A HERMENEUTIC RECONSTRUCTION OF THE IDEA OF THE GOOD

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ABSTRACT

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The goal of the present dissertation is to study the problem of the good and reconstruct it upon the ground of the interpretive philosophy which we call hermeneutics. Therefore, our primary aim is to investigate the relationship between ethics and hermeneutics and then try to reconstruct the idea of the good in a hermeneutic manner. I shall develop a hermeneutic conception of philosophical ethics, based on H. G. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics by focusing on his magnum opus *Truth and Method*. The problem is resolved by employing hermeneutics as practical philosophy, by means of which it becomes possible to devise a dialectical-dialogical model. It is the peculiar feature of that model that it functions without a foundation in the sense of epistemological justification, since it always has a subject-matter with which we are occupied. This

subject-matter is the human good in relation to the good in itself, which can be captured by finite humans within the indeterminacy and infinity of dialogue.

Keywords: good, hermeneutics, philosophical hermeneutics, ethics, philosophical ethics, language, tradition, understanding, effective-historical consciousness, *phronesis*, *ethos*, reason

ÖZ

İYİ DÜŞÜNCESİNİN HERMENEUTİK TASARIMI

Yılmaz, Alim

Doktora, Felsefe Bölümü

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Bu çalışmanın amacı 'iyi' sorununu araştırmak ve bunu hermeneutik olarak adlandırdığımız yorumsamacı felsefe çerçevesinde çözümlemektir. Bundan dolayı, temel amacımız hermeneutik ve etik arasındaki ilişliyi inceleyerek, 'iyi' düşüncesini hermeneutik bir çerçevede yeniden oluşturmaktır. Bu amaca ulaşabilmek için felsefi etik kavramı, Gadamer'in felsefi hermeneutik'i temelinde ve büyük eseri *Yöntem ve Doğruluk*'a göndermede bulunularak geliştirilmeye çalışıldı. Sorunu, hermeneutiği pratik felsefe olarak sunarak çözüme kavuşturmaya çalıştık. Böylece, diyalektik-dialojik bir model tasarlama olanağı oluşmuştur. Bu modelin ayırdedici özelliği, araştırmayı yönlendiren sürekli bir konuya sahip olduğundan, bilgi kuramsal gerekçelendirmelere başvurmadan işlemesidir. Bu konu 'iyi' düşüncesiyle etkileşim içinde olan 'insansı iyi' düşüncesidir.

Sonlu insan bu düşünceyi diyalog ortamının belirsizliği ve sonsuzluğu içinde yakalayabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İyi, hermeneutik, felsefi hermeneutik, etik, felsefi etik, dil, gelenek, anlama, tarihsel bilinç, *phronesis*, *ethos*, us

To the Memory of My Father

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the present dissertation is to study the problem of the good and reconstruct it upon the ground of the interpretive philosophy which we call hermeneutics. The good is a concept which constitutes the core idea of ethics or moral philosophy. In this sense, our primary aim is to investigate the relationship between ethics and hermeneutics and then try to reconstruct the idea of the good in a hermeneutic manner. But, what is ethics? And what is hermeneutics? How can we construct or reconstruct ethical problems in terms of hermeneutics and particularly in terms of philosophical hermeneutics?

In trying to understand what ethics is, it is necessary to start by making a threefold distinction between 'morality,' 'moral theory,' and 'meta-ethics.' Morality consists of individual claims about what is of moral value, such as honesty and liberality, and about what must be done or avoided in certain situations. In this sense, morality is a body of moral claims, which are expressing a certain kind of commitment.

It is likely that a morality will be associated with some principles which can serve as justifying particular claims. This leads to the constitution of a moral theory that articulates such principles within a systematic structure. Here, I need to clarify two points: first, that one can make moral claims without having a moral theory. And second, those moral claims may be compatible with different moral theories. For instance, one may hold that to deceive an inexperienced customer is wrong without having a systematic account of what makes it wrong, and furthermore this moral claim might be justified by quite distinct theories, such as deontology or consequentialism.

Meta-ethics differs from the previous two, since it is not concerned with what is right or wrong, good or bad, but rather concerns the logical status of moral claims and moral theories. Thus, meta-ethics can be described as the abstract form of thinking about morality. It is concerned with such metaphysical and epistemological questions as whether values are objective, and whether we can derive genuine knowledge from thoughts about them.[1]

[1] For this threefold distinction between morality, moral theory and meta ethics, see, Skorupski, J. Ethics., Haldane J. Applied Ethics. In Nicholas Bunnin and E.P.Tsui-James (Eds.). 1996. *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*. Oxford, Massachusetts: Blackwell publishers., Arrington, Robert L. 1998. *Western Ethics: An Historical Introduction*. Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers., Skorupski, J. 1993. The Definition of Morality. In A. Philips Griffiths (Ed.). *Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See also, Singer P. (Ed.). 1991. *A Companion to Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell. And for a valuable consideration on ethics, see, Sidgwick, H. 1922. *The Methods of Ethics*. London: Macmillan.

Given these distinctions, I contend that both moral theory and meta-ethics can be described as reflection on morality stemming from a scientific apprehension of philosophy, which aims to construct a secure ground for philosophy and ethics. However, morality cannot be rationally constructed in the way moral theories and meta-ethical theories try to do, since they ignore human historicity as well as contextual and cultural settings. Thus, I hold, a moral consciousness can be constituted in a practical philosophy, which presupposes the validity of reason effected by contextual settings, i.e., historical conditions. This can be done by employing a quite different philosophical approach upon which our moral consciousness can be constituted. That approach is philosophical hermeneutics and thus also philosophical ethics. Philosophical hermeneutics refers to the philosophical position of Hans-George Gadamer who has developed philosophical conceptions for the interpretation of texts including the world, religion, law, society and tradition.[2] Philosophical ethics is what corresponding to the philosophical position of Gadamer as a practical philosophy. The concept of philosophical ethics is, in fact, the projection of the notion of philosophical hermeneutics and it refers to a conception of ethics which differs from

[2] Gadamer points out the aim of philosophical hermeneutics by the following expressions: "Philosophical hermeneutics takes as its task the opening up of the hermeneutical dimension in its full scope, showing its fundamental significance for our entire understanding of the world and thus for all the various forms in which this understanding manifests itself; from interhuman communication to manipulation of society; and from the tradition as it is built of religion and law, art and philosophy, to the revolutionary consciousness that unhinges the tradition through emancipatory reflection." Gadamer, H.G. 1967. On The Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection. Trans G.B. Hess and R.E. Palmer. In David E. Linge (Trans. and Ed.). 1976. *Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

others, such as, religious or transcendental moral philosophies. Indeed, the notion of philosophical ethics is almost synonymous with practical philosophy.[3]

Therefore, one must relate ethical problems to all of philosophical theory, in any attempt to construct or reconstruct a conception of philosophical ethics. That is, problems belonging to the area of philosophical ethics connect with problems of philosophy at many points. It is, in fact, difficult to decide from which to begin. Should we start from ethics or philosophy? Any of them can be taken as a departure, since there is a dialectical relation between the two. This dialogical relation seems essential in devising a moral theory. Thus, I have tried to establish a dialogical relation throughout my dissertation, which constitutes the core idea of my investigation. On these considerations, furthermore, I need to describe my conception of philosophy as primarily stemming from philosophical hermeneutics. Then, upon this ground, I aim to find my way to philosophical ethics.

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[3] The concept of philosophical ethics has bee used to constitute a third alternative between normative moral theories, such as, Platonic, Kantian and Utilitarian ethics and meta-ethical theories, such as emotivism, non-cognitivism and the like. For this conception of philosophical ethics, see, Darwall, Stephen. 1998. *Philosophical Ethics.* Colorado and oxford: Westview press. pp. 3-17. However, Gadamer has used the concept of philosophical ethics in a particular sense. In Gadamer's sense the notion of philosophical ethics is almost synonymous with practical philosophy, and is the outcome of the dialectical relation between our moral consciousness (*phronesis*) and our moral being (*ethos*). For this use of philosophical ethics, see, Gadamer, H.G. On The Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics. In Ronald Beiner and William James Booth. (Eds.). 1993. *Kant and Political Philosophy: the contemporary Legacy.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press., pp361-373.,hereafter PPE, where Gadamer starts with a description of philosophical ethics by the following expressions: "It is not self-evident that "philosophical" ethics, a philosophy of morals, is anything other than a "practical" ethics, than the establishment of a table of values consulted by the actor and the knowledge connecting him to that table of values."

Throughout this critical investigation, I try to find some ground upon which a new conception of the good can be reconstructed. Nowadays, we are living in a 'post-modern world.' The term 'post-modernism' describes a dominant and lively conception of current philosophy. There is an identity crisis here, because ambiguity in the structure of such notions as 'rationality', 'truth' and 'reality' now pervades philosophical investigation. Further, the lack of a dominant philosophical paradigm aggravates the crisis. This leads to a pluralistic conception which may not seem 'philosophical' in the sense of philosophy as 'love of wisdom'. If there are different approaches to the concept of truth, then why should not one adopt the same attitude toward the concept of the good? But there is a danger here: nihilism, relativism and skepticism undermine the claim that the pursuit of knowledge is possible.[4]

Hence, the contemporary conception of the good cannot be separated from questions regarding philosophy in general. The danger is that philosophy cannot contribute to the realization of an ethical life the more it becomes skeptical and relativistic. This is one aspect of the so-called danger. Another is that an ethical theory cannot be constructed in

[4] *Ethical relativism* is the doctrine which militates against moral rightness and wrongness of action. For it is alleged that moral principles vary from society to society, and thus there are no universal moral values binding for every one. Ethical relativism differs from moral skepticism in that moral skepticism contends that there are no moral standards at all. Pojman makes these points in his *Ethics* p.26., (Pojman, L. 1995. *Ethics*: *Discovering Right and Wrong*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.): "*Ethical relativism* holds that there are no universally valid moral principles, but rather that all moral principles are valid relative to culture or individual choice. It is to be distinguished from *moral skepticism*-the view that there are no valid moral principles at all (or at least we cannot know whether there are any)-and from all forms of *moral objectivism* or *absolutism*."

terms of philosophical theories which are objective and impersonal.[5] Since morality is based on particular contextual settings and personal factors, it may be impossible to use philosophical theory in the construction of morality. If this is so, there will be no room for a philosophical ethics. That is to say, a rational and reflective ethics could not be founded philosophically.

I, however, will argue that there is a dialectical relation between ethics and philosophy, by means of which it is possible to construct a rational and critical ethics without appealing to a transcendental ethical theory. Since, as is held by some positivists, theories are abstract and general, and since they are subject to justification, they cannot be applied to ethics. This position can be called as relativistic and is akin to the positivistic conception of moral philosophy. The view that an ethical theory cannot be constructed in a philosophical way is implied by emotivism,[6] a positivist theory. Positivists employed philosophy as an instrument to clarify the structure of the natural sciences. Hence, the concepts and norms of ethical theories can refer only to emotions which are

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[5] Moral objectivism is the view that moral principles have universal validity, independent of cultural settings. However, the objectivist holds that no moral principle has absolute priority. There exist many types of objectivism. Pojman argues: "The *objectivist*, on the other hand, shares with the absolutist the notion that moral principles have universal, objective validity, but denies that moral norms are necessarily exceptionless...There are many types of objectivism, ranging from the position that there are some absolutes and some nonabsolute objective principles." *Ethics*, p. 41.

[6] Emotivism, a version of noncognitivism, is the doctrine which holds that moral judgments do not have truth-values but are expressions of our feelings. It also militates against the view that moral truths are discovered by intuition, and the view that moral statements are objective and that they are either true or false. The emotivist argues that good is not a property, and thus ethics is not a reality at all. Since ethics has not a subject-matter, it is only about emotions. For a consideration on emotivism, see, Pojman, L. *Ethics*. pp. 194-198.

psychological states, so that a scientific theory of ethics would be impossible. That is to say, for the positivist, a philosophical ethics cannot be constructed scientifically, and hence a philosophical ethics is impossible.

According to Ayer's "Critique of Ethics", for instance, value judgments cannot be justified, since they are expressions of emotions which cannot be true or false. However, Ayer argues that he does not adopt a subjectivist point of view. What he means is that there can be disagreements about ethical values, and thus disagreements about ethical questions cannot be resolved rationally.[7] On the other hand, MacIntyre argues, emotivism results from the failure of Enlightenment ideals to provide a basis for morality.[8] This was the ideal of Kant who attempted to provide a ground for ethics in pure practical reason. The failure of this project gave rise to the idea that philosophical ethics is impossible. Contemporary moral philosophy shares the same view that moral philosophy cannot have a foundation as in the Kantian deontological moral philosophy. This situation bears a danger for moral philosophy; namely, the threat of nihilism and relativism. According to nihilism, no distinction can be made between good and bad since we have no

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[7] Ayer, A.J. Critique of Ethics. In 1997. *Morality and the Good Life*. Ed. By Thomas L. Carson and Paul K. Moser. New York: Oxford University Press. p.61, where he argues; "...we shall set ourselves to show that in so far as statements of value are significant, they are ordinary "scientific" statements; and that in so far as they are not scientific, they are not in the literal sense significant, but are simply expressions of emotion which can be neither true nor false."

[8] According to MacIntyre, emotivism removes the distinction between manipulative and nonmanuplative behavior in social relations. MacIntyre, A. 1981. *After Virtue*. University of Notre Dame Press. Chapter 1.

objective criterion to apply to our judgments. Relativism claims that we can distinguish good from bad, but they are relative to cultures, individuals, etc., and hence, there cannot be universal and necessary ethical judgments. Thus, it is clear that a foundation of moral philosophy can provide a universal and necessary criterion for establishing objective ethical judgments. What about pluralism? Can it supply philosophy with a foundation? Pluralism is, I think, a modern attempt to resolve the question of identity in philosophy. Pluralism, in the final analysis, seems to be a position in which hermeneutics, social theory, linguistics etc. are employed to attain an answer to the problem of identity in philosophy.

The point I will stress is related to the problem of identity in philosophy. It is plain that the pluralistic response cannot resolve the problem of identity. There are mainly two reasons: first, the concept of 'incommensurability' which distinguishes no criterion for a possible comparison among different types of philosophy. This approach to philosophy is based on an extension of the idea of 'form of life' or 'language game'. And second, this approach gives rise to the problem of 'situatedness,' which puts emphasis on the historical conditions. According to this idea, because of different historical conditions, to understand a different culture, we must understand its practices, and delving into different philosophies pertaining to different cultures and histories seems to be impossible. Therefore, it could be argued that different philosophies are incommensurable.

The same could be said for moral philosophy. If there cannot be a universal and absolute foundation for ethics, then each morality would have its unique foundation owing to its particular cultural context. The question is: how is it possible to understand other moralities and to make judgments about moralities and distinguish one as true? It seems that we cannot reach an absolute judgment, since each morality justifies itself in terms of its own subjective conditions. This approach assumes the relative 'rightness' of each morality. However, if there cannot be a foundation for morality, then it becomes impossible to resolve a possible conflict even in a single culture. In this case, can we have a criterion which is outside? I will also argue that the so called problem of a foundation for philosophy in general and for morality in particular cannot be solved by finding a universal criterion as the foundation of philosophy. This is what transcendental philosophy aims to do. But I will argue that one possible resolution could be the rehabilitation of the idea of incommensurability, which may then be used as a basis for moral philosophy. This is the main task of the present dissertation. This problem can be resolved mainly in two ways. The first resolution can be derived from transcendental philosophy by discovering universal conditions of philosophical consciousness, which is itself, I think, the source of the problem at issue. The second way, which I prefer, is to clarify the historical conditions of philosophical reflection in such a way as to remove incommensurability. I will defend this possibility in the sixth chapter of my dissertation under the

subtitle “Language,” and in the conclusion, where the ontological structure of language is analyzed.

In order to understand what philosophy is, we need to give an account of its historical relations. This point has not been taken into account in modern and contemporary approaches, such as positivism, analytic philosophy and linguistic analysis. By means of those scientific conceptions of philosophy, the identity crisis in philosophy cannot be overcome. Furthermore, the aforementioned crisis, I hold, cannot be resolved by any application of the realization of an absolute reason or by an understanding of a rigorous science, since their relation to history is negative. That is to say, for instance, the Hegelian conception of absolute reason colonizes history for the sake of a pure and scientific apprehension of philosophy. I think the relation between history and philosophy cannot be constructed on power, since it may lead to connecting philosophy and history only by colonizing and controlling one for the sake of the other. Instead, a dialectical relationship between philosophy and history seems more reasonable.

The dialectical conception of philosophy, which I have mentioned, may help to resolve the problem of incommensurability between different conceptions of moral philosophy. Indeed, the failure to overcome the problem will aggravate the identity crisis in philosophy and lead to nihilism and skepticism. This is a quite different problem, since an attempt at resolution necessitates clarifying the dialectical relation between history

and philosophy. Failure in doing so will justify transcendental philosophy, and this makes it impossible to keep the danger of nihilism or skepticism away, since transcendental philosophy militates against a conditioned moral philosophy, which serves as a theory of action situated in the empirical world. Herein lies the challenge in showing that philosophy is possible without appealing to any epistemological foundation and in demonstrating that it is possible by revealing a dialectical relation between philosophy and history.

Similarly, philosophical ethics is to be evaluated and reconstructed in its relation to the concept of historical consciousness which stems from the philosophical understanding of history. I will argue that ethics can be understood precisely as an historical phenomenon since its concepts, norms, values and practices come into existence throughout history. The historicity of ethics as application is also related to Kantian formal or a priori ethics with its empirical dimension.[9] In this sense, the empirical dimension of ethics cannot be abstracted from its content. Hence I will argue that ethics is both historical and empirical as much as being philosophical in the sense that it is rational. Here, the main question is how to demonstrate that ethics is both historical and rational. As an attempt to answer this question, to identify and evaluate the problem of philosophical ethics, I will employ the hermeneutic conception of

[9] Gadamer suggested that even in Kantian moral philosophy we can find an empirical dimension of philosophical reflection. "Ever since Kant, moral philosophical reflection may not appear as a mere theory. Rather, Kant's moral renunciation of the Enlightenment's pride in the understanding was so powerful that he insisted on the necessity of the transition to moral philosophy, and, on this basis, moral philosophy could no longer completely deny the demand to be of moral relevance." See, PPE. p. 362.

philosophical ethics based on Gadamer's notion of philosophical hermeneutics. I claim that through a reconstruction of his arguments, it is possible to establish and develop a dialogical ethics which is both rational and historical. He has suggested that philosophical ethics has to be both theoretical and practical. This ideal of Gadamer was implicit in Kantian formalism as a combination of practical and pure reason. Here the problem is whether justice could be done to ethical life or to human action. The problem derives from the fact that ethics as a theory has a certain level of "abstraction" and "generality" actually relates to "the generality of reflection". This dilemma, Gadamer says, could be resolved either by Kant's ethical formalism or by Aristotle's conception of the relation between *ethos* and *phronesis*.

Gadamer, however, prefers the third way: employing them together.[10] Forging a link between Aristotelian and Kantian ethics at first seems paradoxical. While the former conception of ethics is based on the concept of *phronesis* or practical reason and concerns customs and training in *ethos* or ethical life, the latter is based on the idea of pure or unconditioned practical reason. In other words, there seems to be an incompatibility between the morally conditioned and the unconditioned. Gadamer argues in a rather astonishing manner that the so-called dilemma does not mean that they are truly incompatible. Accordingly,

[10] Gadamer points out this point by the following expression: "I believe that only two ways can possibly lea out of this dilemma within philosophical ethics. One is the way of ethical formalism stemming from Kant; the other is the way of Aristotle. Each may not be adequate by itself, but both together might contribute to the possibility of ethics." PPE. p.363.

philosophical ethics is made possible by demonstrating the compatibility between the conditioned and the unconditioned. There is, however, a weakness in the positions considered above. While the unconditioned ethics excludes the practical life, the conditioned ethics gives no room to freedom and reason.

Gadamer demonstrated the common point between Aristotle and Kant by singling out the main problem that excludes the possibility of commensurability. Before analyzing this, let us distinguish the central problematic in Aristotle's and Kant's ethics. The problem for Aristotle is how a universal moral law could be constructed by the use of practical reason. Thus he identifies practical reason as relating to decisions about particular moral actions. The problem for Kant is to show how a priori universal moral laws can be applied to empirical and particular moral actions. Accordingly, the problem may be identified as determining what a moral law is and how people agree upon it. Put in another way, the question becomes how can we establish the relation between moral laws and their application to particular actions? In terms of ethics, it is hard to demonstrate a common basis for the conditioned and the unconditioned. If an a priori moral law applies to particular actions, then is it really unconditioned? This problem is formulated in terms of the freedom of action in the empirical world in which all things are caused according to

the laws of nature. Kant discussed this problem in the section devoted to the third antinomy of pure reason.[11]

To resolve this problem, Kant makes the noumenon-phenomenon distinction according to which action can be understood as phenomenon, that is, as subject to the laws of nature. It can also be understood as noumenon, that is, in terms of what he calls the law of freedom. From this dualistic view of action, we can derive two aspects of philosophical ethics: the practical and the theoretical. Following this line of thought, it becomes clear that philosophical ethics has the dimension of noumenal unconditionality and that of phenomenal conditionality. This dualistic internal structure of Kant's ethics is the basis upon which Gadamer constructs his theory of ethics, aiming to the apparent incommensurability between Aristotelian and Kantian ethics.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that there is no compatibility between these systems if we consider Kantian philosophy as a whole. Gadamer derives his thesis from the *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals* section II, arguing that Kant is compatible with Aristotle in the sense that one completes the other. In Aristotle, we find a concrete moral philosophy of decision and action; while in Kant, we have the introduction of critical and rational thinking into the ethical life. For Gadamer, this

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[11] Kant, I. 1965. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman K. Smith. New York: ST Martin's Press. (Original work Published 1781) hereafter CPuR. A444-5 B472-3, where he argues; "thesis
Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can one and all be derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom.
antithesis
There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature."

implies an essential conditionality or finitude, which characterizes any endeavor to employ philosophical reflection in an understanding of ethical life. This finitude of moral reflection is not only a feature of Aristotle's moral philosophy, but also a characteristic of Kantian ethics. Kant's moral philosophy makes no new moral content, since it aims at clarifying and articulating the moral experience of ordinary people.[12] In fact, Aristotle created a similar balance between *logos* and *ethos*. *Ethos* is our ethical being or ethical life, and *logos* is our ethical consciousness. Ethical action is related to our ethical life rather than our ethical consciousness. Aristotle demonstrated that education and politics and other historical factors determine our ethical life. Thus, as one demonstrates the common basis on which ethics stands, the gap between practice and theory can be closed. Therefore, I will argue, the constitution of a philosophical ethics requires an account of both Aristotelian and Kantian ethics. Both have influenced modern and contemporary moral philosophy. However, to develop a hermeneutic conception of philosophical ethics, it is required to rehabilitate the Kantian claim that an Aristotelian conditioned ethical theory cannot be rational. And for this task, we are in need of an Aristotelian concept of the good, which provides a rational and attainable conception of ethics.

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[12] The compatibility between Kant and Aristotle is demonstrated in PPE. p. 371 throughout these expressions: "As Kant did with his formalism, Aristotle too expelled all false claims from the notion of a philosophical ethics. It was Kant who debunked the moral-philosophical rationality of the Enlightenment and its blind pride in reason by separating the unconditionedness of practical reason from all conditionedness of human nature and by representing it in its transcendental purity. It was Aristotle, however, who placed the conditionedness of the human life situation in the center and identified the concretization of the universal and its application to the present situation as the principal task of philosophical ethics as well as of ethical conduct."

Accordingly, my dissertation is divided into six chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. In order to give an account of the idea of the good, and reconstruct it in a hermeneutic manner, I have introduced two rival theories of the good; namely, the Aristotelian and the Kantian. Aristotle provided a conceptual analysis of the notion of the good and conceived it to be actualized in the life world, whereas Kant's moral philosophy is more abstract, formal and transcendental. A hermeneutic conception of the good is, therefore, more Aristotelian, and stands in contrast to the Kantian position. To demonstrate why a Kantian moral philosophy cannot necessarily and sufficiently justify human action in the sphere of moral being (*ethos*), we must refer to an interpretive reconstruction of Platonic and Aristotelian moral thought. This is done in four consecutive chapters: "The Idea of the Good in Aristotle", "A Critique of Kant's Moral Philosophy", "Hermeneutics and Ethics", and "Hermeneutics as Ethical Understanding."

In Chapter Two, to understand Aristotle in relation to Plato, a brief account of Plato's idea of the good and justice is given. I then give an account of Aristotle's notion of the good by considering his *Nicomachean Ethics* where he investigates the chief good as the ultimate end of human action. Aristotle argues there that the chief good is *eudaimonia*, i,e,. happiness explicated under the first subtitle "Happiness as the Chief Good". However, the concept of *eudaimonia* has often been misunderstood. I accept the interpretation that *eudaimonia* is the virtuous

life or living well, an ideal which man can actualize in practice. In this sense, to be virtuous means to act virtuously. But what is virtue? I treat this point under the second subtitle "The Notion of Virtue and the Mean." Here the notion of 'mean' is used to understand the nature of moral virtue. Aristotle argues that the mean is determined by a rational principle of practical wisdom or *phronesis*. This concept has a crucial significance for my hermeneutic reconstruction of the idea of the good. However, in this chapter, I do not evaluate the concept of *phronesis*, since the last chapter is devoted to pointing out its relevance to philosophical ethics as it relates to my own treatment of the question of the good.

Chapter Three, "A Critique of Kant's Moral Philosophy," is devoted to description and criticism of Kant's moral philosophy by appealing to the main concepts of his deontological ethics which has dominated not only modern and contemporary moral philosophy but politics as well. There is a strong Kantian influence on modern and contemporary moral philosophy either as a source of inspiration or as a rival philosophy. Kant's critical philosophy intends to establish a ground for such ideas as necessity and law. In the case of moral philosophy, Kant introduced practical reason, which must be pure and independent of all empirical conditions, and thus provided moral laws that are conceived to be necessary and binding for all rational beings. Accordingly, any empirically conditioned element, such as happiness or love, cannot serve as a moral law. Kant is, thus, rejecting the Aristotelian moral tradition which assumes empirically conditioned notions,

such as happiness, as the ultimate good. Here I hold that Kant's notion of pure practical reason cannot establish a rational ground for human action, since action is conditioned and related to the empirical world. First of all, it is self-contradictory for reason to be simultaneously pure and practical. Whereas the term 'pure' implies the a priori, the term 'practical' implies the a posteriori, or the conditioned in experience. Hence it becomes impossible to rationalize human moral conduct on such a logically self-contradictory ground. For Kant, not only does pure practical reason justify human action, the possibility of freedom also has to be demonstrated. Indeed, the idea of freedom is not only Kant's *sine qua non* for ethics but of all modern and contemporary moral philosophy. According to Kant, freedom has two different spheres: the transcendental and the practical. Transcendental freedom is the idea of unconditioned causality. Here, I argue that practical freedom remains a mere idea which is employed as the ground of moral philosophy.

In "The Idea of Duty" and "The Idea of Good Will," I analyze the concepts 'good will' and 'duty' in relation to two fundamental aspects of moral imperatives: that moral imperatives are categorical, and that only free rational agents are committed to such imperatives by their use of practical reason. Accordingly, as rational beings we choose both our actions and the principles on which we act. But the context of choice may not always be good, since an act is good only if it is accompanied by a good will which wills it for its own sake. Here, the idea of duty is

compulsory for the agent who has a good will when performing a moral act. Indeed, for an action to be morally good, it must be motivated by the idea of duty, not by any conditional factors such as happiness or love.

I have examined the categorical imperative and moral law under the title "Categorical Imperative and Moral Law". The categorical imperative is, for Kant, what makes a will good and an action morally worthy. That is to say, an action should be performed out of respect for the law, which is the motive that serves as the principle of will. Clearly, moral imperatives are categorical and binding for all rational beings.

Chapter Four is devoted to a historical treatment of modern hermeneutics with regard to moral theory. Here, I explicate the relationship between hermeneutics and ethics by appealing to the main representatives of the hermeneutic theory, namely Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is treated in chapter five, "Hermeneutics as Ethical Understanding" where I offer my resolution to the question at issue. Here I consider hermeneutics as an alternative to the Kantian formulation of transcendentally grounded ethics.

Modern hermeneutics begins with Schleiermacher's romantic hermeneutics which rejects the traditional dogmatic form of hermeneutics. It is this rejection that gives rise to the modern hermeneutic theory. Schleiermacher argues that there are mainly two forms of interpretation: grammatical and technical or psychological. The former mode of

interpretation involves the relation between the text and the language in which it is expressed. The latter one concerns the genius or the intention of the author. Schleiermacher's ethics has an interpretive structure, and employs reason to guide moral activities in the practical sphere. Thus he argues against Kant's idea of pure practical reason. Practical reason, for him, cannot be pure since it is situated in nature. Indeed, his moral theory affirms the unity of being and thought in so much as language and thought are the facts of reason. He bases his moral philosophy on his general hermeneutic theory which foresees a dialectical unity between reason and nature on the one hand, and ethics and physics on the other.

The second outstanding representative of modern hermeneutic theory is W. Dilthey who intended to lay down the philosophical foundation of the human sciences, which he calls *Geisteswissenshaften*. Dilthey makes a radical distinction between the natural sciences and the human sciences in terms of their different subject-matters. According to him, the natural sciences aim to explain external reality through observation and experiment in the external world, whereas the human sciences purport to understand internal reality which is embedded into 'the structure of mental life'. And, accordingly, the relationship between theoretical knowing and practical life is extended into the sphere of ethics as the practicality of moral consciousness.

Heidegger is the last figure who represents a radical shift from epistemological hermeneutics towards an ontological-phenomenological

hermeneutics. He employs hermeneutics to expose the ontological structure of Dasein. That is, he intends to explicate the ontological conditions of historicity and to demonstrate the possibility of uniting life with history. This was Dilthey's point of departure and where he failed, since his epistemological hermeneutics could not resolve the tension between life and science. Heidegger's intention, however, was not to resolve the problem of history but rather to identify its main locus. The question of history is located in the existential-ontological exposition of Dasein. Therefore, Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics represents a radical turn from Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's epistemologically oriented theory of interpretation. The question of the relevance of hermeneutics for ethics is next to be considered. However, that is a problematic issue for Heidegger, since he never wrote a systematic ethics. I have inferred his views on ethics from his article "Letter on Humanism" where he described language, thinking and humanism as determining the essence of human action in which life is constituted and as a subject for ethics. Ethics is thus reduced to the act of thinking and hence renders values insignificant to moral action since values, he argues, veil Being.

Chapter Five, entitled "Hermeneutics as Ethical Understanding", applies my hermeneutic critical detour to the question of the idea of the good in relation to a consideration of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, and Aristotle's concept of *phronesis*. I use Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to resolve the problems inherited from

Schleiermacher's, Dilthey's and Heidegger's hermeneutic theories. Here I try to answer the question of the validity of prudent judgment (*phronesis*) by appealing to moral self-knowledge in the sphere of the life-world. I argue that the validity of practical moral judgments cannot be abstracted from the prejudices as pre-understanding which characterizes the human sciences. My resolution depends on my reconstruction of Gadamer's use of *phronesis* in relation to language and tradition both of which enable the dialogical apprehension of the human good with the good in itself. Therefore, drawing upon the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer, I contend that the problem of providing morality with a sound ground can be resolved.

CHAPTER 2

THE IDEA OF GOOD IN ARISTOTLE

2.1. The Platonic Background

Even a moral question which is not philosophical needs philosophical insight to be apprehended. The fact that Greek society recognized the relation between moral questions and philosophical reflection gave rise to the creation of philosophical ethics. What lies at the center of moral philosophy is expressed by the Greek word *agathos* which serves as the origin of our word good. However, its original use is not identical with the good which pervades modern moral philosophy. For the word *agathos* was originally a term ascribed to 'a Homeric nobleman,'[13] whereas the modern conception of "good" concerns some quality, such as bravery, cleverness and justice in man. The word *agathos* is related to the noun *arete* which is translated as virtue. In this sense, virtue (*arete*) is what the good (*agathos*) man has and exercises.

[13] For this remark see, MacIntyre, A. 1991. *A Short History of Ethics*. London: T.J. Press, hereafter SHE, where he takes a quotation from W. H. Adkins; "To be *agathos* one must be brave, skillful and successful in war and in peace; and one must possess the wealth and (in peace) the leisure which are at once the necessary conditions for the development of these skills and the natural reward of their successful employment."

The Homeric concept of the good, although it does not have strong philosophical connotations, is given philosophical duty in Plato's works.[14] For example, in the *Gorgias* where Plato's central questions of ethics are explored, the question of virtue is examined. Socrates there makes a distinction between the sort of persuasion that produces knowledge and that which does not. While the former uses reason to grasp knowledge, the latter involves only psychological beliefs without any rational ground.[15] However, Socrates is far from giving definite answers to the given question; what does the good consist in? Instead, he needs to explain a necessary condition for the question that what are the rules that must govern behavior in order to call something good? And a further step is to investigate what the good is in relation to human life. This is what Plato intended to identify in the *Republic* where the solutions are proposed to problems which were previously introduced in the *Gorgias*. The discussion in the *Republic* begins with a demand for a definition of the notion of justice. Here Plato tries to arrive at a criterion for and knowledge of just action. Now, justice is related to the virtue that corresponds to a man's

[14] For quotations from and references to Plato's *Republic* and *Gorgias*, we will give the paragraph numbers from the translation of M.A.B. Jowet (B. Jowet, (Ed. and Trans.). 1953. *The Dialogues of Plato*. In Four Volumes. Volume II. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[15] In the *Gorgias*, the questioning over persuasion between Socrates and Gorgias proceeds along the paragraphs 454-457. Socrates makes a distinction between two sorts of persuasion by asking the following question: "Shall we then assume two sorts of persuasion,-one which is the source of belief without knowledge, as the other is of knowledge?"

social function, but in an arbitrary way.[16] The aim in the remainder of the *Republic* is to overcome this arbitrariness.

In Greek society, virtue was desired for its rewards both in this world and in the next.[17] However, for Plato, the question was how justice can be preferred to injustice without concern for rewards. Therefore, he tries to demonstrate what justice is both in the state and in the soul. And he asserts since cities and souls can be just, they must have an identical characteristic called justice. Since justice exists in both souls and cities, to study justice in the city is easier, and then applying it to the soul becomes possible. Socrates points out this as follows:

> I will tell you, I replied; justice is, as you know, sometimes spoken of as the virtue of an individual, and sometimes as the virtue of a State...Then in the larger (city), justice is likely to be more abundant and more easily discernible. I propose therefore that we inquire into the nature of justice and injustice, first as they appear in the state, and secondly in the individual, proceeding from the greater to the lesser and comparing them.[18]

Just as the soul consists of three parts, which are reason, appetite and the spirit, there are three classes of citizens in the Platonic state: artisans and laborers who satisfy the material needs of the society,

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[16] The questioning over justice takes place at the beginning of the *Republic*. Although we cannot get a clear definition of justice, Socrates contends that justice resembles knowledge and goodness in certain respects. Thus it stands on the side of virtues, while injustice among the vices. He says "...Then the just has turned out to be wise and good and the unjust evil and ignorant." See, *Republic* 348b-354c.

[17] See, SHE, p. 36.

[18] *Republic* 368b-369b

soldiers who defend the state and rulers who organize social life.[19] While reason in the soul provides rational standards of behavior, appetite represents the bodily desires. Furthermore, the spirited part strives for honorable behavior, as much as with anger and indignation. Indeed, the spirited part of the soul serves as a mediator between reason and appetite.

Accordingly, men should be organized into three classes according to the dominant part of the soul. Among such virtues as courage, wisdom and temperance, justice is different in that it belongs not to any class, but to the society as a whole. Analogously, justice in the soul belongs to each part of the soul in virtue of performing its proper function. To speak more precisely, justice belongs to the whole soul, not to any part of it. Hence we face two questions here: who is the just man? And which state is just? The two questions can be answered by examining the interrelation between the state and the soul. To be a just man, one has to live in a just state, and for a state to be just, there must be just citizens. This dialogical

[19] In the *Republic*, the issue of the parts of the soul sounds as a psychological theory according to which the soul has three parts or faculties. However, a soul cannot have parts in the way "a piece of land" does. Rather, the parts of the soul serve as elements that must work together to make a greater unity. The parts of the soul are "...the one with which a man reasons, we may call the rational principle of the soul, the other, with which he loves and hungers and thirsts and feels the flutterings of any other desire, may be termed the irrational or appetitive, the ally of sundry pleasures and satisfactions?...And what now of passion, or spirit? Is it a third, or akin to one of the preceding?" See, *Republic* 439d-440a.

relation between the state and the soul is illustrated by the ideal of the philosopher-king in the *Republic*.[20]

The philosopher can apprehend the Forms via the intellect but only through training in abstraction.[21] He can thus grasp the meaning of general terms and abstract nouns, the Forms. The training of the philosopher includes geometry and dialectic. What Plato means by dialectic is a process of a rational dialogue in which Socratic questioning takes place. In the process of such questioning, one tries to help a rational subject deductively apprehend the Forms. In the *Republic*, the supreme Form is described as the Form of the Good, which seems to have strong religious implications. The Form of the Good as the supreme form belongs to the noetic (unchanging) world and thus dwells beyond existence. Indeed, we cannot directly grasp the Form of the Good itself. Instead, it enables us to apprehend other Forms. So good is a transcendental entity, other things only standing in relation to that entity.

However, it is still hard to identify the nature of justice, since we cannot have, for example, a list of just actions in terms of Platonic abstractions. Despite this, Plato suggests that there is a criterion in the knowledge of the Forms. Further, only a few men can grasp the knowledge of the Forms through education in an ideal state or social

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[20] This point is related to the *Republic*'s radical political ideal that either philosophers become kings or existing kings must learn philosophy. The questioning over why philosophers make good rulers, and how rule by philosophers is possible take place in the *Republic* 473c- 502c.

[21] The Form of the Good is intended to unite the apprehension of philosophers with the ethical knowledge, which makes life worth living. Hence philosophers become qualified to rule in the ideal city. These remarks are made clear in the *Republic* 503e-518b.

environment. Consequently, only this few people can comprehend justice. "Thus the social order which the platonic concept of justice enjoys could only be accepted by the majority of mankind as a result of the use of nonrational persuasion (or force)."[22] That is to say, there are Forms and to grasp them is possible, but such knowledge is only possible for a minority. It is, however, noteworthy here that this latter point is merely asserted, not explicitly argued for.

My contention is that Plato could not provide a real insight into matters of conduct. Although Plato conceived knowledge of the good as a special kind, which differs from both *techne* and *episteme*, and thus required a method of justification in the sense of dialectical demonstration in moral reasoning, the good still remains transcendental. That is, the good transcends the phenomenal world as it is tied to the problem of being in a sense that eidetic elements are to be separated from phenomenal beings. This is why Aristotle criticizes Plato regarding how justice and goodness can be actualized. We find Aristotle's critique of Plato's idea of the good at the beginning of his three works on ethics; namely, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Magna Moralia*.[23] In all these works, Aristotle contends that Platonic knowledge of the good in itself has no relevance for practical philosophy or ethics, since, for him,

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[22] SHE, p. 49

[23] For the Aristotle's critique of Plato, see, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096a-1097a, *Eudemian Ethics* 1217b5, 1218a15-25, and *Magna Moralia* 1182a25-1183a32.

"the good is practically good."[24] Hence I will argue that an Aristotelian interpretation of Platonic dialectics in moral philosophy could provide sufficient arguments for the constitution of a philosophical ethics. In order to achieve this goal, I must now give an account of the Aristotelian moral philosophy by appealing to its main concepts, which are the most valuable sources for my conception of philosophical ethics.

2.2. Happiness as the Chief Good

Although the modern and contemporary conception of morality has been influenced by Aristotle's writings on morality, his ethics differs from modern moral philosophy in character. The modern use of 'morality' has a different meaning, since what moderns call 'moral' is actually Aristotelian intellectual virtue.[25] In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle construes the chief good as the ultimate end toward which we aim. However, unlike Kant, Aristotle does not make a sharp distinction between science and ethics. In trying to discover what is the good for human beings in his theory, ethical questions are not distinguished from scientific questions. According to Aristotle, in order to know the nature of a thing, we should know its final cause, its *telos*. This includes human beings, who also have a *telos* or a final end within their nature.

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[24] For these remarks, see, Gadamer, H.G. 1986. *The Idea of The Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*. Trans. Christopher Smith. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. pp. 126-158.

[25] For this point see, G.E.M. Anscombe. Modern Moral Philosophy. In *Morality and the Good Life*.

For Aristotle, the main task of the ethical investigation is to identify the chief good for human beings, since every human action aims at some good.[26] Hence good is defined in terms of the purpose of an action. But what is this good? It is clear that every kind of activity has its own standards and thus its own good. In relation to this point, the main features of Aristotle's moral philosophy can be reformulated into three main points. The first one is that there is a chief good which is desirable only for its own sake. Indeed, all activities aim towards it and everything else is performed for the sake of it. In the second point, the good is '*eudaimonia*' which means flourishing or happiness. He defines this as excellent human activity. Thirdly, human excellences or virtues are states of character, and they regulate actions and passions by an ideal of good conduct. The virtuous men choose actions as good in themselves.

> Now, if there exists an end in the realm of action which we desire for its own sake, an end which determines all our other desires; if, in other words, we do not make all our choices for the sake of something else-for in this way the process will go on infinitely so that our desire would be futile and pointless-then obviously this end will be the good, that is the highest good.[27]

Aristotle is not saying that all chains of desire must end somewhere or that they must end in the same place. And he is not saying that there

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[26] For quotations from and references to Aristotle's work *Nicomachean Ethics* we will give the paragraph numbers from the translation of Martin Ostwald (Aristotle. 1987. *Nicomachean Ethics.* Trans. Martin Ostwald. New York and London: Macmillan Publishing Company,) by the abbreviation NE, 1094a., where he argues "Every art or applied science and every systematic investigation, and similarly every action and choice, seem to aim at some good; the good, therefore, has been well defined as that which all things aim."

[27] NE, 1094a20-25

must be one chief good. In fact, Aristotle would accept that even if there is a single, chief good, there must be a number of other things, which are desired in themselves and for various reasons. Hence, we observe an important difference between Aristotle and Plato. While Plato argues that all good things are good because of their relation to a single form of the good, Aristotle says that a common form for the good 'as such' and 'as relation' does not exist, since the existence of a universal good that can be valid for all cases seems impossible.[28]

If there are several distinct causes, there must be a basis that enables man to decide what to do. If there is to be a basis for thought and action, conflict must be the result of misconstruing the final or chief good, *eudaimonia*. At the time, there was disagreement over what sort of life achieves *eudaimonia*. While some say that it is a life of pleasure, others say that it is an honorable or wealthy life, or a virtuous life. I think Aristotle defends the view that *eudaimonia* is the virtuous life. Pleasure is a consequence of the good or virtuous life, but it cannot be the substance of the good life. Virtue requires excellent activity, which is pleasurable to virtuous persons. Thus, happiness is the final end or good. It possesses some significant properties: as a final end, it must always be chosen for its own sake in the sense that it cannot be a means to something else. We sometimes choose something for its own sake, but it can be chosen for some further end also. However, happiness is not one of these things. For

[28] NE, 1096a20-25, where Aristotle argues; "Consequently, there cannot be a Form common to the good-as-such and the good as a relation...It is clear, therefore, that the good cannot be something universal, common to all cases, and single; for if it were, it would not be applicable in all categories but only in one"

Aristotle, thus, happiness is not used for any further end, since it is a final end. Indeed, happiness is a self-sufficient good, which is neither a part of some other state of affairs nor a good among others.

But the question of what constitutes happiness must be addressed. This is related to the issue of man's final end. For example, the final end of a lyre player is to play well. At this point, one might begin to wonder what man's specific or unique function might be. According to Aristotle, everything has a function or a characteristic activity which is good. Thus, all human beings must have a function. Their function is related to their distinctive feature, which is the activity of soul guided by a rational principle. Rationality is specifically human. There are two ways in which human experience and activity can involve rationality. It can involve rationality either implicitly or explicitly. In the former case, our emotions or actions are responding to reasons. In the latter case, we are responding to the reasons through the reflection and deliberation by which we do ethics.

Man's aim is to act toward his end which is determined by his distinctive characteristic. And the human good is defined as the activity of soul which aims at excellence or virtue, *arete*. Since there is more than one excellence, the best and most complete is preferred.

We can understand problem of the chief good for human beings by focusing on two points. Firstly, the question concerns the best life for us as humans. The second question concerns what is intrinsically good about pleasure, wisdom, and honor. However, there must be a single chief good,

since otherwise any conflict between intrinsic goods would be irresolvable. And every action aims at some good: if there is a basis for choice among 'final' or 'complete' goods, there must be some 'more complete' or the 'most complete' good. Aristotle calls a good 'complete' or 'final' if it is desired for its own sake. In this sense, not all complete goods are equally complete, since some are more complete than others. In plainer language, one good is more good than another if it is never desired for the sake of the other while the other can be desired for the sake of it. We call a good complete without qualification if it is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else. *Eudaimonia* is generally thought to be the 'most complete'. Any other complete good we may desire for the sake of a flourishing life, but such a life we desire simply for its own sake.

2.3. The Notion of Virtue and the Mean

Following these arguments, Aristotle examines the nature of virtue and virtuous activity. The word 'virtue' is a translation of the Greek word *arete* by which Aristotle means human excellence, which is realized in distinctively human rational activity. In discussing virtues, Aristotle taxonomizes them according to his division of the soul into the rational and nonrational. This can be understood, MacIntyre says, as "the contrast between reasoning and other human faculties."[29] The nonrational parts involve psychological dispositions which can be either rational or irrational.

[29] SHE, p. 64.

That is, for Aristotle, desires do not necessarily conflict with reason but can agree with it. Rationality concerns two kinds of human activity, the first of which is thinking, where reason determines the activity directly; the second are those activities in which humans may succeed or fail in following reason. Hence, the excellences of the activity of reason are what Aristotle calls the 'intellectual virtues,' which include wisdom, intelligence and prudence or practical wisdom. The excellences of the activities other than thinking are called 'moral virtues,' which include justice, pride, temperance, liberality, etc. Indeed, there is a question about which excellences of human activity are the best. Aristotle defends the view that the best human life harmoniously realizes moral as well as intellectual virtues. But he seems to change his view in book X and argues that contemplation is the uniquely best and most excellent human activity, and that the other virtues have value only if they can assist such activity. This is obviously a very different view from what Aristotle defends in most of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Aristotle is interested in understanding the nature of moral excellences which are related to passion and action. He argues that the distinctive feature of human excellence demonstrates itself in our dispositions to feel and express passions in certain ways and to choose certain kinds of actions for their own sake. The questions with which Aristotle begins are: how can virtues be understood, if they are aspects of the soul? How are virtues acquired? Can we understand the nature of

virtues by considering how they are acquired? If virtues are human excellences with respect to passions and actions, what can be said about the kind of relation that exists among virtues and different passions and actions?

According to Aristotle, there are three elements of the soul: passions, faculties, and states of character. However, he thinks that the former two elements cannot be human excellences since excellences are things by which we are praised or blamed. Accordingly, they must be subject to choice or involve choice. Thus, the virtues are states of character by which we are praised or blamed. Indeed, human beings are not simply passive with respect to passions. That is, we can mediate our own passions and control how they are felt and expressed in behavior. Since virtues are not innate, we acquire them by habituation. That is to say, we are neither born with them, nor do we acquire them by any process that does not involve our own activity. Since we gain them through exercise or training, we become just men by acting justly and similarly become courageous by performing courageous actions.

> In our transactions with other men it is by action that some become just and others unjust, and it is by acting in the face of danger and by developing the habit of feeling fear or confidence that some become brave man and others cowards...In a word characteristics, develop from corresponding activities. For that reason, we must see to it that our activities are of a certain kind, since any variations in them will be reflected in our characteristics.[30]

[30] NE, 1103b15-20.

Thus, in order to be virtuous, we must do virtuous acts. In this way, virtue is like having the ability to perform an art, which we can only acquire through training. On the other hand, Aristotle claims that the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar. It is not enough for a person to have the ability, know-how or even habit of doing what the virtuous person does. He must also perform actions virtuously or excellently. This involves not only what is done, but the character which actions reflect. There is an analogy here between moral virtues and artistic skills. In both cases, we acquire skills through habituation. In other words, we acquire them by practice, involving right habits. He argues that we are able to become good by avoiding bad habits and learning good ones. And Aristotle extends this observation to the virtues. A person who acts unfairly toward others will acquire the habit of acting unfairly, and become an unfair person. To become a fair person, one must give up old habits and acquire new just ones. He makes this point as follows:

> Virtue, as we have seen, consist of two kinds, intellectual virtue and moral virtue. Intellectual virtue or excellence owes its origin and development chiefly to teaching, and for that reason requires experience and time. Moral virtue, on the other hand, is formed by habit, ethos and its name, *ethike* is therefore derived, by a slight variation, from ethos. This shows, too, that none of the moral virtues is implanted in us by nature, for nothing which exists by nature can be changed by habit.[31]

However, Aristotle thinks that the virtues are not like artistic skills in all respects. There are many differences that make acquiring them more

[31] NE, 1103a15.

complex. In an artistic skill, we have an independent conception of what it accomplishes. The products of the arts have their goodness in themselves. For instance, good lyre playing is a technique producing good sounds. But, in virtuous activity this is not so. We do not begin with a clear conception of what a virtue, such as courage will produce. Moreover, we cannot define courage simply as a state of the person that will produce a definite result. For Aristotle, courage is the character of the person who responds to feelings of fear and confidence in the appropriate way. Accordingly, we have a conception of courage as a state of character by which one performs courageous acts. Thus, unlike the products of an art, the value of actions in realizing virtues doesn't consist simply in the act, in simply what is done, but in its realizing a virtue. That is, it is realized in how it is done. In the case of the arts, it is quite possible for someone to evaluate an artistic ability by training. But in the case of ethical virtues, this is not so clear. If courageous acts are those which courageous people would perform, and if courage is the appropriate way of responding to fear and confidence, then to respond to fear and confidence appropriately cannot be realized by someone who has not acquired the virtue. Only the ones who have acquired the virtue can perform the related act. Similarly, we cannot behave respectfully towards others unless we have become the kind of person who feels respect. Aristotle says:

> Moreover, the factors involved in the arts and in the virtues are not the same. In the arts, excellence lies in the result itself, so that it is sufficient if it is of a certain kind. But in the case of the

> virtues an act is not performed justly or with self-control if the act itself is of a certain kind, but only if in addition the agent has certain characteristics as he performs it: first of all, he must know what he is doing; secondly, he must choose to act the way he does, and he must choose it for its own sake; and in the third place, the act must spring from a firm and unchangeable character.[32]

Given these considerations, it may be noted that to acquire the excellences of character, one must acquire practical knowledge; i.e., the ability to know what to do or feel in a given context. While performing virtuous activity, one must be in a certain condition. There are mainly three stages by which an action is performed by an agent. He must first have knowledge, then he must choose acts for their own sake according to this knowledge and thirdly, his actions must proceed from an unchangeable character. The value of virtuous activity, unlike that of the arts whose products have value in themselves, consists in realizing a state of character. For an action to be fair, the agent must know that what he does is fair, and he must choose to do it because it is fair. Indeed, his choice must flow from a firm character. Moreover, the genuinely virtuous person takes pleasure in his virtuous activity.

In acquiring virtues, one does not only acquire a certain know-how. One must also understand, desire, and enjoy virtuous activity for its own sake. Hence, habituation can lead to moral virtues which involve knowledge, feeling, and motivation. In the case of acquiring the habit of acting fairly toward others, one must first know what a fair act involves,

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[32] NE. 1105a30.

and secondly, one must desire fairness for its own sake. Finally, one must enjoy what one does. This is different from the arts, since the relevant habituation here must involve a certain concept such that the agent knows that what he is doing is fair. The agent should also know that this action is worth choosing because it is fair. Aristotle argues that the agent must know that this action is noble because it is fair. When the agent is just beginning to choose fair actions with the knowledge that they are noble, he will not choose them just for that reason. He will choose them for some other reasons too. However, through habituation over time he will come to enjoy choosing fair dealing for its own sake. He will come to enjoy it, because human beings naturally enjoy their distinctive feature. Hence human beings have the capacity to choose an action because it realizes a conception of value. Moreover, according to Aristotle, moral virtue concerns passions and actions which pertain to the practical situation. The practical problem involves our response to them. For, in our experience, we have feelings, such as fear, to which we can respond with virtue or with vice, with courage or with cowardice. In his conception of ethics, we are subject to various pleasures such that we can display the virtue of temperance. All Aristotelian virtues and vices need corresponding passions and emotions that characterize the human condition.

Regarding this point, we can understand Aristotle's theory of the mean with regard to virtue or excellence. He says that virtue is the mean constituted by a rational principle. A man of practical wisdom can

determine this virtuous mean. Virtuous choice, thus, takes place in accordance with a mean.[33] However, the notion of the mean is problematic in Aristotle's ethics since it is very difficult to understand its main implications. But it can be defined as a principle between two extremes of both emotion and action. For instance, "In feelings of fear and confidence courage is the mean...In regard to pleasures and pains the mean is self-control...In giving and taking money the mean is generosity...,"[34] and so on. However, there are some emotions and actions that cannot have extremes, and thus the theory of the mean cannot always be applied. Although Aristotle was aware of this fact, he did not propose any solution.[35] This can be interpreted in different ways, but my concern here is not to show the logical consistency of the theory of the mean. Rather, I intend to explicate the practicality of his moral theory.

Indeed, in understanding the meaning of moral virtue, identification of the mean is very important in Aristotle's moral philosophy, since, according to him, moral virtue is determined by the mean. And the mean is determined by the principle which guides a person of practical wisdom who both deliberates and is morally virtuous. The question about the mean has some epistemological and ontological significance. Epistemologically, the difficulty lies in how one can know that a character

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[33] NE, 1107a5., where he says; "We may thus conclude that virtue or excellence is a characteristic involving choice, and that it consists in observing the mean relative to us, a mean which is defined by a rational principle, such as a man of practical wisdom would used to determine it...Hence, in respect of its essence and the definition of its essential nature virtue is a mean, but in regard to goodness and excellence it is an extreme"

[34] NE, 1107b5-10.

[35] For a proposed resolution see, SHE. p. 65.

trait is the mean. The ontological lies in understanding what makes the mean a virtue. Aristotle says that the virtuous character is determined by a rational principle. Saying that the mean is determined by a rational principle means that virtue consists in having certain properties. However, this is not to say that virtue can be located just by finding a point between extremes. There is also the further question: what determines precise location of the mean between its extremes? According to Aristotle, it is determined by a rational principle; but this is not a sufficient response, since what makes a principle rational must be clarified. He is saying that the mean is determined by a principle known to the man of practical wisdom. There are two important points here. The first is that it is not enough that certain properties belong to the mean. On the contrary, it is necessary that these properties should be recognized by someone of practical wisdom. Secondly, we must consider what Aristotle means by practical wisdom. I will analyze this concept in the section addressing the relation between *phronesis* and philosophical ethics.

Moreover, Aristotle stresses both the words 'mean' and 'intermediate'. While the former refers to virtue as a state of character aiming at actions and responses to specific passions, emotions, and feelings; the latter refers to the aims themselves. He distinguishes the intermediate in the object from the intermediate relative to us. The latter is not informative when taken by itself. For Aristotle, the good life consists in excellent human activity, which involves character and an idea of what is

good and what is worth doing for its own sake. And this activity should be both enjoyable and satisfying because what the virtuous person does is, in fact, what he wants to do.

Aristotle points out the role of friendship as a virtue in a constitution of a good life, since, he argues, there is a strong relationship between friendship and virtuous activity. There are three sorts of friendship: friendship for mutual advantage, for mutual pleasure, and for mutual love. The most genuine one is the friendship for mutual love, which is distinctively a part of good life.[36] Friendship is one of the central objects of Aristotelian practical philosophy or ethics. However, it becomes the mediator between virtues and goods as 'shared virtues' rather than as 'loving friendship.' Thus, a life without having friendship cannot be imagined.[37]

On these considerations, I contend that Aristotelian moral philosophy provides a genuine sense of moral consciousness in life-world, since Aristotle is the originator of practical philosophy by reconstructing "the one-sidedness of the Socratic-Platonic "intellectualism" without abandoning its essential insights."[38] Aristotle explicated the fact that virtue

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[36] For the relationship between friendship and virtue, see, NE 1155a, where Aristotle says "Continuing in a sequence, the next subject which we shall have to discuss is friendship. For it is some sort of excellence or virtue, or involves virtue, and it is, moreover, most indispensable for life. No one would choose to live without friends, even if he had all other goods."

[37] I owe this remark to Gadamer. He explained these crucial points in PPE, p. 370. "...This makes it clear for the first time why a central object of Aristotelian practical thought is friendship, not as "loving friendship" but rather as the mediator between virtues and goods that exist only as *met' aretes* (shared virtues). The full life is unthinkable without the (constantly endangered) possession of friendship."

[38] PPE. p. 367.

cannot be only apprehended by knowledge; instead, the possibility of knowledge depends upon our way of life, which is shaped by the conditionedness of our ethical being or *ethos*. The essence of ethical knowledge lies, thus, in the concept of "the choice of what is better," which is related to Aristotle's analysis of *phronesis*. The concept of *phronesis* or prudence recognizes a mode of ethical being or *ethos* in ethical knowledge.[39]

[39] In PPE. p. 368., Gadamer says: "Aristotle succeeded in clarifying the essence of ethical knowledge so that in the concept of "the choice of what is better" he includes both the subjectivity of ethical consciousness, which judges cases of conflict, and the enduring substantiality of law and ethos, which determine its ethical knowledge and present choices. His analysis of *phronesis* recognizes in ethical knowledge a mode of ethical being itself that is accordingly not detached from the concrete totality that he named ethos."

CHAPTER 3

A CRITIQUE OF KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

There is a close relation between Kant's theory of knowledge and his moral theory in that casual relations are transcendental and applied to experience as pure concepts rather than being derived from it. That is, casual relations cannot be derived from experience. Moreover, he never derives scientific results, since arithmetic and Newtonian mechanics are taken for granted by him as science. What he tries to explain is how science is possible. A similar strategy is applied to the domain of morality. For Kant, the existence of an ordinary moral consciousness demonstrates the existence of moral being. Therefore, he looks for not the existence of morality, but to show the possibility of morality with our concepts and percepts. In plainer language, he does not argue for specific moral conclusions but simply tries to show how morality is possible.

His theory of knowledge is, thus, very important for understanding his moral theory,[40] both of which can be understood in relation to Kant's critical philosophy. His critical philosophy began as a critique of reason in

[40] See, SHE., p. 191., where MacIntyre argues; "Kant's theory of knowledge, even as so very briefly adumbrated, is important for his theory of morals...Kant takes the existence of arithmetic and that of Newtonian mechanics for granted and inquires what must be the case with our concepts for these sciences be possible. So also with morals, Kant takes the existence of any ordinary moral consciousness for granted".

its theoretical and practical uses in response to Hume's skeptical treatment of necessity and causation. The main goal of Kant's critical works is to understand and construct a basis for such ideas as necessity and law, even extending beyond what we can experience. In our experience, we have a coherent order structured by causal laws. However, on the other hand, as Hume showed, we have no adequate empirical basis for positing necessity and law, since, for Hume, the senses convey only sensations. Kant agrees with Hume that the foundation of the ideas of necessity and law is not empirical, since we cannot account for them in our experience. Furthermore, Kant says that they must have an a priori basis as the conditions of the possibility of experience. In the case of morality, he says that morality is autonomous.[41] That is to say, it is not instrumental in the sense of the utilitarian conception in which moral values are derived from nonmoral values and the moral values of an agent are extrinsic or external to one's character. However, for Kant, morality cannot be derived from nonmoral values, and it is intrinsic or essential to moral agency.

> The former view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates, as it were, my importance as an animal creature, which must

[41] Autonomy means that there cannot be a conception of the good which is prior to the moral law. If it is prior, then the principal of heteronomy will serve as an external source of authority. For the concept of autonomy, see, Kant, I. 1975. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Lewis W. Back. Indianapolis: The Boobs-Merrill Company. (Originally Published 1788). All references to this book are given in paragraph numbers of the translation of Lewis W. Back., hereafter, CPR. Kant says: "The *autonomy* of the will is the sole principle of all moral laws and of the duties conforming to them; *heteronomy* of choice, on the other hand, not only does not establish any obligation but is opposed to the principle of duty and to the morality of the will...The moral law expresses nothing else than the autonomy of pure practical reason, i.e., freedom." CPR, 33-34.

> give back to the planet (a mere speck in the universe) the matter from which it came, the matter which is for a little time provided with vital force, we know not how. The latter, on the contrary, infinitely raises my worth as that of an intelligence by my personality, in which the moral law reveals a life independent of all animality and even of the whole world of sense.[42]

In this sense, moral laws are laws of freedom arising from the moral agent's own autonomous self-regulation. Moreover, In Kant's moral philosophy, agents are not mere things or instruments, since they have a dignity that makes them worthy of respect. Thus, they cannot be treated as objects to be used merely for one's own ends. They must always be treated with respect for their nature as rational and moral agents. It is wrong merely to use people without respecting their dignity. That which makes human beings subject to the moral law is their having the will or capacity to act for reasons. This also entitles them to respect as beings having their own wills and own reasons for acting. That is to say, the capacity of being autonomous makes one subject to the moral law. Indeed, the moral law itself commands respect for that capacity. That is, we must respect the moral law in ourselves and in others.

In order to understand Kant's moral philosophy, the concepts that constitute its structure must be analyzed. They are 'pure practical reason', 'freedom', 'good will', 'duty', 'categorical imperative' and 'moral law'. Hence I will analyze and criticize these concepts one by one.

[42] CPR, 162

3.1 Pure Practical Reason

In order to exercise pure practical reason, Kant introduces a method of abstraction in comparison to the chemist's method of isolating the essential from the non-essential elements of something such that it becomes possible to demonstrate the purity of the former. "Like the chemist, he can at any time arrange an experiment with the practical reason of any man, in order to distinguish the moral (pure) determining ground from the empirical."[43] However, the method of abstraction in relation to the analogy of the chemist bears a weakness in itself. For, the chemist's method is clearly analytic, but the method in the *CPR* seems to be synthetic. This is a crucial point, since, for Kant, only a synthetic method can provide a priori practical knowledge as a priori practical laws.[44]

Kant argues that practical reason must be pure in order to construct a moral philosophy, being independent of all empirical conditions and principles such as happiness and pleasure. In this sense, practical reason is completely different from principles which have empirical content.[45]

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[43] For this expressions and for the analogy of the chemist, see, CPR, 92-93.

[44] For these outstanding remarks, see, Kant, I. 1950. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Trans. Carus. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril., p. 23. See also, CPR, 16., and *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*., 5.

[45] The word pure involves both 'cognitions' and 'faculties.' Cognitions are used in different two senses. "(*a*) cognitions which are independent of experience and (*b*) cognitions in which there is no empirical content...The moral law is pure in senses *a* and *b*; the concept of duty is pure only in sense *a*; practical reason is pure, or may be pure, in the sense that it is an a priori legislating faculty, giving the moral law." Beck, L. W. 1966. *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press., p. 40. 20n.

I submit that he is opposing the Aristotelian moral tradition which posits happiness as the ultimate goal of men. According to Kant, the purpose of practical philosophy could not simply be acquiring something empirical such as happiness; since, in that case, there would be no need for pure reason in ethics. Instead, desires would serve better for such a goal. But human beings have the power of reason, which has the aim of realizing its end without heteronymous principles such as happiness or virtue.

Now the questions which concern us are why practical reason must be pure, and how can it be pure? To clarify these questions, I need to define 'pure'. For Kant it means a priori or independent of experience. This implies, according to Kant, its being rational and necessary. While empirical knowledge is contingent, rational knowledge is a priori and therefore necessary. This general remarks about knowledge can be applied to moral philosophy with regard to 'pure practical reason'. Kant needs to demonstrate the possibility of pure practical reason.[46] That is, he is searching for whether there are a priori practical moral laws of nature. Accordingly, we are going to analyze whether practical reason can be pure and whether pure reason be practical. This is, in fact, one of the most serious problems in Kantian ethics, namely, whether reason can be both

[46] Kant makes it difficult to argue against the possibility of pure practical reason. He argues that it is impossible to prove that pure reason is impossible. He points this out by the following expressions: "Nothing worse could happen to all these labors, however, than that someone should make the unexpected discovery that there is and can be no a priori knowledge at all. But there is no danger of this. It would be like proving by reason that there is no such things as reason, for we can only say that we know something through reason when we know it even if it had not actually come within our experience." CPR, 12.

pure and practical. Pure reason is independent of all empirical conditions, but it determines actions under empirical conditions. This is possible because, while the categories of understanding are pure, their applications are empirical. "This strict universality of the rule is never a characteristic of empirical rules; they can acquire through induction only comparative universality, that is, extensive applicability."[47] Thus is the relation between pure reason and practical life.

Now, the question of how pure reason can determine action, how it can be practical, if it has no relation with the phenomenal world, must be answered by Kant's moral philosophy. I argue that reason is either pure or practical, it cannot be both pure and practical. This is the question that Kant could not resolve. Obviously, the problem stems from the structure of practical reason, specifically the dialectic between the empirical and rational aspects of practical reason. Kant tries to solve this problem by distinguishing the noumenal and phenomenal worlds. Action is phenomenal and hence empirical. It is also necessarily noumenal and thus pure. The moral worth of an action is determined by its intelligibility. Thus we could say that morality is based on the aspect of the dialectic of practical reason which involves the relation between inclinations and reason, subjectivity and universality, and so on.

These dialectical relations also involve a dualism concerning action. He does not think that action can be conceived wholly in empirical or phenomenal terms. He argues that although action is empirical and thus

[47] CPuR, A92-B124.

phenomenal, on the other hand it is also noumenal and thus pure. Therefore, morality is situated on the practical side of action. This solution is intelligible, if the dualism between noumenal and phenomenal world could be accepted. But, there is no reason to accept this dualism. Even if it is accepted simply as a methodological distinction, the distinction remains metaphysical in essence for Kant, so the problem remains unsolved. The relationship between the two worlds, and two conceptions of action, remains problematic. This dualism of action implies other dualisms, which are related to the idea of pure practical reason.

3.2 The Idea of Freedom

The concept of freedom, the possibility of which is necessary for pure practical reason, has a central place in Kantian moral philosophy. "The concept of freedom, in so far as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, is the keystone of the whole architecture of the system of pure reason and even of speculative reason."[48] Moreover, the idea of freedom seems to be the presupposition not only of Kant's deontological ethics but of all modern and contemporary moral philosophy.

According to Kant, freedom involves two different realms, the transcendental and the practical. Transcendental freedom expresses itself as unconditioned causality in the causally determined world. Practical

[48] CPR, 4.

freedom exists in the moral sphere, which is governed by universal and necessary moral laws. In this sense, practical freedom is established on the foundation of transcendental freedom. This is the basis of moral philosophy. However, we cannot find evidence to show that practical freedom is justified by the establishment of transcendental freedom.

The idea of freedom is a concept which is self-consistent and compatible with the laws of nature. A valid relationship between an idea and its object constitutes its objective reality. However, a mere idea does not need an object, and accordingly does not have an objective reality. Practical freedom establishes its reality in the actual and historical world of moral action. But transcendental freedom is a mere idea having no objective or practical reality.

In light of these considerations, I claim that the idea of practical freedom remains problematic since its objective reality is grounded by a mere idea of transcendental freedom which has no objective reality. On the contrary, Kant is, in fact, interested in the transcendental reality rather than the practical. He argues that the cosmological meaning of freedom accounts for spontaneity. Thus freedom becomes a pure transcendental idea in the sense of having no relation to experience.[49]

[49] For these remarks, see, CPuR. A533 B561., where he concludes "...Freedom, in this sense, is a pure transcendental idea, which in the first place, contains nothing borrowed from experience, and which, secondly, refers to an object that cannot be determined or given in any experience".

Hence, I claim that Kant did not demonstrate the objective reality of the idea of freedom. In order to resolve the third antinomy,[50] he needs to demonstrate that the idea of freedom is possible as an idea which is compatible with the laws of nature. He argues that we cannot know practical freedom theoretically. But we can think of it even though we cannot know it, since claiming to know an object we have to show its possibility. On the other hand, when we think an idea we don't have to show its possibility because it does not have to have a determinate object.[51] The idea of transcendental and practical freedom satisfies the conditions of being internally consistent and compatible with the laws of nature. The problem is that we cannot define practical freedom as a mere idea which has no objective reality. If it is a mere idea, then how do we decide that it is not just a fiction of our mind? Moreover, freedom is supposed to be noumenal and hence beyond knowledge. However, Kant claims that we can think of freedom by being aware of the moral law. And we can know the moral law if we can construct the principles of the will implying that only a universal law constitutes a moral command. This is because the moral law is the consciousness of pure practical reason and is identical with the positive concept of freedom. That is to say, there is a

[50] An antinomy is a set of two contradictory statements both of which can be proved validly. Kant describes the antinomy as "the most fortunate perplexity" into which pure reason falls. In the first Critique, there are four antinomy of pure reason. Here, I am dealing with the third antinomy which occurs between freedom and natural causation. The antinomy is resolved by applying the thesis to the relationship between noumena and phenomena, and restricting the antithesis only to phenomena. CPuR, A445B473.

[51] CPuR Bxxix-xxx.

reciprocal conceptual relation between the moral law and the idea of freedom.

He related the moral law to the concept of freedom, a concept having both negative and positive definitions. On the negative side, we are free in our actions in the sense that the will can work independently of external causes. However, the idea that the will is independent of external causes does not yet give us an adequate notion of rational self-determination; the will could be completely random and be independent of external causes without any rational self-determination. On the positive side, the agent acts for reasons in accordance with a conception of law. Here, the kind of law cannot be a law of natural causes and effects. Rather, the idea seems to be that one cannot understand his action as sensible and supported by reasons unless one understands it as sensible or reasonable for any person in a situation just like his. This is a universal law that one takes to apply to all rational beings. Thus, one can conceive of his will as rationally self-determined only if he takes it to be governed by universal principles. For this reason, freedom of the will consists in the capacity of rational agents to act on the categorical imperative, and we succeed in rationally determining our own wills only when we are guided by it. This is, in fact, what freedom is. We suppose that we are free in this sense since we cannot act without believing that we have reasons for acting as we do.

Kant relates freedom and the moral law by claiming that moral law is the fact of reason as a fact of consciousness. It is a fact which establishes itself and which is identical with the consciousness of freedom of the will. The concept of practical freedom derives from the fact of reason, and similarly the consciousness of the moral law supplies us with that of freedom. In this way, the concept of freedom is related to the concept of objective reality. Kant argues that reality is attributable to freedom which belongs to the will which is determined by pure reason. In this sense, reality is what corresponds to the reality of a concept, not to the existence of the object of the concept. To say that freedom has objective reality means that it is a real concept.

> The consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason, since one cannot ferret it out from antecedent data of reason, such as the consciousness of freedom (for this is not antecedently given), and since it forces itself upon us as a synthetic proposition a priori based on no pure or practical intuition. It would be analytic if the freedom of the will was presupposed, but for this, as a positive concept, an intellectual intuition would be needed, and here we cannot assume it. In order to regard this law without any misinterpretation as given, one must note that it is not an empirical fact but the sole fact of pure reason, which by it proclaims itself as originating law (*sic volo, sic jubeo*).[52]

I argue, thus, that freedom is possible only as a concept, not as a reality within the context of the life-world, i.e., phenomena. For this reason, I submit that Kant could not demonstrate the practical reality of practical freedom.

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[52] CPR, 31.

3.3. The Idea of Duty

In the *Groundwork*, Kant pursued a strategy similar to that which I have discussed regarding practical reason and the idea of freedom. He investigates the conditions that are necessary for the possibility of morality and for the moral notions, such as moral duty or obligation. He argues that a moral philosophy needs a common idea of duty and those laws of morality as well. And a law bears in itself the idea of absolute necessity in order to be valid morally and to be a ground of obligation.[53] Kant means two different things by "absolute necessity." Firstly, it means that when we ought to do something, we are, in fact, under some obligation as subjects and as a rational being. And secondly, what we morally ought to do is inescapable in the sense that while we ought to do something only as a means to some end, we cannot escape the force of the moral 'ought' or 'must' by simply giving up some relevant end. For example, it is not the case that we morally ought to keep our promise for some end such as happiness. Rather, we ought to keep our promise, even if we may lose some of our present ends. Moreover, if we morally must do something, then we must do it. No one can have adequate justification for not doing what morally should be done. That is, having adequate justification cannot be a condition for not doing the morally necessary action.

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[53] For our quotations from and references to Kant's work *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals* we will give the paragraph numbers from the translation of H.J. Paton (Kant, I. 1964. *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. Trans. H.J. Paton. New York: Harper and Row. (Originally Published 1785) by the abbreviation Groundwork.

For Kant, these claims are implicit in the idea of moral obligation, an idea which we recognize in our moral experience and thought. Suppose that we ought not to tell a particular lie since it would be wrong to do so. Do we think that being human demands this? A careful examination will show us that a person, who is in conditions like ours, must not lie. What 'a person' means in this context, for Kant, is just a moral agent or a rational being. Thus, Kant maintains that the idea of moral duty requires the idea of a law to which all rational agents are subject, and we share the idea that this is the case when we reflect on what we think. Moreover, Kant argues that, since the idea of moral duty contains the idea of a law or necessity to which all rational agents are subject, it cannot be empirically based. There can be no adequate justification for such an idea through experience, since the aforementioned idea is a priori.

Now, the question arises as to what is a rational being? What does Kant mean by the phrase 'rational being'? And what kind of a role does it play in Kantian moral philosophy? To answer these questions, I should explain those expressions from the *Groundwork* which pertain to the meaning of rational beings. According to him, all natural events occur in harmony with laws. Contrary to natural events, rational beings, since they have a will as practical reason, perform their action in accordance with their idea of laws which are their principles. Hence, if the will is to be determined by reason, then objectively necessary actions become

subjectively necessary too.[54] That is to say that only beings who have a will are subject to morality and that they can act on this principle. A human action differs from a natural event in that, while human actions involve the power of reason as will, natural events occur in accordance with natural laws. Thus, only a rational being can act for reasons. The reasons for which a rational being can act are, in fact, the universal principles which bind all rational subjects. Kant points out that the idea of moral duty is identical with the idea of a law by which all rational agents are bound. We have the problem, underlying all these claims, of whether there are such universal principles. We can put the question thus: are there universal principles that bind all rational agents? Kant's response is in the affirmative, but, on the other hand, we actualize the universal moral law through our autonomous practical reason.

3.4. The Idea of Good Will

According to Kant, there are two basic features of moral imperatives. The first is that moral imperatives are categorical, being grounded in the Categorical Imperative. This is the Kantian view of morality as the foundation of the moral point of view. The second is that free rational agents are committed to the categorical imperative by the use

[54] See, *Groundwork*. 413-37., where he argues, "Everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the power to act in accordance with his idea of laws--that is, in accordance with principles--and only so has he a will... that is to say, the will is then a power to choose only that which reason independently of inclination recognizes to be practically necessary, that is, to be good."

of pure practical reason. In this sense, a moral norm will necessarily bind all rational agents. That is to say, a rational agent is bound by the categorical imperative.

When analyzing Kant's statements about the notion of good will, we see that he distinguishes good will including a goodness of character, talents, and temperament, from gifts of fortune. There is a contrast between what an agent does by intention and what he confronts within the context of choice. We are free in our choice, whether good or not. In this sense, we both choose our action and the principles on which we act. Many good aspects of a choice need not be morally good, since being morally good requires that an action be accompanied by a good will. That is to say, no emotional or psychological accompaniment of the action determines its moral worth. Rather, it is unconditional and it does not depend on any psychological condition or context.

> It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and any other talents of the mind we may care to name, or courage, resolution, and constancy of purpose, as qualities of temperament, are without doubt good and desirable in many respects; but they can also be extremely bad and hurtful when the will is not good which has to make use of these gifts of nature, and which for this reason has the term 'character' applied to its peculiar quality.[55]

Obviously, goodness of will does not depend on any other condition. That is, it need not always realize good results, or even the

[55] *Groundwork*, 393-l.

results it intends, since its worth is not qualified by any external factor. "...It is good through its willing alone-that is, good in itself...even then it would still shine like a jewel for its own sake as something which has its full value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add to, nor subtract from, this value."[56] That is, it is good in itself, and nothing outside can determine its being good.

What about happiness? It cannot be a principle on which morality rests, since it is contextual and qualified by external conditions. In the Kantian moral philosophy, good will is, in fact, the supreme value of the rational moral agent. Good will is thus identified with practical reason. Accordingly, moral laws apply to all rational agents. Indeed, for Kant, good will essentially involves the character and activity of a rational moral agent. It is the only unconditioned moral value which a moral agent can realize. Thus, the goodness of good will is intrinsic and unconditioned. In conclusion, Kant argues that the good will is realized by its willing alone. That is to say, good will involves acting on a particular principle which is a maxim. And a moral agent having good will acts only in a way that is consistent with the moral law, a way resulting from the idea of duty. An action has the distinctive value of good will if the agent performs it as the result of duty, i.e., the agent acts according to a moral ought.

On the other hand, an act is not identical with the duty which morally compels the agent to perform it. A morally right action is to be performed only in accordance with duty and from the motive of duty. One

[56] *Groundwork*, 394-4.

can do the right thing for the wrong reasons. An action can be the right action but without having the distinctive values of good will and dutiful motivation. Thus, the distinctive value of the good will can only be realized by acting for certain reasons, only by doing what is right because it is right. To illustrate this, Kant asks us to consider, for instance, the case of the grocer and the inexperienced customer. If it is wrong to try to take advantage of inexperienced customers, a shopkeeper may pursue the morally correct policy for various reasons. If he does so only out of self-interest, then his action will not have genuine moral worth, since it does not express good will. If, however, the shopkeeper pursues this policy because he thinks it morally correct to do so, then his action has moral worth.

And, Kant says, not all morally worth actions are performed for the sake of duty alone. Many people think that some other motive is unqualifiedly good; for example, that acting from love alone, and not duty, can have distinctive moral value. For Kant, however, nothing except for duty, can play such a role, not even love or happiness. Kant insists that morally worthy action having a good will is performed from the motive of duty only. But why does Kant argue that actions motivated by love lack moral worth? The reason seems to be that such an agent would be acting to acquire pleasure for himself. And, in this case, the agent who acts directly to benefit others without the motive of duty would act on an inclination. According to Kant, the only motives available to an agent are

either those provided by momentary inclinations or those that arise through practical reason. But there are surely other possibilities. A person may care about others without feeling any inclination to help them, and wants to help anyway but not because of any thought that he ought to, or that it would be wrong not to behave so. Why should such an action not have moral worth? His answer is that it is, for instance, a duty to help others, but this should not be performed as the result of any self-interest or as a result of a natural inclination. Even in this case, an action which may be performed because of another motive, may be "in conformity of duty, but not from the motive of duty."[57] An action of this kind has no moral worth, although it may not contradict one's duty. Indeed, there is no necessary relation between what benefits a particular person in a particular case and what it is right for one to do in that case. Thus if one acts out of the desire to benefit, then performing the right thing will only take place by chance. But there is no guarantee that the person who acts out of desire will also do what is right. Kant argues that it is no accident that the agent who tries to do his duty directs his conduct toward what is right.

On the other hand, there is a difference between the agents who have moral beliefs which do not determine their actions, and those who lack any conception of what they morally ought to do. In the former case, it is unclear whether to credit the actions with moral worth, since the agents would deny their moral convictions. And in such a case they would have

[57] *Groundwork*, 389-10.

done the same thing even though they think that it was wrong. In the other case, it is problematic to decide whether the actions performed have moral value, since we cannot identify these beings as moral agents. For instance, acting from love has moral worth if it is a motive which is available to any rational agent. But its being morally good is not something that rational agents desire.

> "If such a man (who would in truth not be the worst product of nature) were not exactly fashioned by her to be a philanthropist, would he not still find in himself a source from which he might draw a worth far higher than any that a good-natured temperament can have? Assuredly he would."[58]

Here, there is a contrast between being defined by an external motive, and a source of motivation available to autonomous rational agents. Nothing in our conception of a rational moral person suggests that every such agent would have a motive of love such that loving would be morally good, assuming that moral goodness is not something which rational moral agents can desire. However, according to Kant, we have to reject this. While thinking on our own moral convictions, we will see that a moral obligation derives from a law that is applicable to all rational agents. And that any agent subject to morality has within him the capacity to be good, not just to do what is right but also to choose what is right for the right reasons by having a good will. Accordingly, for Kant, an autonomous moral agent would have good will. The features that make a rational agent

[58] *Groundwork*, 399-11.

subject to morality are the capacity to perform autonomous rational actions which are developed from the unqualified value of the good will.

3.5. The Categorical Imperative and the Moral Law

After these considerations about the good will and the conditions of moral actions, Kant aims to explain what the moral law is. He employs the categorical imperative as the basis of the good will and the moral worth of actions. This implies that if an action is the result of duty, then it has moral worth. An agent acts as a result of duty when what motivates him is what Kant calls "reverence" for the moral law, not anything external to the action. That is to say, the action should be performed out of respect for the law. Clearly, he argues that the moral worth of an action depends on the idea of the law in itself; thus it does not depend on any external factor including its consequences.[59]

As I have mentioned, Kant is stressing the idea of law that makes an action morally valid. But we need to understand what this law is and how we acquire it. Accordingly, he puts the question as, "But what kind of law can this be, the thought of which, even without regard to the results expected from it, has to determine the will if this is to be called good

[59] *Groundwork*, 401-16, where he says: "Thus the moral worth of an action does not depend on the result expected from it, and so too does not depend on any principle of action that needs to borrow its motive from this expected result...Therefore nothing but the idea of the law in itself, which admittedly is present only in a rational being...can constitute that pre-eminent good which we call moral, a good which is already present in the person acting on this idea and has not to be awaited merely from the result."

absolutely and without qualification?"[60] He answers this question by appealing to the view that actions must be in accordance with universal law as such, and every rational being must adopt a maxim such that it could become a universal law. From this, we understand that, as mentioned earlier, the principle of the will cannot be derived from any consequence of the action. This is the ground of Kant's moral philosophy. But what is the motive that serves as the principle of the will? It is, he argues, respect for the moral law. Herein the question is what is this law and what kind of a law is it? Kant, however, rejects the idea that we obtain through reason a set of specific moral laws prescribing particular actions. Instead, the thing that determines the will is the idea of universal law itself. That is to say, reason supplies us with neither a list of laws nor the content of the law. What reason provides is only the form of the law. And, accordingly, our will is determined by the idea of law when we determine ourselves to act on principles which can be universal laws. Then, a person having good will shall determine principles which are consistent with the categorical imperative. Accordingly, one can realize the moral good as unqualified and the only good worthy of respect. An agent will act in accordance with respect for the moral law when he determines himself by the categorical imperative. Therefore, the categorical imperative is the moral law to which any rational person is subject, and a rational person must act only on maxims he can will as universal law. Moreover, Kant argues that we are governed by a moral idea. However, that is not to say

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[60] *Groundwork*, 402-17.

that everybody has a formulation of the categorical imperative in his or her heads. On the contrary, we recognize the moral bindingness of this principle when it is presented to us and when we implicitly reason with it. According to his moral thought, practical reason involves the pattern of practical thought.

On the other hand, in order to understand the idea of moral law, we should give an account of the distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives in Kant's philosophy. He argues as follows:

> All imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. Hypothetical imperatives declare a possible action to be practically necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wills. A categorical imperative would be one which represented an action as objectively necessary in itself apart from its relation to a further end.[61]

By declaring moral imperatives categorical, Kant distinguished them from hypothetical imperatives. As Kant mentioned above, hypothetical imperatives indicate an action as practically necessary in order to achieve someone's aim as a consequence. However, a hypothetical imperative is not just a conditional 'ought'. It is a categorical imperative; if you have promised to help someone, then you ought to do it. In this sense, a hypothetical imperative indicates that an action ought to be performed, as one must do. In willing an end, we will have some means to achieve it. If, for instance, the only means to achieve A is B, then it is necessary for one, while willing A, to will B also. That is to say, if one is not prepared to

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[61] *Groundwork*, 414-39.

do B, then he cannot will A. But a hypothetical imperative, unlike a categorical imperative, does not imply that one ought to do B, even if one wants to do A. This means that one cannot will both A and not will B, even though one can satisfy that demand of his without willing A as an end. Categorical imperatives express what one ought to do under certain conditions. Thus, unlike a merely hypothetical imperative, one can conclude from them that if the conditions obtain, one really ought to do so. What Kant means by the absolute necessity is an essential component of our ordinary idea of moral duty or obligation. Moral oughts are categorical imperatives. However, categorical imperatives cannot tell us what to do, rather they tell us what not to do.

> The typical examples of alleged categorical imperatives given by Kant tell us what *not* to do; not to break promises, tell lies, commit suicide, and so on. But as to what activities we ought to perform, what ends we should pursue, the categorical imperative seems to be silent.[62]

My conclusion is that moral imperatives are categorical, while conditional imperatives are merely hypothetical. The possibility of a categorical imperative requires a possible end which is essential to practical reason. This possible end is the rational nature which is unique to humanity. And, thus, rational nature has to be an end in itself in that it would have to be its own end. Categorical imperatives exist only if rational nature is an end in itself. Similarly, there can be moral imperatives only if

[62] SHE.

rational nature is an end in itself. Therefore, there is a moral law only if it requires that persons respect rational nature as such. Kant points this out as follows:

> Suppose, however, there were something whose existence in itself has an absolute value, something which as an end in itself could be a ground of determinate laws; then in it, and in it alone, would there be the ground of a possible categorical imperative-that is of a practical law.
> Now I say that man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means for arbitrary use by this or that will.
> If then there is to be a supreme practical principle and a categorical imperative, it must be such that from the idea of something which is necessarily an end for every one because it is an end in itself it forms an objective principle of the will and consequently can serve as a practical law. The ground of this principle is: Rational nature exists as an end in itself. This is the way in which a man necessarily conceives his own existence: it is therefore so far a subjective principle of human actions. But it is also the way in which every other rational being conceives his existence on the same rational ground which is valid also for me; hence it is at the same time an objective principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws for the will.[63]

Respecting the rational nature of persons requires respect for the capacity of all persons to act on their own principles or reasons. That is what Kant calls practical reason. We could derive from Kant's examples that it is wrong to make a deceptive promise to another to get a benefit from him since this treats his will as a mere instrument. Using a man for one's own purposes by such a promise cannot be in accordance with one's way of behaving to other's. But does this mean that we cannot

[63] *Groundwork*, 428-65, 429-67.

behave towards other people in ways that do not advance their ends also? In what sense can others share our ends? Thus we can say that we treat others with respect for their rational nature, their capacity to act on principles. The maxims or principles on which we act are ones that others would rationally will to be universal law.

But there are problems with this interpretation. Firstly, is there any reason to think that there are principles on which it would be rational for everyone to will all persons to act? If not, we may face the problem that there are insoluble moral dilemmas, since the agent is also a person who respects his own rational nature. And if there are conflicts between what he rationally wills and what others would rationally will as universal principles, then he may act wrongly whatever principle he acts on. Secondly, Kant is often interpreted as saying that persons can never be used as mere means under any condition. So, it would be wrong to treat someone merely as an instrument even for an end which is good. On this point, I am in agreement with Kant. This is related to the formula of the end in itself, according to which we must always treat rational nature as an end and never simply as a means both in our own person and in that of others. Since the will is distinctive of rational beings, we may take this as respect for the will of others. However, Kant does not say we may never act contrary to someone's will. Wills may conflict. It is reasonable to interpret Kant as requiring persons always to respect others as capable of

acting on principles, and hence, to be prepared to constrain one's actions towards others if they could not will one's maxim to be universal law.

By the formula of autonomy, Kant suggests that a person of good will would be guided by the categorical imperative. But he rejects the idea that the moral law has a metaphysical reality independent of practical reason. In this respect, Kant's view of reason is quite different from Plato's. The moral law is not something that has an independent metaphysical existence which reason directly intuits. He is rejecting this Platonic picture in the formula of autonomy, since the function of the moral law is not simply to impose an external norm on rational agents. Rather, an agent is subject to the moral law since he is, in a sense, the originator of it. And, in addition, he is morally bound to act in accordance with a given social norm or legal statute because a law arises from his own social condition. According to the first formulation, the formula of universal law, we act only on maxims that we could will to be universal law. And the second formulation, the formula of autonomy, requires that we act in a way that is compatible with the idea that other agents are also rational persons.

Now I must explain what Kant understands by the notion of maxims. According to him, all maxims can be formulated in three ways. These are as follows:

1. Formal: the formula of universal law or the law of nature which is expressed as "Maxims must be chosen as if they had to hold as universal

laws of nature." What Kant means is that you act only on a maxim if you could will that everyone act on that maxim. This does not mean that you would be willing that everyone do that specific action. By the word 'maxim,' Kant means a principle that includes the agent's motive or reason for acting. In the case of intentional acts, one acts because of various features of the situation that constitute one's reason for acting.

2. Material: the formula of the end in itself which is expressed as "A rational being, as by his very nature an end and consequently an end in himself, must serve for every maxim as a condition limiting all merely relative and arbitrary ends." The crucial point is whether we can will that the world be such that everyone is motivated in the same way in the same situations. Accordingly, we first consider what maxim or reason motivates the proposed action. Secondly, whether we can will the maxim as one on which everyone acts. If we cannot will that, then we ought not to act on it and we must find some other maxim.

3. A complete determination: the formula of the kingdom of ends which is expressed as "All maxims as proceeding from our own making of law ought to harmonies with a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature."[64] There are two kinds of case where one could not will that everyone act on one's maxim. The first is the one in which there cannot be a world where one acts on the maxim because the act would be destructive of one's continuing ability to act so. The second is the one in which one can conceive of a world in which everyone acts on the maxim,

[64] *Groundwork*, 436-80-81.

but one cannot consistently or rationally will such a world. In both cases, the maxim violates the categorical imperative. And consequently, according to Kant, it would be wrong to act on a maxim of either kind.

In order to clarify these conditions, Kant gives some examples. In the second example, a person, in order to meet some of his needs, is going to borrow money even though he knows that he cannot pay it back. In such a case, in order to get the money, he makes a promise that he repays the money. However, he must consider whether he could will a world in which everyone is motivated in the same way. Kant claims that he cannot, since it is only possible for people to promise if there is enough trust for others to believe that the person promising intends to keep his promise. But a world in which everyone acted on this maxim would be a world where such trust would not exist. Therefore, it is impossible to think of a world where everybody acts on this maxim. This example also illustrates the idea of a contradiction in will. The person, in this example, uses the trust of others and the practice of promising for his own ends by making a false promise. But can these ends be realized by one's making such promises? If not, then he cannot rationally will both such a world and that his own ends be realized by making the false promise. Therefore, it is wrong for him to make a false promise to get an advantage.

Consequently, Kant's moral philosophy contains in itself many unsolved problems. Neither the idea of transcendental freedom nor that of moral law could provide a ground for the reconstruction of philosophical

ethics. Kant's ethics cannot give an account of the idea of the good because of its formalistic structure. Moreover, Kantian ethics ignores the practical conditions of human relationships in a good life including happiness, friendship, emotions and so on. And since moral action and practical reason are practically determined through history and life experience, Kant's deontology cannot contribute much for the construction of a practical philosophy or philosophical ethics. Thus, they cannot be constructed with pure and transcendental conceptions alone, such as Kant's transcendental and theoretical abstractions. That is to say, although a philosophical ethics cannot be transcendental, it is still possible to provide a rational reconstruction of it. This possibility requires philosophical hermeneutics, including language, tradition, *phronesis* and the notion of effective historical consciousness.

CHAPTER 4

HERMENEUTICS AND ETHICS

I contend that moral philosophy is possible without the Kantian formulation of transcendental philosophy. An alternative can be found in contemporary philosophy. This alternative is hermeneutics, by means of which we gain a new concept of practical reason as historical, a new method for ethics as dialectical, and a new concept of human action and freedom as finite. Throughout these considerations, I am going to express the role of hermeneutics in the constitution of philosophical ethics. To perform this task, the meaning of hermeneutics and its history will be explained. Indeed, understanding the transition from transcendental philosophy to hermeneutics is necessary for grasping a hermeneutic conception of ethics. In the development of hermeneutics, Kant stands as a major figure. Thus, for limiting transcendental philosophy, the concept of history, a key notion in understanding the alternative to transcendental consciousness, is widely used in hermeneutics. For the realization of such a goal, Gadamer has developed a philosophical, historical consciousness under the name of 'philosophical hermeneutics.'

But what is hermeneutics? How is it related to philosophy? It can be defined as the science or art of interpretation. It could also be described as "the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts. So the key idea will be the realization of discourse as a text."[65] In a sense, the history of hermeneutics begins with philosophy itself although the Latin word *hermeneutica* had been used in the seventeenth century. Plato and Aristotle used the word 'interpretation' almost synonymously with hermeneutics, but not in a systematic way.[66] But modern hermeneutics has been dominated by two questions. The first one concerns enlarging the context of hermeneutics by expanding 'regional' into 'general' hermeneutics. The second question shows that hermeneutics is not only general but 'fundamental' by the movement of 'radicalization,' which locates it in the written language, which is the first 'locus of interpretation.' Therefore, language has a privileged place in understanding hermeneutics. In language, we use words with multiple meanings; that is, words which exhibit 'polysemy,' a term expressing one of the most important characteristic of language. Due to polysemy, we face the question of how to grasp a definite meaning for a word or a message while talking with someone, since the meaning of a word may

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[65] Ricoeur, Paul. 1981. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.* Trans. and ed. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 43., hereafter, HHS.

[66] For a comprehensive consideration; see, Grondin, Jean. *Introduction to. Philosophical Hermeneutics.* p. 21., hereafter, IPH, where he says: "...the title of Aristotle's logical and semantic treatise *Peri hermeneias*-whose subject is propositions (logos apophantikos) that can be either true or false-was consistently translated in Latin as *De interpretatione*...That term (hermeneutica), however, is merely the Latinized rendition of the word hermeneutike, which is first to be met with in the Platonic corpus (*Politikos* 260d11, *Epinomis* 975c6, and *Definitiones* 414d4)."

change as the context changes. Hence, in the act of grasping a stable meaning for a given word or message, the act of interpretation comes to the fore. This is, in fact, the interplay of question and answer, in which the players try to acquire unambiguous messages from words having polysemic structure.

> What is important for the present discussion is that the polysemy of words calls forth as its counterpart the selective role of contexts for determining the current value which words assume in a determinate message, addressed by a definite speaker to a hearer placed in a particular situation. Sensitivity to context is the necessary complement and ineluctable counterpart of polysemy. But the use of contexts, involves, in turn, an activity of discernment which is exercised in the concrete exchange of messages between interlocutors, and which is modeled on the interplay of question and answer. This activity of discernment is properly called interpretation.[67]

Indeed, from the Greeks to our day, hermeneutics has been used as the art of interpretation, addressing literary, biblical and legal texts when they became the subject of criticism during the Renaissance and the Reformation. For these reasons, hermeneutics was developed and used to interpret the literal and religious texts without misunderstanding. In this era, the classical texts are in danger of being misunderstood because they originated in different cultures with different languages. In order to overcome this difficulty, hermeneutics was introduced as a theory of interpretation and as a strategy for proper understanding of the text. Both the Protestant and Catholic theologians appealed to the Bible for justifying

[67] HHS, p. 44.

their positions by employing the hermeneutic theory. Furthermore, there has been another kind of hermeneutics; namely, legal hermeneutics. While appealing to the Roman Law, European societies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used a unique strategy which is the art of interpretation or hermeneutics. In this sense, hermeneutics was conceived as instrumental in understanding and adopting some new developments, such as the rise of capitalism, including concepts of property, individual, nation-state and the like. Therefore, it could be consistently argued that modern hermeneutics, in a sense, begins with the Enlightenment in which the use of hermeneutics was rationalistic and challenged tradition. On the other hand, the conception of hermeneutics in this era bears a dogmatic content having as its aim the discovery of the fixed and the constant meaning of a given text. However, Schleiermacher formulated a general theory of interpretation in order to overcome that dogmatic structure. In order to perform this task, he tried to find a rational and critical conception of hermeneutics as a response to its Enlightenment conception.

So Schleiermacher's notion of hermeneutics involves concepts of reason and understanding that differ from how they were used in Kantian philosophy. Although he constructs hermeneutics as the opposite of Kant's transcendental philosophy, Kant's philosophy was a source of inspiration for him and Dilthey who introduced hermeneutics as the critique of historical reason. Besides these figures, Heidegger conceived hermeneutics as the work of historical understanding and exposition of

Dasein, which is, for him, the main question of philosophical investigation. The concept of historicity identifies the historical dimension of hermeneutics which Gadamer articulated more systematically to resolve the problem of historical knowledge. Within this articulation of hermeneutics, Gadamer paid attention to the concepts of practice and effective historical consciousness which must be realized both historically and ontologically. Now, in order to understand hermeneutics in relation to ethics more comprehensively and systematically, I will try to elucidate its historical development with its main representatives, namely, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer.

4.1. Schleiermacher and Romantic Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics was developed along two different interpretative traditions: the philology of classical texts of Greco-Latin antiquity, and the exegesis of sacred texts of the Old and New Testaments. In these two traditions, the activity of interpretation becomes fundamental in that the interpreter must find the particular meaning and the rules that govern a textual understanding. The problem of understanding of texts has an affinity with Kantian philosophy in terms of the relation between knowledge and being.

Thus, as I have already mentioned, there are strong ties between hermeneutics and Kantian philosophy which determine the limits and

possibility of science by distinguishing it from metaphysics. The conception of hermeneutics, which is traditionally conceived as the art of interpreting classical texts, begins to change as a result of Kant's definition of understanding as a cognitive faculty which operates with a priori categories. However, hermeneutic understanding is not based on the categories in the Kantian sense, rather, it is based on rules which are derived from experience. In this sense, hermeneutics remains more empirical than an a priori conception of knowledge and truth, since it is derived from texts and traditions rather than sensible intuitions or cognitive processes. The first similarity between Kant's critical philosophy and hermeneutic theory is based on Schleiermacher's intention to construct hermeneutics as critical, just as Kantian thinking and the Enlightenment are critical. Thus, he begins by rejecting the traditional form of hermeneutics which has a dogmatic content. However, there is a dilemma here since while he gives some objection to the traditional type of hermeneutics, on the other hand, as a theologian, he is concerned with the religious traditions through which hermeneutics was transmitted. Thus, his aim was not to destroy the traditions themselves, but, rather, to elucidate the moral and philosophical traditions. The second similarity is that, like Kant's distinction between science and metaphysics, Schleiermacher makes a separation between religion and metaphysics. By doing so, he becomes the Kant of Protestant theology but, on the other hand, he rejects the Enlightenment's rationalistic perception of religion, as

represented by Kant's critique of religion. In his defense of religion, he criticized Kant's idea of experience and promoted the concept of feeling (*Gefühl*) as the ground of reasoning. Indeed, his aim was to reveal religion's significance in a revolutionized worldview.

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics has two phases. One of them comes from romantic philosophy by which the process of creation becomes possible. The second phase was constituted in relation to the critical philosophy which constitutes the universal rules of understanding. Romantic hermeneutics can be summed up in the expression 'to understand an author as well as, and even better than, he understands himself.'[68] And critical hermeneutics is explained as 'there is hermeneutics where there is misunderstanding.'[69] Accordingly, there are two forms of interpretation in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, which are grammatical and technical or psychological. The former is founded on the characteristics of discourse including the common characteristics of a culture. That is to say, the grammatical mode of interpretation involves the relation between the text and the language in which it is expressed. The latter is related to the genius, to what the writer intends to say.

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[68] See, Schleiermacher, F. 1998. *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Trans. and Ed. Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., hereafter, HC, p.33., where he says: "In the assertion that we must become conscious of the language area as opposed to the other organic parts of the utterance also lies the fact that we understand the author better than he does himself."

[69] Schleiermacher makes this point in HC, p. 227., by the following expressions: "Hermeneutics rests on the fact of the non-understanding of discourse: taken in its most general sense, including misunderstanding in the mother tongue and in everyday life."

> *Understanding is only a being-in-one-another of these two moments (of the grammatical and psychological).*
> 1. The utterance is not even understood as an act (tatsache) of the mind if it is not understood as a linguistic designation, because the innateness of language modifies the mind.
> 2. The utterance is also not understood as a modification of language if it is not also understood as an act of the mind, because the ground of all influence of the individual lies in the mind, which itself develops by utterance.[70]

That is, we are concerned with the relation between the text and the thoughts of the author. There are two separate levels of psychological interpretation. While the first is purely psychological in that the author's original idea is investigated, the second is technical and concerned with the structure of expression.

> But first we must still draw attention to another difference, namely to the difference between the indeterminate, fluid train of thoughts and the completed structure of thoughts. In the first there is, as in a river, an indeterminate transition from one thought to another, without necessary connection. In the second, in completed utterance, there is a determinate aim to which everything relates, one thought determines the other with necessity, and if the aim is achieved the sequence has an end. In the first case the individual, the purely psychological predominates, in the second the consciousness of a specific progress towards a goal predominates, the result is intentional, methodical, technical. The hermeneutic task accordingly splits on this side into the *purely psychological* and the *technical.*[71]

Accordingly, hermeneutics is concerned with understanding the composition of the text and the intention of the author. But the process of

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[70] HC, p. 9. For a comparison between the grammatical and psychological interpretation, see, pp. 94-97.

[71] HC, pp. 101-102.

interpretation is never complete, because in order to understand the grammatical level, we must have total knowledge of the language in which the text expressed. Similarly, to understand the psychological level, the reader should have complete knowledge about the author. Therefore, there is an interplay between the levels of hermeneutics, an interplay without rules. This is the reason why hermeneutics is called an art of interpretation rather than a science.[72]

However, it is impossible to practice the grammatical and psychological forms of interpretation simultaneously, since in the case of focusing on the common language, the writer disappears; and similarly, in the act of understanding, so does the intention of the writer, as a result of which we lose the language. This is the conflict between the common and the peculiar. The common phase of interpretation provides a sense of objectivity, because meaning is derived from linguistic characteristics, not from the author. On the other hand, the peculiar phase involves individuality, since language is conceived as an instrument that the individual uses.

Both the grammatical and psychological levels have comparative and divinatory methods. But, while the grammatical level is more comparative, the psychological level is more divinatory.

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[72] These remarks are made by Grondin in IPH. p. 69 by the following expressions: "Language can be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, any given utterance to be understood is an instance of the overall usage of a given language community. That is, every expression follows a prescribed syntax or pattern of usage and is to that extent supra-individual. The aspect of hermeneutics concerned with this aspect of language Schleiermacher calls "the grammatical side" of interpretation...hermeneutics must also pay attention to the other side of interpretation: the individual. "Technical" interpretation is the term Schleiermacher gives to this second aspect of understanding."

> *For the whole procedure there are, from the beginning, two methods, the divinatory and the comparative, which, though, because they refer back to each other, also may not be separated from each other.*
> The *divinatory* method is the one in which one, so to speak, transforms oneself into the other person and tries to understand the individual element directly. The *comparative* method first of all posits the person to be understood as something universal and then finds the individual aspect by comparison with other things under the same universal.[73]

In this sense, the author of a text is a unique individual, just as the text is. The interpreter is, similarly, unique and thus divines the uniqueness of the text.[74] However, this uniqueness can be gained by comparing the author and his text to other authors and their texts, which are composed in the same period and in the same language. Thus, the interpretation of a text is the combination of these methods. It is the interplay between the grammatical and psychological modes of interpretation. However, in his later works, Schleiermacher gives superiority to the psychological or technical interpretation, which is not only restricted to the intention of the author. The core idea of this kind of interpretation lies within the words 'comparison' and 'contrast.' That is to say, the individuality of a text can be comprehended in the activity of comparison. In this sense, psychological interpretation exceeds what the

[73] HC, pp. 92-93.

[74] The term "divination" does not mean "a sacred gift", it rather implies a "process of guessing". However, divination has two senses; namely objectively and subjectively divinatory. Schleiermacher points this point out in HC, p. 23., as follows: "Objectively divinatory means to conjecture how the utterance itself will become a point of development for the language...Subjectively divinatory means to conjecture how the thoughts contained in the mind will continue to have an effect in and on the utterer. See also in IPH, p. 71.

author intended to say, since the activity of comparison bears a critical consideration within which individuality can be realized. However, it is not possible to grasp individuality directly, rather, its difference can be actualized in comparison with others.[75]

Clearly, for Schleiermacher, the goal of hermeneutics is to grasp the individuality of the interpreted text. In this sense, every text is unique, like the uniqueness of individual persons, which can be understood by the psychological mode of interpretation in its uniqueness. Hence, the idea of individuality becomes the central concept in his writings, through which he tries to explain how a unique individual could understand a unique text of a unique author in a general hermeneutic theory.

As mentioned earlier, he introduced two different methods which are comparative and divinatory, for the comprehension of an individual text. However, since in comparison, generalities are always coming into existence, the comparative method cannot give true individuality. It can be grasped by the divinatory (intuitive) method. He argues, on the other hand, that the task of grammatical knowledge is to point out the meaning of a word by reference to the whole context of a given language. On the grammatical level, we understand the unique meaning of the words that the author uses. This can be generalized to the sentences in the text, and even to the text itself. Accordingly, the aim is to understand the individuality of the author's language. However, since the divinatory method is incomplete in itself, Schleiermacher concluded that both

[75] HHS, p. 47.

methods are necessary for the art of interpretation. Despite this, the divinatory method is considered superior, since it opens the way to individuality which identifies the relation between the grammatical and psychological modes of interpretation. Individuality is essential for the psychological mode, which is divided into purely psychological and technical types. In the purely psychological mode of interpretation, we seek to discover the individuality of the author. More obviously, we are trying to find the motive that makes the author want to communicate. On the other hand, the goal of technical interpretation is to discover how the individuality is expressed through the text. That is, we are trying to understand the style and composition of the text. Throughout this process, our goal is to understand the uniqueness of the text by taking its style and composition into consideration. Moreover, the ultimate goal of interpretation is to grasp the individuality of the author who is the source of that uniqueness. The grammatical mode of interpretation concerns language in a particular sense, not as an abstract or general concept. The text is taken as a unity in relation to the author. Schleiermacher argues that in the grammatical interpretation, the individual is a mere organ of language, while in the psychological interpretation the language is a mere organ of the individual; whereas, the individual seems to have priority over the language in his hermeneutics.

Given these considerations, the psychological mode of interpretation is more crucial than the grammatical one. The reason for

this is that language is not the central motive in the act of interpretation. A text, which is the subject of interpretation, is the expression of the thought of an individual. Therefore, the text, which is composed by the individual, must be understood in terms of his individuality. And similarly, the individual is to be understood in terms of his uniqueness.

The psychological character of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics bears a weakness resulting from the metaphysics of individuality. Interpretation is, for him, the act of reconstruction in which the interpreter puts himself in the position of the author. Gadamer explains this as follows:

> Isolating understanding in this way, however, means that the structure of thought we are trying to understand as an utterance or as a text is not to be understood in terms of its subject matter but as an aesthetic construct, as a work of art or "artistic thought." If we keep this in mind, we will understand why what is at issue is not a relation to the subject matter (Schleiermacher's "being"). Schleiermacher is following Kant's definition of the aesthetic when he says, "artistic thought can be differentiated only greater or lesser pleasure" and is "properly only the momentaneous act of the subject"... What is to be understood here is not a shared thought about some subject matter, but individual thought that by its very nature is a free construct and the free expression of an individual being.[76]

Throughout this passage, Gadamer constructs a relation between Kant's aesthetic judgments and Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. He argues that Kant already subjectivized aesthetics because he stressed

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[76] For our quotations from and references to Gadamer's work *Truth and Method*, we will give the page numbers from the translation of Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Gadamer, Hans George. 1991. *Truth and Method*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Crossroad (Originally published Germany 1960)), by the abbreviation TM. pp. 187-188.

genius and its cognitive faculties in the constitution of aesthetic judgment. Schleiermacher has subjectivized and psychologized hermeneutics in the same manner, since he introduces interpretation as the act of reconstruction performed by the free act of the author. Thus, for Gadamer, this conception of hermeneutics cannot be an alternative to Kantian transcendental philosophy. It is obvious that Schleiermacher gives priority to the psychological mode of interpretation over the grammatical one. This structure of interpretation cannot be critical and rational. The reason for this is that his hermeneutic conception excludes historical situations, which is the result of the Kantian idea that an artwork or a text is created as a free production. This implies that a text comes into existence in the sense that no historical determinant plays any role. This is the point where hermeneutics coincides with Kantian transcendental philosophy, even though its aim was to provide an alternative to that philosophy.

I intend to evaluate Schleiermacher's hermeneutics in relation to his moral philosophy to see what it can contribute to a hermeneutic reconstruction of moral reflection, which is my ultimate goal here. It is alleged that just as he could not establish a systematic hermeneutic theory, he could neither constitute a systematic moral theory. His first philosophical book on ethics is *Sketch of a Critique of Previous Ethical Theories (1803)* in which he analyzed and criticized ethical theories including those of Aristotle, Kant and others. He argues that, while practical reason guides ethical activity, it cannot be pure in the Kantian

sense, since reason is always found in nature. That is, it is not pure reason but natural reason that guides human action in the sphere of moral being. In this sense, ethics involves a unity of reason and nature such that it comprehends human actions. Accordingly, ethics, which involves a combination of the ideal and the real, is related to physics. Here, in ethics, the active agent is the ideal which guides the real. Thus, ethics becomes the representation of human beings as finite entities guided by the power of reason. On the other hand, in physics, nature is the active agent on which the ideal acts. And similarly, physics becomes the representation of finite being guided by the power of nature. Herein, practical reason, for Schleiermacher, becomes significant in the form of individuality under the conditions of space and time.

Thus, he argues against the Kantian notion that pure practical reason cannot contribute to the ultimate unity between reason and nature. Instead, he claims that the so-called unity can be achieved through action only. Moreover, he says that there is a contradiction in Kant's ethics. While he mentions the idea of the unity of virtue and happiness, on the other hand, he ignores moral life in the moral existence of human beings by employing a distinction between the empirical and rational selves. Hence, Schleiermacher says that a moral philosophy can be constructed on the dialectical relationship between ethics and physics, ideal and real, soul and body, self and community, etc. Ethical action is performed through these relations even though its goal is to overcome such

polarities. That is why I can say that he is a Platonist in terms of understanding the idea of the good, since, like Plato, he foresees that by the interaction of these polarities, human action can arrive at the speculative idea of the highest good which is the organic togetherness of the totality of human goods. This conception of good has been stressed by the theory of duty and virtue. While the former is identified as the critical side of ethics, and concerns the actualization of ethical action and the goods, the latter expresses the technical side of ethics in Schleiermacher's sense. In my conception of philosophical ethics, there is a combination of these theories, including that of goods, virtue and duty, into a unified theory of ethical action. Therefore, I can say that there is a concrete ethical theory in Schleiermacher, because his ethics has empirical and historical constituents as well as dialectical and critical ones. Furthermore, Schleiermacher's concept of ethics is derived from hermeneutics as dialogical or dialectical, because of the relationships between the grammatical and the psychological, the divinatory and the comparative, interactions in the constitution of understanding. Indeed, his ethics consists of such unions as reason and nature, ethics and physics, and so on. However, Schleiermacher conceives the unisons between being and thought, and language and thought, as the facts of reason. This seems more dogmatic and thus excludes a dialectical consideration of the idea of the good. Therefore, his ethics does not make too many

contributions to resolving the problems we face in Kantian transcendental philosophy.

4.2. Dilthey and Historicism

The question of historical interconnection precedes that of understanding a text in the past, since the coherence of history comes before that of the text. In this sense, history is the great document of mankind, and it is the expression of life. This is what motivates Dilthey to connect hermeneutics with history. He formulates his ideas on the assumption of a total rejection of Hegelianism. Experimental knowledge is considered to be more valuable. In this historical period, intellectuals tried to construct the scientific dimension of historical knowledge in comparison with the natural sciences. In this context, Dilthey tried to develop a methodology and epistemology for the human sciences which have affinities with those of natural science. Obviously, his main aim was to provide a philosophical foundation for the human sciences, what he calls *Geisteswissenschaften*. He argues that the human sciences are distinct from the natural sciences because of the different subject-matters involved. While the natural sciences study nature which is their object of knowledge, the subject-matter of human studies is quite different; namely, humanity as a historical and social being. And, while the natural sciences aim at perceiving external reality through observation and experiment in

the external world, the human studies try to apprehend internal reality as the 'structure of mental life.' The faculty of understanding can apprehend this structure but not by means of scientific explanation. Indeed, one other motivation for Dilthey is the attempt to secure a foundation and provide an epistemological legitimization for the human sciences, which has already been provided for the natural sciences by Kant and other philosophers.

> What is contained in the concept of science is generally divided into two subdivisions. One is designated by the name "natural science," while for the other there is, curiously enough, no generally accepted designation. I shall follow those thinkers who refer to this second half of the *globus intellectualis* by the term *Geisteswissenschaften*...Yet this shortcoming of the expression *Geisteswissenschaften* is shared by all the other expressions that have been used: *Gesellschaftswissenschaft* (social science), *Soziologie* (sociology), *moralische* (moral), *geschichtliche* (historical), or *Kulturwissenschaften* (cultural sciences)...The practice of regarding these disciplines as a unity distinct from the natural sciences is rooted in the depth and totality of human self-consciousness.[77]

For Dilthey, the human sciences begin with life itself. Although each individual life belongs to a person, every part of a life is related to other lives also. And, accordingly, he says that philosophy gains its concrete existence within life, since life demonstrates the interrelation of all humanity, which can be understood through the category of 'interconnectedness' (*Zusammenhang*) from which all the categories of knowledge are derived. We apprehend the category of interconnectedness through the category of 'part-whole' as the

[77] Dilthey, Wilhelm. 1933. *Introduction to the Human Sciences: Selected Works.* Volume I-II. Trans. and Ed. Rudolf A. Makkareel and Frithjof Rodi. New Jersey: Princeton university Press., hereafter, IHS, pp.57-58.

hermeneutic circle. While the parts are the only true reality, the whole can be understood in terms of its parts. However, the parts can only be understood in terms of the whole to which they belong. Now, the dialectic between parts and whole expresses the structure of interconnectedness of the life.

> All science, all philosophy, is experiential. All experience derives its coherence and its corresponding validity from the context of human consciousness. The quarrel between idealism and realism can be resolved by psychological analysis, which can demonstrate that the real world given in experience is not a phenomenon in my representation; it is rather given to me as something distinct from myself, because I am a being that does not merely represent, but also wills and feels. The real world is what the will possesses in reflexive awareness when it meets resistance or when the hand feels pressure. This reflexive awareness of the will is as much of this real world as of itself. Both self and the real world are therefore given in the totality of psychic life. Each exists in relation to the other, and is equally immediate and true.[78]

Thus, although knowledge could be gained through life, it does not arise from life only, since we become aware of life, that is, life knows itself, through experience (*Erlebnis*) by interpreting the expressions of life. In order to understand an expression or objectification, we have to grasp the mental content which is the source of all objectifications.

In light of these remarks, Dilthey asks his fundamental question: how is historical knowledge possible? Or, how are the human sciences possible? This is comparable with the Kantian question of how science is possible. As a response to this question, he makes the distinction

[78] IHS, pp. 493-94.

between the explanation of nature and the understanding of history. The human sciences are to be conceived by understanding history, since, according to him, in the natural sciences, we only have access to the phenomena, which are distinct from us. However, in the human sciences, man knows man as himself or another. Indeed, man is not a distinct phenomenon for man, since he has a mental world which is different from the physical world. Thus, human sciences, including cultural systems, philosophy, art and religion, are the sciences of the individual who acts in history and in society. That is why only in the human sciences can man understand himself as man. Thus, knowledge is self-knowledge in the sense that life understands itself. History is crucial here because life is understood through the experience which is objectified in the realm of history. Furthermore, history itself is the realm of life, and the knowledge of life is grasped as an historical process. In this sense, the problem of the knowledge of life is, in fact, the problem of historical knowledge. Although knowledge arises from life, it does not have a scientific character, since such knowledge is not scientific. Now we face the question of how such knowledge can be scientific. This question can be answered by the critique of historical knowledge based upon the phenomenon of interconnection by which the life of others can be identified. Each individual, each society and each historical age has a structure of its own purpose, which is related to the structure of mind. That is to say, the

horizon of each individual, society or historical age has relations with other individuals, societies and ages.

> Knowledge of others is possible because life produces forms, externalizes itself in stable configurations; feelings, evaluations, and volitions tend to sediment themselves in a structured acquisition which is offered to others for deciphering. The organized systems which culture produces in the form of literature constitute a secondary layer, built upon this primary phenomenon of the teleological structure of the productions of life.[79]

Here, the question is how to form concepts in the realm of life which are opposed to natural regularity. The answer to this problem lies in the fact that spiritual life has the possibility of being understood by another. And to clarify the notion of interconnection, Dilthey prefers to use the notion of 'mental life' originated by Husserl. We can identify mental life by intentionality in which we cannot comprehend the mental life itself but understand what it intends.[80]

Hermeneutics becomes an interpretive psychology which foresees the impossibility of understanding the mental life of others in its immediate expressions. What should be done is to reproduce and reconstruct the mental life by interpreting objectified signs. This process of reproduction needs unique rules which Schleiermacher finds in philology. This is the point that Dilthey denies, since he thinks that though the problem of

[79] HHS, p. 50.

[80] HHS, p. 50., where Ricoeur says: "This idea of intentionality and of the identical character of the intentional object would thus enable Dilthey to reinforce his concept of mental structure with the Husserlian notion of meaning."

objectivity is inevitable, it is insoluble. Therefore, he needs to respond to positivism by developing a scientific conception of understanding. The idea of objectivity, he says, begins with the moment of self-interpretation, which is one of the most difficult tasks. For I understand myself by means of the signs which I received from others. Thus self- knowledge is actualized through 'signs' and 'works'. That is to say that life has a creative dynamism in that it interprets itself by means of signs and works. Accordingly, man can come to know himself through his activities including his effects on others. Obviously, he knows himself through the act of understanding, which is itself an interpretation. Psychology and hermeneutics are the two basic disciplines of the human sciences. While the former apprehends the depths and the structure of the human mind, the latter interprets the objectifications of life as expressions of the structure of the common mind. In order to connect different individuals, societies and ages, the comparative method is employed, which is possible due to empathy (*Nacherleben*). Here, the concept of empathy is not used to explain a psychological mood of an individual; rather, it is almost synonymous with the word 're-experiencing.' Experience is thus extended by the possibility of re-experience. In conclusion, psychology and hermeneutics employ comparison and empathy to recover the I in the Thou.

The horizon and the relativity of the knowledge of experience as empathy is what draw the limits of historical consciousness, which is the

beginning of historical knowledge. The extension of historical knowledge is achieved through the combination of empathy and comparison. In this way, consciousness could extend its historical relativity and its knowledge in relation to experience. Consequently, historical knowledge acquires its identity and unity as a concrete actuality. Thus the conflict between life that tends to relativity and individuality, and science which aims at stability and universality, is overcome by the possibility of empathy and the connectedness of life as the facts of consciousness.[81] However, the question is how can an individual experience be objectively valid? If we start with one individual experience and compare it to another, how does the comparison produce objective knowledge? Dilthey resolves this question by appealing to the concept of the objective mind as the universal feature of the human being. This universal structure serves as the account for the objectivity that the comparative method employs. But this structure discloses itself through history, it is not constructed as a priori.[82]

Now it is problematic whether the comparative method, which is itself historical, can be based on the so-called empirical and historical

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[81] Dilthey explains the concept of fact of consciousness as follows: "Facts of consciousness are the sole material from which objects are constituted. The resistance that objects exert, the space they occupy, their painful impact as well as their agreeable contact-all are facts of consciousness." IHS, p.245.

[82] IPH, p. 85., where, Grondin makes these remarks by the following expressions: "Dilthey first locates the solid foundation of social-scientific research in inner experience, or the "facts of consciousness." All science is empirical, experiential science, Dilthey argues, but experience derives its coherence and validity from the structuring a priori of our consciousness. Thus it seems likely that the human sciences' conditions of validity and objectivity are to be found in inner experience, just as the foundations of pure natural science, as Kant showed, derive from the principles of pure understanding."

structure. There is a circle here. The comparative method can be objective even if it assumes the existence of this structure, and yet this structure can be common as the result of the comparative method. Dilthey employs this circularity as a solution to the conflict between life and science. This is, in fact, the cause of the mentioned conflict, since the objective validity that science needs cannot be derived from science. To overcome this conflict, Dilthey stresses the universal facts of consciousness and the categories of life, which are immanent to life itself. But he faces the new question of how to justify these universal facts. In my opinion, the problem of the conflict between life and science remains unresolved in his attempt to overcome the circularity of his methodology.

Another main problem that Dilthey faces in his hermeneutics is the analogy between the unity and the wholeness of an individual's life and the unity and the wholeness of history. Gadamer addresses this issue as follows:

> The decisive step for Dilthey's epistemological grounding of the human sciences is the transition from the structure of coherence in an individual's experience to historical coherence, which is not experienced by any individual at all. Here-despite all the critique of speculation-it is necessary to put "logical subjects" instead of "real subjects." Dilthey is aware of this difficulty, but he considers it permissible, since the way individuals belong together-as in the solidarity of one generation or one nation-represents a spiritual reality that must be recognized as such precisely because it is not possible to get behind it in order to explain it.[83]

[83] TM, p. 224.

The difficulty is that since no individual can experience the continuity of history, for Dilthey, it is not experienced at all. However, experience is the basis of knowledge, and so the continuity of history would not be known. If this is true, then his claim that history has a unity does not make sense. He employs the notion of the 'objective mind' to resolve this difficulty. It is true that no individual experiences the continuity and accordingly the unity of history, but this unity can be constituted indirectly through the interpretations of the objectifications of life, including customs, institutions, laws etc. We get the continuity and the unity of history through our understanding of it, which is recorded and transmitted in language. The role of hermeneutics is to demonstrate and to construct this continuity and unity with a unique methodology. However, it seems that this project of the critique of historical reason remains incomplete, since, despite all his claims, Dilthey could not resolve the tension between life and science for the reasons that I have already mentioned. Another difficulty is that, since he ignores the role of history, his hermeneutics comes closer to the romantic hermeneutics which is mainly ahistorical. Dilthey conceived history just as a text which can be understood like any other text. Indeed, he cannot justify historical knowledge on the basis of life and with the scientific conception of objectivity and validity. He resolved the problem of historical knowledge by transforming history into a text which must be deciphered. Moreover, contrary to Schleiermacher who established his hermeneutic theory on an abstract methodology to

constitute mind as a universal vehicle, Dilthey does not conceive hermeneutics as a mere instrument, but as a medium of historical consciousness which aims at understanding life through expressions.[84]

It is necessary to evaluate Dilthey's hermeneutics in relation to his ethics, which is my ultimate concern here. His hermeneutics concerns construction of the relationship between theoretical knowing and practical life, which is extended into the sphere of ethics as the practicality of moral consciousness. On this view, philosophical ethics has the purpose to determine the meaning and value of human life. It could be argued that his ethics is more Aristotelian than Kantian, since he valuates a social ethics whose ultimate goal is action. Dilthey criticizes contemporary ethical theories in his writings on ethics. According to him, the natural sciences, such as biology and physics, misconceive human beings since they conceive humans as animals. Therefore, ethics has to be reconstructed in a philosophical manner. For such a goal, Dilthey intends to establish new principles for the constitution of a new ethics which is philosophical in character. However, new principles could be derived neither from the natural sciences, nor from religion or metaphysics. While the natural sciences are the main source of the problem, religion and metaphysics restrict the construction of ethics. He also denies utilitarianism, since it

[84] See, TM, p. 241, where Gadamer says: "Schleiermacher's hermeneutics rested on an artificial methodical abstraction which tried to establish a universal instrument of the mind, but tried to use this instrument to express the saving power of the Christian faith; but in Dilthey's grounding of the human sciences, hermeneutics is more than a means. It is the universal medium of the historical consciousness, for which there no longer exists any knowledge of truth other than the understanding of expression and, through expression, life. Everything in history is intelligible, for everything is text. "Life and history make sense like the letters of a word." Thus Dilthey ultimately conceives inquiring into the historical past as deciphering and not as historical experience (*Erfahrung*)."

rests on a dogmatic assumption implying that there is a harmony between the individual good and the general good. Thus, he foresees an empirical method for ethics since human moral life involves empirical situations such as drives, feelings and actions. They constitute a system which begins with individual lives and then extends to social life. This system also constitutes the power or forms of social life. Accordingly, ethical life is formed by these historical and social powers. In this sense, the good is the structure that holds society together and that constitutes the unity between individuals in the social structure.

Therefore, I can say that Dilthey's conception of ethics is empirical, social and historical, describing some historical powers and forms of life. His descriptions are far from objectivity, since they provide guidance for individual and social actions. Although he rejects Kant's ethics, he accepts some unconditional moral judgments that can be derived from the three forms of synthesis; unity, plurality and totality. The unconditional moral judgments are duty, the common good as the sense of sympathy with others, and the consciousness of ideals in concrete action. This shows that Dilthey paradoxically tries to reconcile neo-Kantian ideals about history and life with the Kantian conception of science and objectivity. This is the reason why his hermeneutic conception of the good, although it involves some positive practical insights, remains insufficient for a hermeneutic reconstruction of philosophical ethics.

4.3. Heidegger and the Ontological Turn

Dilthey conceived hermeneutics as the theory of knowledge in which the debate on the distinction between explanation and understanding becomes prominent as a methodological question. Heidegger and Gadamer interrogate his epistemological conception of hermeneutics. Their conception of hermeneutics, thus, cannot be interpreted as the extension of Dilthey's work. On the contrary, they stress the ontological aspect of hermeneutics. Their goal is to uncover the ontological conditions. Therefore, rather than perfecting the methodological questions inherited from the earlier hermeneutics including Schleiermacher and Dilthey, they address a new question meant to unveil the mode of being of Being in relation to understanding.[85]

Dilthey could not resolve the conflict between life and science consistently in favor of life and history, since the Kantian conception of science dominated his hermeneutics. Heidegger paid attention to this issue, although he does not concern himself ultimately with human sciences. He discusses the conflict between science and history rather than the conflict between life and science. The reason for this is that in order to overcome the conflict between life and science, we must have a proper understanding of history. For Heidegger, the conflict stems from an inadequate understanding of the ontology of history or historicity. For him,

[85] See, HHS, p. 54, where Ricoeur says: "So we must not expect that Heidegger or Gadamer will perfect the methodological problematic created by the exegesis of sacred or profane texts, by philology, psychology, the theory of history, or the theory of culture. On the contrary a new question is raised: instead of asking 'how do we know?' it will be asked 'what is the mode of being of that being that exists only in understanding?"

the goal of Dilthey was to understand life philosophically, and that is why he founded his hermeneutics on his conception of life itself. In this context, life refers to the mode of being of humans. Indeed, hermeneutics becomes the activity of life's understanding itself, while psychology is employed to be the science of life as the mode of human existence. Accordingly, the concept of psychological hermeneutics identifies the domain of Dilthey's researches. Heidegger argues that in Dilthey's approach there is no conflict between life and science, since his main goal was to understand life. However the conflict does exist between life and history because psychological hermeneutics aims at understanding life through its historical development. Therefore, in order to understand life, we have to understand history.

According to Heidegger, Dilthey's hermeneutic theory can be investigated mainly under three headings. The first is his theory of the human sciences, which involves the distinction between the natural and human sciences. The second is the investigation of the history of the sciences of humanity including society and the state. The last is the aim to grasp a psychology which can give an understanding of the "whole fact of man." All these three domains are interconnected and employed to provide a secure foundation for the human sciences that can grasp "life

itself."[86] However, on the other hand, Heidegger argues that Dilthey was not aware of the distinction between the 'historical' and the 'ontical.' History is crucial to understanding life because life is historical. And the concept of the historical is different from that of the ontical, the former refers to the temporal order of events of history. This order alone cannot provide a full understanding of history. On the contrary, to understand history, we need to understand the concepts of the 'historical' and 'historicity.' Here, Heidegger introduces the notion of 'ontological difference' as the difference between the historical and the ontical, which is the difference between Being and beings. By doing so, he intends to explain the ontological conditions of historicity and to demonstrate how historicity can unify life and history. For Heidegger, Dilthey never grasped this because he was unaware of the ontological conditions that constitute the possibility of understanding life.

[86] These remarks are made by Heidegger, M. 1962. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row. (Originally published 1927), hereafter BT, as: "We may divide Dilthey's researches schematically into three domains: studies on the theory of the human sciences, and the distinction between these and natural sciences; researches into the history of the sciences of man, society, and the state; endeavors towards a psychology in which the 'whole fact of man' is to be presented. Investigations in the theory of science, in historical science, and in psychological hermeneutics are constantly permeating and intersecting each other. Where any one point of view predominates, the others are the motives and means. What looks like disunity and an unsure, 'haphazard' way of 'trying things out,' is an elemental restlessness, the one goal of which is to understand life philosophically and to secure for this understanding a hermeneutical foundation in terms of 'life itself.'"

The primary ontological condition of Dasein[87] is historicity, but it has to be explained ontologically. Although Dilthey's concern with historicity is inadequate, it shows that his implicit interest is ontological. However, because of this inadequacy, he could not become aware of the things that happen on the ground of happening. Moreover, this inadequacy prevents him from distinguishing the 'ontological' from the 'historical'. For Heidegger, it is possible to understand historicity philosophically and ontologically. Then, we can distinguish the ontical from the historical. He pointed out this possibility as follows:

> If one has an interest in understanding historicality, one is brought to the task of working out a 'generic differentiation between the ontical and the historical.' The fundamental aim of the 'philosophy of life' is tied up with this. Nevertheless, the formulation of the question needs to be radicalized in principle. How are we to get historicality into our grasp philosophically as distinguished from the ontical, and conceive it 'categorically,' except by bringing both the 'ontical' and the 'Historical' into a more primordial unity, so that they can be compared and distinguished? But that is possible only if we attain the following insights: (1) that the question of historicality is an ontological question about the state of Being of historical entities; (2) that the question of the ontical is the ontological question of the state of Being of entities other than Dasein-of what is present-at-hand in the widest sense; (3) that the ontical is only one domain of entities. The idea of Being embraces both the 'ontical' and the 'Historical.' It is this idea which

[87] The concept of Dasein dominates Heidegger's magnum opus 'Being and Time.' It literally means being-there. But for a comprehensive analysis of the concept of Dasein; see, Pöggeler, O. 1990. *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking.* Trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc. (Originally Published 1963.), p. 39., where he says "Dasein is being-in-the-world; that is to say, it "is" its world; it is from out of a familiarity with the world...It is not an I which would first of all have to establish a relationship to others but rather one which exists primarily in Being-with-others."

must let itself be 'generically differentiated.'[88]

In the case of the problem of history, Heidegger aims to identify the locus of the problem, rather than to achieve a resolution. The existential-ontological exposition of Dasein is the locus in which the problem of history is identified. Dasein is defined in relation to its Being-toward-death. Dasein's life is to be understood in terms of the primordial connectedness between its experiences. The experiences and the moments of life must be understood as being actual and also in ontological terms. We can grasp this understanding if Dasein is conceived as care, since it lies between birth and death, this being the structure of life's connectedness. Indeed, history as historicity appears in this horizon of care, where its essence is temporality. The locus of the problem of history is temporality, which is the essence of historicity by constituting the connectedness of life. In other words, historicity is the ontological structure of historicizing Dasein as care, which is grounded in temporality.

Therefore, the problem of the connectedness of life leads to the problem of history and of temporality. In temporality, care grasps its constitutive totality as the ground of its unity. Thus, we can comprehend the ontological structure of the "connectedness of life" in relation to the temporal constitution of Dasein. As regards the 'connectedness' of Dasein, it becomes "the ontological problem of Dasein's historicizing. To lay bare the structure of historicizing, and the existential-temporal

[88] BT, p. 455.

conditions of its possibility, signifies that one has achieved an ontological understanding of historicality."[89]

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger casts light on a forgotten question of being; namely the question of the meaning of being. His most outstanding concept is 'Dasein,' which opens a new horizon for human understanding. Knowledge has been construed as a relation between a subject and an object. However, the Heideggerian Dasein is not a subject that is facing an object. Rather, it is 'a being within being,' which demonstrates the place of the question of being and understands being. Accordingly, there is an opposition between 'epistemological grounding' and 'ontological foundation.' Epistemological investigation concerns the sphere of particular objects including nature, life, history and language. However, the task of philosophy is to unveil the basic concepts that provide science with thematic objects, and to give rise to positive investigations. Philosophical hermeneutics should identify beings with their basic state of being. Thus, what he investigates "is neither a theory of concept formation of historiology nor the theory of historiological knowledge, ...what is primary is rather the interpretation of authentically historical entities as regards their historicality."[90]

Accordingly, hermeneutics is the interpretation of the ontological ground on which the human sciences are constructed. Dilthey conceived the question 'how to understand others' problematically, but Heidegger

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[89] BT, p. 427.

[90] BT, 31

gave a new direction to the problem of understanding. For Heidegger, understanding is far from the epistemological perception, since, as he says, understanding emerges in the relation of being with the world. That is to say, understanding occurs in our situation, and it is described in terms of 'power-to-be,' not in terms of discourse. So understanding demonstrates our situation in that we apprehend the possibility of being through understanding. For example, when we understand a text, what we apprehend is not only a lifeless meaning but the chance to unveil being as represented in the text. Here, we face the relationship between understanding and interpretation as an explication of understanding, but in this process of explication, the meaning of being does not transform into something else, it becomes itself.

> The projecting of the understanding has its own possibility-that of developing itself (sich auszubilden). This development of understanding we call "interpretation." In it the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it. In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former. Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding.[91]

The fundamental ontology thus reveals the hermeneutic circle as the interaction between subject and object in the human sciences.

[91] TM, pp. 188-89.

Heidegger construes this methodological structure as a pre-understanding which cannot be explained epistemologically.

For our purpose, we should now examine Heidegger's ethics and show its relevance to his hermeneutic theory. It is a fact that Heidegger never devised a systematic ethics. We find his views on ethics in the "Letter on Humanism". Although humanism usually concerns the humanity of humans, Heidegger defines it quite differently. It is defined in terms of something which no longer pertains to man. It is not the humanity of humans but Being which informs his conception of humanism. To identify a Heideggerian ethics, it is necessary to examine his claims about language, thinking and humanism; for these concern the essence of human action. Ethics is the study of human life as constituted in action; and thinking grasps being by bringing it into language, the home of 'eksistence.'

> Thinking is deed. But a deed that also surpasses all praxis. Thinking permeates action and production, not through the grandeur of its achievement and not as a consequence of its effect, but through the humbleness of its inconsequential accomplishment. For thinking in its saying merely brings the unspoken word of being to language.[92]

Accordingly, thinking is action as it thinks. Heidegger argues that 'original ethics,' as ontology, thinks the truth of Being, and it is simply thinking. In this sense, thinking does not just define ethics. It is ethics. In

[92] Heidegger, M. Letter on Humanism. In William McNeill. (Ed.) 1998. *Pathmarks*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press., hereafter, LH, p. 274.

his sense, *ethos* refers to the human dwelling place occupied by Being. That is why it is unnecessary to write on ethics: he has already written on the question of being. Heidegger makes these points as follows:

> Ethos means abode, dwelling place. The word means the open region in which man dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to the essence of the human being, and what in thus arriving resides in nearness to him, to appear. The abode of the human being contains and preserves the advent of what belongs to the human being in his essence.[93]

Heidegger rejects the traditional task of ethics in which values are determined and justified. Traditional ethics is subjectivizing in that 'it does not let beings be.' Since "thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against being," and human action is reduced to thinking, human life becomes valueless in acquiring its true essence.

> Rather, it is important finally to realize that precisely through the characterization of something "as a value" what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for human estimation. But what a thing is in its being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be. Rather valuing lets beings: be valid-solely as the objects of its doing.[94]

Heidegger's conception of ethics is related to his idea of transcendence. He says that, as in the case of philosophy in general,

[93] LH, p. 269.

[94] LH, p. 265.

values are subjective when we try to make them objective. He criticizes subjectivism and metaphysics in order to disclose the transcendence of Being. This intention is extended to the sphere of ethics. Herein, he rejects valuing so as to open the way to the disclosure of the transcendence of Being. This is how we can conceive that beings should not be valued but experienced in their Being. When he refers to transcendence, he does not intend to say that ethics is merely abstract and theoretical. Since thinking is neither *theoria* nor *praxis*, thinking is the highest form of human action. However, we cannot say that Heidegger's ethics is practical in the sense of guiding human action. Moreover, action is turned toward thinking, which can only listen and follow being. He points out that all forms of humanism and ethics are metaphysical, since they insist on some specific conception of human nature. By doing this, they forget the question of being and the ontological difference. Although Heidegger has demonstrated the ontological difference, his conception of ethics continues to have metaphysical features. He retained some conceptions about human nature, such as existence and Being.

CHAPTER 5

HERMENEUTICS AS ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING

5.1. Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Philosophical Ethics

Gadamer is interested in the great philosophical questions of classical philosophy, namely, what is good and bad, *agathos* and *kakos*, what is beautiful and ugly, *kalos* and *aischros.* My emphasis here will be on the good: What is it? And what do we understand of it? In order to respond and analyse these questions, it is necessary to begin with his theory of interpretation and understanding and then try to grasp his conception of ethical truth.

Gadamer argues that the experience of art has some crucial affinities with philosophy. In his great work, *Truth and Method*, he explicates his ideas on the experience of art in a philosophical manner. He says that the experience of art is an experience of truth, which happens to us in all of our activities. Thus, truth is an event, and it is a universal characteristic of human understanding. He derives his conception of understanding from Heidegger's concept of '*verstehen*.' Here, the concept '*verstehen*' should not be confused with '*verstand*' which can also be

translated as understanding, but in the Kantian sense '*Verstand*' is an extrinsic concept which is objectifying or externalizing.[95] Thus, it was used in reference to scientific investigation of spatio-temporal objects. However, Gadamer says, understanding as '*Verstehen*' is non-objectifying, ontological, and thus it concerns with the being in the world.

Hence, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is employed to resolve the problems encountered in Schleiermacher's, Dilthey's and Heidegger's hermeneutic theories. Its main function is to provide a ground for philosophical ethics so as to overcome the difficulties that we face in Kantian and earlier hermeneutical ethics. I am going to show how these difficulties can be resolved through Gadamerian hermeneutics by stressing the concept of '*phronesis*' as practical wisdom. However, to achieve this task, it is necessary to examine the development of his hermeneutics. Herein, the most crucial point is the relation of Gadamer's hermeneutics to that of Heidegger. For one thing, their relation is direct in the sense that his main task is to examine 'the transcendental significance' of Heidegger's problematization of the structure of human understanding which also involves the problem of historical understanding.

> Hence we too are beginning with the transcendental significance of Heidegger's problematic. The problem of hermeneutics becomes universal in scope, even attaining a new dimension, through his transcendental interpretation of

[95] See. Rosen, S. 1987. *Hermeneutics as Politics*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 25., where he argues "The transcendental ego possesses two intellectual faculties, which he (Kant) calls *Vernuft* and *Verstand*...*Verstand* produces concepts spontaneously; these unify sensation into objects of experience, which are also possible objects of scientific knowledge."

> understanding. The interpreter's belonging to his object, which the historical school was unable offer any convincing account of, now acquires a concretely demonstrable significance, and it is the task of hermeneutics to demonstrate it. That the structure of Dasein is thrown projection, that in realizing its own being Dasein is understanding, must also be true of the fact of understanding in the human sciences. The general structure of understanding is concretized in historical understanding, in that the concrete bonds of custom and tradition and the corresponding possibilities of one's own future become effective in understanding itself.[96]

By developing the notion of 'effective-historical consciousness,' Gadamer tries to overcome Heidegger's transcendentalism, even though he begins with Heidegger's insights concerning the form of the ontological structure of human understanding. Indeed, effective-historical consciousness is the core idea in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which serves to resolve the problems in Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's hermeneutic theories. The concept of 'effective-historical consciousness' means that consciousness is mainly effected by history, since understanding is temporal and occurs historically. Thus, this concept suggests that there cannot be an Archimedean point from which we can start, because of the fact that consciousness is historical. In relation to this concept of effective-historical consciousness, understanding becomes one of the outstanding notions in Gadamer's hermeneutics. However understanding is neither just a concept nor a methodological procedure. Rather, understanding is what explicates the ontological mode of human being. It is, in fact, self-understanding. Obviously, understanding is neither

[96] TM, p. 264.

"a resigned ideal of human experience" nor "a last methodological ideal of philosophy." However, its true meaning lies in the fact that it is "the original form of the realization of Dasein, which is being-in-the-world," and furthermore, it is "Dasein's mode of being, insofar as it is potentiality-for-being and "possibility."[97]

Human understanding consists of three features which constitute the hermeneutical circle of interpretation. These are fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. We are able to perceive the possibilities existing in understanding by interpretation. Thus interpretation is a 'fore-having.'[98] Indeed, Dasein's ontological predicament is its being in the world into which it has already been thrown, and understanding is its basic mode of being. That is why Dasein's initial understanding is not characterized as self-consciousness. Rather, its initial being is to be identified with its throwness and facticity. This is what the notion 'fore-having' explains. The second feature of understanding, and interpretation is 'fore-sight' which means that Dasein already has a perspective or point of view.

There is a circular relation among these concepts, since when we examine 'fore-having,' we find a perspective having a limited view, which is 'fore-sight.' It is this perspective that opens up the possibility of the next step of interpretation. This step is 'fore-conception' by which we cognitively grasp the original 'fore-having' and 'fore-sight' through the

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[97] TM, p. 259.

[98] BT, pp. 189-190.

possibility of interpretation. In this respect, interpretation is not a presuppositionless understanding of something that we face. Interpretation thus has a circular structure resulting from the 'fore-structure' of understanding. That is to say, what is to be understood is already understood, that is, it is 'fore-understood.' As I have already mentioned, there is circularity here. But this is not a vicious circle. On the contrary, it is productive since it is derived from the ontological structure of Dasein. Accordingly, understanding is the understanding of Dasein, and interpretation is the explication of its ontology, since it is the explication of understanding, which is ontologically determined by Dasein. Therefore, interpretation is what interprets Dasein's ontological predicament.

> This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential fore-structure of Dasein itself. It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. Because understanding, in accordance with its existential meaning, is Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being.[99]

Gadamer agrees with this conception of hermeneutic circle and the hermeneutic situation that Heidegger has described. The gist of this conception defines the hermeneutic situation in terms of the totality of

[99] BT, p. 154.

presuppositions that constitute the 'fore-structure of understanding.' In order to clarify this idea, I need to analyze the concept of 'prejudice,' originally a legal notion. It means pre-judgment or fore-judgment, to judge before all the facts are given. In this sense, it has both positive and negative aspects. Its negative aspect identifies the 'pre-mature' judgments about the given fact. The main difficulty here is how to identify its positive aspect, even though Gadamer bases its negativity on its positive aspect. A prejudice as pre-judgment has a positive value in the sense that it serves as a guide for further inquiry. However, its negativity arises when it is taken as the final judgment. Gadamer argues in *Truth and Method* that there has been a long standing prejudice against 'prejudice' since the Enlightenment. Therefore, he defines prejudice against the critique of the Enlightenment by explaining the notion of the fore-structure of the understanding for which prejudices are the conditions. The second kind of prejudice is the negative one which stems from dependence on authority. This is the object of Enlightenment criticism. Thus, any dependence on authority is considered negative. The Enlightenment, as the age of reason and freedom, is bound to eliminate all prejudice, and consequently eliminate tradition which is the source of all prejudice. Gadamer's task was to focus on the positive role of prejudices as the conditions of understanding and thus challenge the Enlightenment critique of tradition. He appeals to the weakness of the human intellect which cannot operate without prejudices. Thus, he argues that true prejudices, which constitute

the historical reality of being, must be justified by rational knowledge through education.[100]

5.2 The Idea of Tradition

The European Enlightenment represents the transition from tradition to reason in the form of a critique of religion. Tradition, being historically determined, supposed, fails to be absolute. Gadamer does not reject this view, nor do I. But one should note that reason is historical too, that is, it operates in a given historical context. Thus Gadamer argues "...the idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms-i.e., it is not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates."[101] Indeed, it is obvious that reason belongs to historical humans beings and therefore cannot be absolute in any sense.

Clearly, the Enlightenment introduced the concept of history in order to question the authority of tradition by revealing that it is historical and historically conditioned. Its aim was to revise and eliminate the dogmatism of tradition with the help of reason. For this end, the

[100] For these remarks, see, TM, pp. 273-277., where Gadamer says: "Since the human intellect is too weak to manage without prejudices, it is at least fortunate to have been educated with true prejudices...True prejudices must still finally be justified by rational knowledge, even though the task can never be fully completed...That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being."

[101] TM, p. 276.

Enlightenment employed the concept of historical consciousness to demonstrate that the foundation of religious authority is not an absolute phenomenon but a historical document. Thus, tradition can be understood historically. Gadamer questions the Enlightenment: why is not reason historical just as tradition is? If reason is not historical, then the transition from tradition to reason is a transition to the absolute. But this transition itself is historical, and accordingly reason cannot be absolute. Now, the Enlightenment also introduced the concept of historical consciousness, which demands an answer to the question of how historical understanding is possible. In order to answer this question, hermeneutics uncovers the historicity of all understanding and the ontological condition of historical consciousness. According to Gadamer, all human understanding, including reason and historical consciousness, is conditioned by historicity. The Enlightenment also led to the discovery that human reason has a historicity. However, this militates against the goal of the Enlightenment, since it blurs the distinction between tradition and reason. Contra the Enlightenment, historicity is not merely negative or restrictive for Gadamer. It is also a condition of the understanding.

It is with regard to these considerations that Gadamer tries to show how prejudice can be a condition for understanding. For this end, he points out the positive roles of authority and tradition in constituting understanding and knowledge. He argues that the essence of authority is knowledge. Thus the Enlightenment mistakenly thought that the authority

of tradition excludes reason, knowledge and freedom. However, authority recognizes reason since it accepts the authority of other humans. This requires the view that others are superior in judging on an issue. Gadamer concludes that authority, tradition, prejudice, reason and freedom are partners in the acquisition of understanding, knowledge and truth.[102]

What has been said about authority relates to tradition, which is the most important topic in *Truth and Method*. According to the Enlightenment, the classics of tradition should be criticized and rejected for the sake of reason. However, Gadamer argues that 'there is no such unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason,' since tradition always involves the motives of freedom and history. Like reason, tradition preserves the essential elements that constitute our mode of being in the world.

Indeed, tradition preserves itself even in the case of scientific or political revolutions. However, the self-preservation of tradition does not mean that it is a natural law. It is affirmed and cultivated, and accordingly preserved by later generations. This preservation is a free act and decision involving reason. That is to say, agents can as freely and rationally decide to preserve tradition as they can freely and rationally deny it. Accepting tradition does not automatically exclude reason and freedom. Gadamer says that it is impossible to reject tradition totally, since our freedom to reject has limits such that we cannot be fully aware of the

[102] For these points; see, TM, pp. 277-285. Under the title; the Rehabilitation of Authority and Tradition.

effects of tradition. We can neither escape from tradition nor completely control it. We exist in tradition, and its existence is not separate from us. Tradition, in this sense, is not an object of knowledge apart from us. What Gadamer means is that tradition defines our being because we are historical beings who are determined by historicity and tradition.

Our relation to tradition can be demonstrated by appealing to the classics. Classical antiquity has both normative and historical dimensions. Its normative dimension is timeless and has validity through different periods of history. For example, ancient Greek philosophy is to be evaluated as the paradigm of philosophical thinking. This paradigm is represented especially by Plato and Aristotle. In modern times, Kant is considered the paradigm, which is also classical since he plays the same role. Not only philosophy, but other disciplines have their own classics. However, the classical has an historical dimension that seems to contradict the normative, since, while the historical is a temporal concept, the normative is defined as ahistorical or timeless. However, Gadamer says that the normative and historical dimensions of the classics are not incompatible. Classical philosophy must be preserved in the sense that it must be affirmed and cultivated. Through this process, it becomes a norm which must be preserved historically.[103]

The two dimensions of classical philosophy are to be taken together, since philosophy is an historical phenomenon. This does not mean that its normative dimension disappears, since it is regained by

[103] TM, p. 289.

situating it in its historical context. Since the normative cannot preserve itself and is preserved in the present, even its timelessness is historical. The historical fusion of the present with the past becomes the "effective substratum" of historical consciousness. Therefore, our understanding of the classical tradition is extended to all historical understanding and to understanding in general.

Gadamer explains his conception of understanding by introducing the notions of "hermeneutic circle," "application," and "horizon." The hermeneutic circle is the interplay between the interpreted and the interpreter. If we try to understand, for example, the classics, our understanding is an interplay of present and past. According to this view, the fore-structure of understanding makes us conscious of the classics, and then we move toward them by examining their content. This examination of the classics changes our fore-understanding. Accordingly, the circle consists of the fore-structure and the subject-matter of understanding. The true understanding of the past of the classics is the process in which the play between interpreter and tradition comes to be. What connects the interpreter with the past is tradition, since the interpreter and the classics belong to the same tradition. This shows how tradition becomes the condition for understanding the past.

> Here again we see that understanding means, primarily, to understand the content of what is said, and only secondarily to isolate and understand another's meaning as such. Hence the most basic of all hermeneutic preconditions remains one's own fore-understanding, which comes from being concerned with

> the same subject. This is what determines what can be realized as unified meaning and thus determines how the fore-conception of completeness is applied. Thus the meaning of "belonging"-i.e., the element of tradition in our historical-hermeneutical activity-is fulfilled in the commonality of fundamental, enabling prejudices. Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which the text speaks.[104]

We are both familiar with tradition and distant from it. These are the poles of the circle of understanding. Tradition combines them as much as it keeps them apart. What separates these two poles is temporal distance which serves, for Gadamer, as 'positive' and 'productive' conditions of understanding. The understanding of tradition is ontologically determined by historicity whose essence is temporality. As finite historical beings, our knowledge is always finite and essentially historical. Hermeneutics articulates the 'horizon' of historical consciousness. 'Horizon' means the openness to see beyond the perspective which determines the narrowness of vision. This is extended to the historical horizon of consciousness which is determined by the perspective of the present. However, we are able to see beyond the perspective of the present which is fused with the horizon of the past. The act of understanding has its foundation in this fusion of horizons.

Now, hermeneutics has the task to explain how we realize this fusion. We should explain the concept of 'application' in order to clarify the nature of this task. As Gadamer used, the term 'application' means

[104] TM, pp. 294-95.

'preservation,' and it also means the hermeneutic productivity of meaning. It also refers to the fact that hermeneutic understanding occurs in the moment of application of the past to the present. For instance, in the case of understanding the classics, we have to apply the normative side of the classics to our own horizon. By doing this, we demonstrate that understanding needs application. The 'moment of application' and the 'fusion of horizons' give us the idea of effective-historical consciousness. As the name suggests, this sort of consciousness is an effect of history, since it is experienced and determined by human historicity. However, experience has a negative aspect as much as a positive one. When experience is just a continuation and confirmation of previous experiences, then it is negative and not new. The positive experience always negates previous experiences. This kind of experience is called 'dialectical' since it opens up new experiences. It is language that sows us the different types of experiences, the ones that confirm our expectations and the ones that are new. The latter is negative and has a positive meaning only in the sense that it is productive. Gadamer explains this as follows:

> Language shows this when we use the word "experience" in two different senses: the experiences that conform to our expectation and confirm it and the new experiences that occur to us. This latter- "experience" in the genuine sense- is always negative. If a new experience of an object occurs to us, this means that hitherto we have not seen the thing correctly and now know it better. Thus the negativity of experience has a curiously productive meaning. It is not simply that we see through a deception and hence make a correction, but we

> acquire a comprehensive knowledge. We cannot, therefore, have a new experience of any object at random, but it must be of such a nature that we gain better knowledge through it, not only of itself, but of what we thought we knew before- i.e., of a universal. The negation by means of which it achieves this is a determinate negation. We call this kind of experience *dialectical*.[105]

This dialectic of experience is not teleological, since it does not have a *telos* beyond itself but belongs to the history of man. That is to say, the dialectical structure of experience is a part of human historicity. This structure is determined by humans' historical and finite nature. The essential feature of this structure is negativity. Gadamer says that new experiences are gained through negative ones. The newness, openness and negativity of experience create insight into the structure of experience itself. This is related to human historicity and finitude in the sense that there is a relation between this account of experience in general and the hermeneutic experience as effective-historical consciousness.

Experience must recognize the reality, the "what is," that is, tradition as the subject of hermeneutic experience. Herein, the relationship between tradition and us must be conceived on the model of a dialogue between "I and Thou," but not in psychological terms. The aim of this analogy is to demonstrate that tradition cannot be understood as an object in the fashion that scientific methodology requires. In a conversation with another, we should recognize the Thou as a person and be open to what he says. This is the condition for a dialogue to be, otherwise it will have

[105] TM, p. 353.

the structure of a monologue, an order from a master to a slave. On this model, our relation to tradition must have the structure of 'equality' and 'mutuality' so that tradition speaks to us. Therefore, the dialogues between I-Thou and present-past share the same structure with experience in general. It is important to mention that this structure of dialogues is determined by openness and mutuality. However, there is another important feature of this comparison between historical consciousness and dialogue. There is an aspect of negativity in the I-Thou and present-past dialogues which is similar to the negativity in experience in general. This means that as much as we are open to what the other says, we are also open to how they challenge our claims. The other may contradict us and may convince us that we should revise our beliefs and knowledge. Accordingly, the openness of dialogue bears this negative moment. In this sense, tradition may negate or challenge us when it says something to us, just as we are free to criticize it. Openness presupposes both mutuality and a willingness to be negated. These features determine the structure of experience in general and the structure of hermeneutic experience in particular.

This is also extended to the structure of effective-historical consciousness and to the experience of art. According to Gadamer, art does not give any information about the world but rather creates a response or a feeling in the subject as a viewer, reader, listener, etc. Thus the content of an artwork is empty in terms of its relation to the world that

it represents. But this does not mean that an artwork just creates a stimulus in the subject; on the contrary, it shows something which is justified in the context of what is said, not in the subjective reactions of the participants who have experienced it.

Indeed, in order to understand Gadamer's critique of aesthetic consciousness, we must understand the distinction he makes between experience as *Erlebnis* and experience as *Erfahrung*. The former is the essential experience of aesthetic consciousness in which the latter encloses itself and becomes visible in its world. In this sense, the *Erlebnis* comes to be in private moments of enjoyment of the subject as aesthetic consciousness. But the *Erfahrung* is an experience of the 'other' who determines the limits of myself in the subject in his otherness. Therefore, experience as *Erfahrung* has certain negative implications and becomes a "painful of the unknown." That negativity bears in itself a positive essence since it leads to an understanding of my own limitations as well as an understanding, an openness, to the other. Accordingly, experience as *Erfahrung* differs from *Erlebnis* in the sense that it occurs within a dialogical interplay with the other in a world. In this way, *Erfahrung* resembles the play (*das Spiel*) to which the players as self and artwork are subordinated. Therefore, Gadamer introduces an aesthetic "non-differentiation" against Schiller's "aesthetic differentiation," a concept that separates the art from all of its secular and religious connotations by ignoring the cultural context in which it is produced and reducing the

artwork to a stimulus of experience. This latter mode of aesthetic consciousness is *Erlebnis*. On the contrary, Gadamer's aesthetic "non-differentiation" suggests that all the participants, including the artist, the artwork and the audience together constitute a common world in which interpretation takes place as *Erfahrung*. Gadamer thus gives precedence to experience as *Erfahrung*, a continuous experience through time from past to future. Thus, it becomes temporal or historical in that it is not a momentary stimulus. Furthermore, while *Erlebnis* represents the Kierkegaardian aesthetic stage of life, *Erfahrung* is the manifestation of its ethical stage. This is what identifies the content of a hermeneutic ethics.

Openness to the Thou in dialogue or tradition in historical consciousness permits Thou and tradition to examine us. And the openness of experience means that it has a structure of a question challenging our knowledge. This is the moment of a negativity which is itself open-ended. Gadamer takes Socratic dialogue as the model for the hermeneutic experience because of the radical negativity in the structure of question. For Socrates' claim to knowledge was based upon the awareness of his own ignorance. Instead of giving answers, this awareness leads him to ask questions. This does not, however, mean that the openness of the question is unlimited since a question that cannot be specifically answered has a horizon determined by its possible answers. Similarly, these answers are determined by the presuppositions of the question and by the fore-structure of understanding. The horizon of the

original question is constituted by presuppositions of the answers which serve as part of the original question. Throughout this process, the question could be answered by allowing the object in question to reveal itself. Here, Gadamer argues that such a process of questioning is the essence of Socratic dialogue and of dialectic as well. In this sense, dialectic is the art of questioning and conducting a dialogue. The text, the object of interpretation, questions the interpreter. Yet to understand the question, it is necessary to understand the text by means of which the fusion of horizons occurs. That is, the horizon of the interpreter is fused with that of the text. Gadamer argues that this is possible, since both the text and the interpreter are concerned with the same question as part of their common tradition and their common historicity.

5.3 The Idea of Language

Although Gadamer does not explicitly show how language and moral philosophy are related, I contend that his philosophy of language can contribute to a philosophical ethics. This relationship can be shown by demonstrating the transition from a philosophy of language to that of morality. For Gadamer argues that understanding the true and the good can be accomplished in language. Therefore, in order to reconstruct a philosophical ethics on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, I must turn to his account of language.

The relation between Gadamer's hermeneutics and language reveals itself in the question of the relation between the hermeneutic experience of tradition and the dialogue with Thou. In his sense, language determines both the hermeneutic act and the hermeneutic object since it is 'the medium of hermeneutic experience.' "Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people."[106] In a conversation between two people, the dialogue conducts the conversation, not the subjectivity of the partners. This is to say that what controls the dialogue is the meaning of the text. In this sense, language guides the dialogue because the meaning of the text is linguistic. This is what it means to say that language is the medium of hermeneutic understanding. Linguistic understanding takes the form of a common language or the concrete form of the 'fusion of horizons.' Linguistic understanding is, thus, interpretation.

> All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter's own language.... It is a genuine historical life comportment achieved through the medium of language, and we call it a conversation with respect to the interpretation of texts as well. The linguisticality of understanding is the concretion of historically effected consciousness.[107]

This is shown by the example of tradition, which is the primary hermeneutic object and is linguistic in character. However, tradition does

[106] TM, p. 384.

[107] TM, p. 389.

not always manifest itself in the form of a written text. Like the written text, tradition is also alienated from both its original writer and reader since meaning belonging to these hermeneutic objects exceeds the author's intention and the original reader's interpretation. Indeed, intention and interpretation could not constitute criteria for future interpretations of the text. The task of hermeneutics is to unfold the meaning of the text within the limits of autonomy and self-alienation. Thus interpretation is the outcome of the dialogue with the text in the process of question and answer.

The hermeneutic experience as effective-historical consciousness has a linguistic character, and it determines the horizon of hermeneutic ontology. In this sense, the concept of effective-historical consciousness should be understood in terms of the relationships between language and the world and between language and reason. Gadamer argues that to have a language is to have a world since there is a primordial "belongingness" between them. The world is the ground on which human beings come to be in dialogue with each other. Whereas, the world may exist without human beings, it is bound to language since it presents itself to us and even in itself through language. That is to say it is linguistic in character. The world, thus, is the same as it manifests itself in language.

Indeed, there is an ontological identity of the relationship between language and the world and language and reason. For the language of the world is identical with the language of reason. In this sense, like the world,

reason has a linguistic form. This is to say that there cannot be a pure reason as reason-in-itself which is distinct from language. The unity between language and the world, and language and reason is not metaphysically justified since we experience both the world and reason in language. Indeed, we have not yet experienced a world which is independent of language.

As I have mentioned, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is a product of Heidegger's transcendental philosophy. However, he formulates his philosophy by favoring historicity over transcendence, using the concept of effective-historical consciousness which is derived from the structures of human understanding and experience. Indeed, he takes the universality of hermeneutic understanding from Schleiermacher, and articulates the relation between life and science for the construction of historical knowledge from Dilthey. Besides, Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel have also had important influences on Gadamer. Throughout these interactions, Gadamer overcomes the transcendental framework, since his primary concern was not with the question of Being in analyzing human understanding. On the contrary, his aim was to demonstrate that understanding is mainly linguistic. In this sense, the Being that can be understood is language. That is why Gadamer's hermeneutics is not transcendental in the sense of being pure and simple.

The account of the hermeneutic circle is a good means by which to differentiate Heidegger from Gadamer. While Heidegger conceives the

circle as the outcome of temporality, which is the main transcendental feature of the question of Being, Gadamer characterizes the circle in terms of the role of the classics in the historical construction of tradition. Thus, I can say that Gadamer is able to escape from the transcendentalism of Heidegger's hermeneutics. This enables him to overcome the conflict between transcendence and historicity by developing the notion of effective-historical consciousness. However, Gadamer still remains on the philosophical ground which concerns the nature of understanding and the structure of experience. This ground is ontological, but not in the sense of fundamental ontology. Rather it is related to experience, to Being as language, which is the place where experience becomes possible in general, and it is also the horizon of ontology.

Consequently, Gadamer distinguishes his hermeneutics from those of Schleiermacher and Dilthey by means of his conception of language. The distinguishing factor here is the factuality of language which is the linguistic experience of the world. On this ground, he escaped from both Schleiermacher's psychological reconstruction and Dilthey's notion of a hermeneutics of scientific objectivity betraying a tension between life and science. Moreover, in Gadamer's hermeneutics, language stands in relation to the world and thus is distinct from psychological experience and scientific objectivity. Accordingly, in order to understand life, language must be the medium of experience. For a critical apprehension of life, we

need to recognize the factuality of language in terms of its own sort of objectivity, a factuality that is distinct from subjective experience and scientific objectivity. This structure of language makes it possible to give a critical account of life. In this sense, just as the concept of effective-historical consciousness liberates hermeneutics from transcendental philosophy, the factuality of language liberates it both from psychologism and scientism.

Here language determines the hermeneutic object or subject matter, namely effective-history. That is to say that language as effective-history is primarily determined by us, but language also determines us. Gadamer argues that there is a primordial belongingness between the subject and object of history which manifests itself in the commonality between the subject and the object of language. This is where philosophical hermeneutics differs from the scientific method and introduces the dialectical structure of hermeneutic consciousness. Gadamer argues that dialectic is "not a movement performed by thought; what thought experiences is the movement of the thing itself."[108] Dialectic is based on the process of question and answer, and has characteristics such as openness and negativity, which show the speculative dimension of dialectic by means of which one grasps the whole. The totality with its parts reveals itself in dialectic. The structure of whole and parts as the thing (*Sache*) presents an infinity of meaning in a finite way. The dialectic of the thing is an interplay between the whole and its parts. In this

[108] TM, p. 460.

process, it negates the finite parts and opens itself to the future moments of the whole as a thing never separable from its parts.[109]

In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, the whole is not something given. In fact, there are no givens in his hermeneutics, since it is confined by the fore-structure of understanding. The object of consciousness is, in a way, related to this fore-structure. We come to know the whole by knowing its parts just as we know the whole object by perceiving its perspectives. Here the concept of historicity is a decisive factor. It could be said that our perception and language are restricted by that human historicity, which is valid for individuals as much as for humanity as a whole. However, the openness of historicity toward the negative moment of experience is the condition of complete perception, dialogue and language. Here there is an infinity of possibilities within the limits of human historicity or finitude which comprise whole and which the speculative dimension of dialectic expresses. There is an apparent paradox here, namely, 'infinity within human finitude.' This apparent paradox constitutes the core of Gadamer's notion of human understanding.

It is this seeming paradox that enriches Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics with a speculative dimension, thus overcoming relativism and avoiding transcendental philosophy. No language and no interpretation are ever absolute, since the speculative dimension of dialectic means that different languages and interpretations are open to

[109] TM, pp. 465-66.

each other. Hence, there can be no incommensurability between them as relativism would require.

Hence, ethical truth is found not in autonomous individuality but in the dialogical relationship between I-Thou in the form of a traditional community in language where ethical truth manifests itself. More clearly, our conceptions of right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and thus our ethical choices are constituted through the language that we have inherited. Moreover, language constitutes the ground of our moral consciousness. Gadamer's conception of language shows why he rejected the prevailing conception of truth, which presupposes Descartes' project of trying to establish a secure foundation for philososphical and scientific investigation. His approach also differs from Husserl's phenomeneology and the early Heidegger's "fundamental ontology," both of which were meant to constitute a transcendental philosophy grounding reality in the constitutive activities of the human being. However, Heidegger could not succed in establishing such a secure foundation, and thus quits the project of fundamenetal ontology. This is why Gadamer rejects the project of trying to formulate a methodology. Furthermore, since human beings are finite and fallible, they cannot grasp a clear and distinct foundation that can secure knowledge claims.

In this sense, Gadamer, like Wittgenstein, aims to understand the meaning of a speech act, not to understand what one means in it. "His (Gadamer) philosophy of human finitude presupposes that whatever

human beings might do or say is sustained by something which transcends them and in which they are embedded."[110] A further point can be made about Gadamer's epistemology. Indeed, it would be wrong to expect from him a method of inference based on a secure Archimeadean point. It would also be wrong to expect him to reach definite conclusions, since the language that we investigate always goes beyond what we grasp in it.

Thus there does not exist a completed system in the Gadamerian sense, since questions are always prior to answers. Furthermore, since 'inconclusiveness' (*unabschliessbarkeit*) is essential in any inquiry, it can never be finished by any answer. Herein lies the Gadamerian Platonic model, which introduces the idea of 'unity in indeterminancy.' This principle of indeterminanacy as indeterminancy in dialogue with others and in the 'dialogue of the soul with itself' presents our getting clear and distinct answers as the ends. That is to say, there is no certainity about the begginning and conclusiveness about the end.

According to Gadamer, there is no pre-linguistic reality of which language informs us. Indeed, language is not a picture of reality, rather it constitutes reality. This Gadamerian conception of language has, in fact, some affinities with that of Wittgenstein. Both philosophers focused on ordinary language, on the spoken and living language in the life-world. This conception of language is not introduced as a perfect system of

[110] Smith, P. Christopher 1991. *Hermeneutics and Human Finitude: Toward a Theory of Ethical Understanding*. New York: Fordham University Press., hereafter, HHF, p.xix.

signs, on the contrary, it is ordinary, inherited and traditional. Wittgenstein says: "our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, of houses with additions from various periods and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses."[111] Hence to have a language is to have a form of life. Similarly for Gadamer, understanding occurs in the context of a life-world or a form of life. In this sense, understanding occurs in the context of 'what is said.' Indeed, Gadamer and Wittgenstein contend that there is an inner unity between the word and the world since language constitutes our life and world. Language is, thus, not something that we create, but something we are born and live in like a city.

Another significant common ground between Gadamer and Wittgenstein lies in the notion "*das Spiel*," game or play, which is conceptualized as "*Sprachspiele*" or language game, a conception which presupposes the contextuality of language. *Sprachspiele* suggests that all our activities in a form of life are based on language, an activity performed according to the rules of the language game in which we have already been involved. Clearly this means that to understand is to know "what to do" and "how to behave" in the context of "what is said."

Language as *logoi* involves 'arguments,' 'speeches,' 'conceptions,' 'theories,' 'statements,' 'assertions,' or even 'propositions,' (Smith, HHF). Indeed, language could be understood more clearly in relation to "what is

[111] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan. 18.

said," as revealed in dialogue. "Discussion or dialogue is not the establishing of a pre-existent state of affairs, but rather a disclosure of something, a bringing something to light, a letting the subject-matter show forth in the medium of the logoi or things said" (Smith, HHF). In this sense, ethical reasoning is based on tradition rather than pure reason or scientific knowing (*episteme*). But here arises the question: how can ethical claims be justified? In a distorted society and tradition, how can we prevent certain sophistic manipulations? More precisely, can ethical reasoning be justified on the ground of tradition and language without appealing to a conception of pure reason and scientific knowing? As Plato demonstrated in the *Meno*, the conclusions of ethical choices cannot be deduced in the same fashion as propositions are demonstrated in mathematics. Hence, ethical understanding differs from mathematical knowledge, just as *phronesis* differs from *episteme*.

My argument here is based on the Socratic dialogue through which the participants justify their choices not only to others but also to themselves in the inner dialogue or in "the dialogue of the soul with itself." This Socratic model of discussion helps us to overcome the idiosyncratic dogma. Thus, individuals can become conscious of the ethical discourse in which they actualize a transition from the "I" to the "We," and so recover the language of their own tradition. In mathematical demonstration, we reach logically valid conclusions from constructed premises. However, in discussion, there is a circular flow of ideas between the participants and

so the results are open-ended. Ethical truths are captured in the discussion, not by geometrical demonstration, but through the "dialogical attitude" of the interlocuters who are involved in an open-ended dialogue.

According to Habermas, for instance, it is necessary to unveil the cause of distortions and thus enlighten the participants in the critical reflection on 'what is said.' Thus, it becomes possible to perform a discourse as a rational communication. This is precisely what Gadamer rejects, since, for him, Habermas misunderstands the nature of true discussion. Indeed, even though Habermas deals with overcoming ideological communicative obstacles and intends to reconstruct an open forum for rational discussion among enlightened individuals, he introduces a model of discourse akin to "the therapist-patient interchange in psychiatry."[112] This model is, Gadamer says, what distorts the nature of dialogue since it presupposes that while one of the participants, as more emancipated, is free from distortion, the other is not. However, in a true discussion, the participants are conscious of their finitude and their relative ideas, by means of which they become aware of their relative views and 'the said' throughout the discourse or dialogue. Indeed, the equality of the partners as a prerequisite leads to the self-unfolding of the question under discussion. This is, indeed, the Socratic model of conducting a dialogue in which we are involved in our ethical understanding. This Socratic art of conducting a dialogue has affinities with psychiatry in so far as Socrates introduces himself a soul doctor

[112] HHF, p.xxiii.

(*Psycheiatros*). This is not identical to Habermasian psychiatry which presupposes a disparity between the participants, one being free from distortion while the other is not. In Socratic psychiatry, there is no such disparity among the participants, since they accord themselves to the 'what is said' and to the *logos* of the subject matter (*Sache*) as 'patients' (*pathantos*). Herein lies the peculiarity of Socratic doctrine of 'learned ignorance' (*docta ignorantia*). This does not mean that the therapist might use it as a tool for treatment. Instead, it is a tool for the confession of the participants, which leads to geniune discussion. Indeed, the consciousness of 'learned ignorance' is a starting point for establishing the equality of the interlocuters insofar as they accord themselves to what is said in the discussion. Herein lies the power of Socratic dialogue in which the interlocuters overcome difficulties by letting the dialogue leads them.

Through this mutual interconnection, Socrates rehabilitates the distorted soul and recollects the common good that does not belong to only one of the participants as a private advantage. Indeed recollection can be grasped at any point in the discussion since the common good demonstrates itself in the dialectic as what is said. Therefore, what Socrates intends to do is to enlighten them about what they are saying, i.e., examining the things said in our discourse with others. Consequently, the participants commit themselves to the 'community of speakers' whose language they speak, and thus they escape from their selfish desires.

5.4 *Phronesis* as Moral Consciousness

I will now discuss philosophical hermeneutics in relation to the notion of philosophical ethics. In order to realize this task, I will introduce hermeneutics as practical philosophy. In order to clarify and to defend the possibility of a practical philosophy or a philosophical ethics, we must turn to Aristotle, the originator of the tradition of practical philosophy, and try to articulate his understanding of it. Indeed, present conceptions of practical philosophy are still under the influence of Aristotle's conceptual horizons. For he puts forth very many significant concepts and distinctions for the formation of a philosophical ethics. Here, it must be noted that the notion of philosophical ethics is almost synonymous with practical philosophy.

In order to demonstrate the relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and philosophical ethics, it is necessary to examine the concepts that Aristotle used to characterize action. Only then could it be possible to show how Gadamer incorporates these concepts into philosophical hermeneutics. The importance of Aristotle's practical philosophy is that he makes a crucial distinction between theoretical and practical reason. There is no trace of such a distinction in any other philosopher before him. Why does Aristotle make this distinction? What are its philosophical implications? In order to answer these questions, we must compare Aristotle with Plato, who does not make such an explicit distinction. Such a comparison throws light on the distinction between the human good and the good in itself, a distinction found in critique of Plato's

conception of the good. While Plato is only interested in the pure good as the good in itself, Aristotle addresses the human good which practical reason aims to pursue in relation to the good in itself.

Gadamer argues that Plato and Aristotle have a common concern for the idea of the good and the human good. Thus, Gadamer emphasized their common basis rather than the difference between them. However, the differences also have important philosophical implications since they give different responses to a common concern. Gadamer does not assume that Plato overlooked the human good and the distinction between theoretical and practical reason. He addresses Aristotle's distinction between theoretical and practical reason by distinguishing the two goods, a distinction also made by Plato in some sense. I am dealing, however, with *phronesis* in relation to the question of the good. Thus it is possible to understand the idea of philosophical ethics as practical philosophy. Gadamer discusses this relation between Plato and Aristotle in many of his writings but most especially in *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*.

> Thus the overall result of our investigation is as follows: in basing the question about being on the physei onta and not on the universality of the eidos or mathematical-eidetic configurations, Aristotle did indeed subject Plato's teachings to a radical critique. But in the end did he not carry out what Plato intended to do-indeed, even go beyond it in fulfilling it? There are basic truths that the Socratic Plato did not lose sight of any more than did the Platonic Aristotle: in human actions the good we project as hou heneka (that for the sake of which) is concretized and defined only by our practical reason-in the euboulia (well-advised-ness) of phronesis. Furthermore, every existent thing is "good" when it fulfills its telos (purpose, goal).

> Still, Plato only anticipated symbolically in his number doctrine what the good in such a universal sense actually means. Aristotle found conceptual answers to this question. The artificial expression *entelecheia*, which Aristotle introduces, is obviously supposed to make clear precisely that the telos is not a goal that belongs to some faraway order of perfection. Rather, in each case the telos is realized in the particular existent itself, and realized in such fusion that the individual contains the telos. Aristotelian metaphysics keeps this fact in focus as its constant theme. It thinks of the being of what is as the self-mediation of an existent thing with its "what-it-is" (ti estin), its eidetic determination. I have tried to make credible that such a mediation of being and becoming has to be presupposed if the postulation of ideas is to make any sense at all. The idea of the good and the barely comprehensible doctrine of the one and the two, point to such mediation even though it is formulated only metaphorically in Plato's dialogues- in the game played in the *Parmenides*, the likeness of the *Philebus*, or the mythos of the *Timaeus*. In Aristotle's thought, what Plato intended is transferred to the cautious and tentative language of philosophical concepts.[113]

In the *Republic*, Plato seems to discuss only pure justice and the pure good, even though the discussion in the dialogue is about the just state and the just individual in relation to the human good. In the *Philebus*, Plato deals particularly with the human good, since only gods, not humans, are able to experience the life of pure reason. Plato says that human life is a mixture of reason and pleasure, in which reason is in control. Here the philosopher makes an implicit distinction between practical and theoretical reason, as he subsumes practical under theoretical reason.[114] However, there is a difference between understanding something in its purity, and understanding it in terms of its

[113] IGPA, pp. 177-78.

[114] See, *Philebus*. 22c-e.

consequences such as pleasure. It is through this consideration that Aristotle's criticism of Plato outlines the domain of practical philosophy.[115]

According to Aristotle, the good in itself is something impractical if it cannot be experienced by humans, that is, if it is not the human good. For Aristotle, the good in itself cannot be a standard for obtaining the human good.[116] Thus the good that he addresses is the human good, a good which is attainable by particular individuals. An abstract notion of the good, as something independent of human good, is useless. By the critique of the Platonic good, Aristotle constitutes the domain of practical reason. The crucial point here is that there are two different reasons, because there are two different goods, not vice versa.

Aristotle does not reject Plato's views completely, especially not the idea of the good, since Plato already recognized that the human good differs from the good in itself. However, the question of whether the human good or the good in itself is the true meaning of happiness remains a divisive issue between them. The two goods suggest that there is a conflict between the practical and the contemplative lives. In order to resolve this tension, Aristotle distinguishes between two types of reason. To clarify the notion of the human good, and to show that it is possible to acquire it rationally, it is necessary to identify the nature of practical reason as distinguished from the theoretical. Herein, the question does

[115] NE, 1096b33-34., where Aristotle argues: "Assuming that there is some single good which different things possess in common, or that there exists a good absolutely in itself and by itself, it evidently is something which cannot be realized in action or attained by man. But the good which we are now seeking must be attainable."

[116] NE, 1097a11-14.

not pertain to the sphere of the difference between action and knowledge, but to the practical domain. The issue assumes the difference between *phronesis* and *techne*, which is necessary for elucidating the notion of practical reason in relation to the human good.

Given these considerations, I will refer to the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle expresses 'five states by which the soul acquires truth.' These are *techne* (art), *episteme* (science), *phronesis* (practical wisdom), *sophia* (philosophical wisdom), and *nous* (intuitive reason).[117]

Aristotle considers practical wisdom to be an intellectual virtue and contrasts it with moral virtue, to which the theory of the mean is applied. A moral virtue is determined by the principle used by a person with intellectual and practical wisdom. Furthermore, he distinguishes between two kinds of intellectual activity, namely, theoretical and practical. The former is a pure theoretical contemplation that is related to action. However, practical wisdom, or practical virtue concerns changing things and addresses what is to be done. Although what Aristotle says about this deliberative excellence is quite complicated, it can be understood by focusing on two points: firstly, deliberation involves a kind of reasoning which aims at some end, throughout which men try to choose the best way for grasping their ends. Secondly, Aristotle distinguishes between *praxis* as genuine action and *poiesis* as intelligence in producing a product or achieving some end beyond an action. Only human beings are capable

[117] NE, 1139b15. Aristotle there argues: "So let us make a fresh beginning and discuss these characteristics once again. Let us take for granted that the faculties by which the soul expresses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number: art, science, practical wisdom, theoretical wisdom, and intelligence."

of *praxis*, which is chosen as an end in itself, by which we choose to perform an action because it is valuable. On the other hand, practical wisdom involves more than excellence, as the intellectual activity involved in making instrumental or strategic thinking, but also the intellectual excellence required by praxis for genuine action. Aristotle relates practical wisdom to the capacity which he calls "cleverness" that guides man to attain his goals. Here, the goal may be "noble" in which case cleverness gains praise, or "base" where it becomes knavery.[118]

In this sense, practical wisdom is neither mere cleverness nor does it need the right ends to aim at, but it involves having the appropriate distinctively human ends which we aim at as ends in themselves. Accordingly, it would seem that the practically wise man must be virtuous in that he already has the moral virtues that are related to character and action in order to be practically wise.[119] That is to say, practical wisdom is not what enables us to take the right means to any end as does mere cleverness, rather it is what enables us to deliberate well with respect to the right ends as a moral virtue. Moreover, Aristotle says that practical wisdom is a kind of insight or perception. The practically wise man can conceive what the appropriate degree of passion and the appropriate

[118] NE, 1144a25. Aristotle says: "That is why men of practical wisdom are often described as "clever" and "knavish." But in fact this capacity alone is not practical wisdom, although practical wisdom does not exist without it."

[119] NE, 1144a10. Aristotle argues: "A man fulfils his proper function only by way of practical wisdom and moral excellence or virtue: virtue makes us aim at the right target, and practical wisdom makes us use the right means."

action should be. Hence, it could be said that the principle by which the mean is determined could not be applied by someone lacking virtue.

The difference between *phronesis* and *episteme* is that while the latter grasps such necessary types of knowledge such as mathematics and the natural sciences, the former deals with accidental objects such as human actions. Moreover, *episteme* involves demonstration, whereas *phronesis* does not since there is no demonstration of accidental things. *Phronesis* also differs from *nous* and *sophia*. While *nous* intuits the first principles of science, *sophia* is the combination of *episteme* and *nous*. Here, we arrive at the distinction between theoretical (*sophia*) and practical (*phronesis*) reason, each of which has its unique object of knowledge. However, since this distinction is based on the different objects of knowledge, it cannot explain the distinction between *phronesis* and *techne*, both of which have the same object, i.e., the human good. On the other hand, what distinguish them from each other is the nature of the human good and the sort of knowledge that they aim to acquire. Accordingly, for Aristotle, there are different human goods that stem from the distinction between *phronesis* and *techne*. Thus, human goods can be evaluated in terms of two different ways, and this has significant philosophical implications. In order to clarify this crucial point, I must explain the main differences between *phronesis* and *techne*, and then show the significance of the notion of *phronesis* in the constitution of philosophical ethics.

The difference between *phronesis* and *techne* concerns that between acting and making or action and production in human practice. The end of production differs from production itself, because the product is not a part of the process of production. On the contrary, the end of action cannot be separated from the action itself. For Aristotle, action is its own end; for instance, being just is identical with acting justly. Therefore, while *techne* is related to production or making, *phronesis* concerns the action which aims at the formation of human character.

> There is, no doubt, a real analogy between the fully developed moral consciousness and the capacity to make something-i.e., a techne-but they are certainly not the same.
> On the contrary, the differences are patent. It is obvious that man is not at his own disposal in the same way that the craftsman's material is at his disposal. Clearly he cannot make himself in the same way that he can make something else. Thus it will have to be another kind of knowledge that he has of himself in his moral being, a knowledge that is distinct from the knowledge that guides the making of something. Aristotle captures this difference in a bold and unique way when he calls this kind of knowledge self-knowledge-i.e., knowledge for oneself. This distinguishes the self-knowledge of moral consciousness from theoretical knowledge in a way that seems immediately evident. But it also distinguishes it from technical knowledge, and to make this double distinction Aristotle ventures the odd expression "self-knowledge."[120]

Indeed, the kind of knowledge related to action is different from that which is related to *techne*. This self-knowledge concerns human interests. Just as humans do not make themselves in the same way that they make products for use, they do not conceive their own interests in the same way

[120] TM, p. 316.

that they perceive the interests of their products. Thus action has its peculiar mode of activity with its own self-knowledge. Another difference between *techne* and *phronesis* is that, while the former concerns a multitude of actions with their own ends, the latter deals with a single good, i.e., the good life.[121]

Furthermore, *phronesis* differs from *techne* in terms of the end and the mean at which it aims. That is to say, there is a distinction between two types of means-ends relationships. Although means and ends are separate in *techne*, they are not separated in the activity of *phronesis*. Thus the end of *phronesis* cannot be known in the same way that the end of *techne* can be known, since in *techne*, we choose the appropriate means for the production of something. Although *phronesis* concerns means, it also involves ends because it is an end in itself. In this case, an action as an end is constituted by the choice of means. Therefore, the action which involves means is, at the same time, an end. Accordingly, the means and ends of action are inseparable.

Techne can be learned and thus can also be forgotten. But *phronesis* is not learned and so cannot be forgotten. It is necessary for action and for being a good person.[122] As an intellectual virtue, *phronesis* is also necessary for the moral virtues, such as justice and the others. Thus, it is essential for the good life and for being good. On the other hand, *techne*, as an intellectual virtue, can make contributions to the good

[121] NE, 1140a25-30.

[122] NE, 1144b30.

life; but it is not essential for the acquisition of moral virtues. *Phronesis* gets its concrete existence in experience and thus can be conceived by a person through experiences in action. Nonetheless, it does not arise from experience in the same way that *techne* does, since it is not learned. Accordingly, I argue that *techne* cannot provide action with rational guidance.

Phronesis is the end in itself as a mode of self-knowledge related to action. In constituting human morality, it involves the whole of action as much as particular acts. There seems to be a paradox here. Although it comes to exist in experience, it is not learnable, a characteristic which distinguishes it from *techne*. Moreover, it involves the whole, and the good in relation to particulars and human goods. But, on the other hand, it is clear that Aristotle describes *phronesis* not with speculative terms. Instead, it is described by such concepts as action, choice, deliberation and self-knowledge. Here action is a kind of human practice aiming to bring about or prevent change. For our purpose here, it is sufficient to note that the notion of action is limited to moral action as it concerns the problem of relating the human good and the good in itself. Moral action aims at self-knowledge, but the notion of 'self' does not refer to the Kantian transcendental and abstract self; rather, it refers here to a living individual, a social being, and thus is closer to Aristotelian sense.

According to Aristotle, action involves choice which originates from desire and deliberation. Although desire is the cause of choice, choice is

not moral unless it results from reason or deliberation. Therefore, choice is peculiar to human beings in that lower animals do not have it. On the other hand, the gods do not need it. Choice is thus as significant for morality as it is for action. However, it does not make sense without practical reason since its result is action. Hence, practical reason mediates between desire and action, and thereby becomes the deliberative choice. We deliberate only about things that we desire and things that we can get through our action. However, the question here is whether we deliberate about the means or the ends of action. Even though means and ends are integrated in *phronesis*, *phronesis* is not distinct from the deliberation which is determined by practical reason.[123]

However, Aristotle argues that while moral virtue determines the end of action, *phronesis* determines only the means. So we are faced with a crucial problem. What can determine the ends of action if *phronesis* cannot? We have learned from Aristotle that the ends of action can be determined neither by science nor by *nous*. There remains the possibility of *techne* determining our actions; but if that were so, *phronesis* would collapse into the pursuit of morality and the good life as ends. That is, the distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* would be lost if *phronesis* were restricted only to deliberating about means. What about *sophia*? Aristotle says that it cannot determine our actions since it constitutes theoretical reason. In such case, reason would be resigned in the constitution of the

[123] NE, 1141b5-10.

good life. The result would be that practical reason plays a crucial role in the rational choice of means toward nonrational ends.

In making these considerations, my aim is to understand how the ends can be rationally determined. Although I have introduced the notion of *phronesis* for the determination of ends, I do not reject the role of *techne* in constituting our ends. It is a fact that *techne* dominates our actions in the form of technology in the modern age. Moreover, our decisions in action are strongly influenced by modern processes of production. There is a danger here: if our actions are to be under the domination of *techne*, then humans will not be acting beings, but only producing entities, which would defy human nature. This seems to be an irrational development against which philosophical and scientific engagements appear to be the means of producing knowledge.

However, a wise man not only deliberates well toward ends which are valued for their own sake. He chooses and performs those acts for their own sake. There is still the question of how people together can constitute such a life. For Aristotle, a wise man is the person who is able to think well about this question. Moreover, he can think well about how the different moral virtues constitute a good life on the whole.

> This is shown by the fact that we speak of men as having practical wisdom in a particular respect, when they calculate well with respect to some worthwhile end, one that cannot be attained by an applied science or art. It follows that, in general,

> a man of practical wisdom is he who has the ability to deliberate.[124]

Thus, the practically wise man would be a person who develops a conception of the good life within which the distinctively human excellences are constituted.

Why does Aristotle not clearly say that *phronesis* defines the ends of action? In order to understand this point, let us first clarify his notion of *nous*. For Aristotle, it is intuitive reason that provides the first principles of science and so *nous* is related to theoretical reason. For Aristotle, *nous* plays a crucial role in the activities of practical reason because it is also active in grasping the ends of deliberation. However, there is a confusion here between theoretical and practical reason. For our purposes, it is important to understand the role of *nous* in terms of practical reason. If *phronesis* and *nous* are distinct, then *nous* cannot play the role of *phronesis* in practical reason. Indeed, since practical knowledge changes over time, *nous* cannot intuit the first principles of unchanging practical knowledge.

That is to say, *nous* comes at a particular time in life as a natural endowment. Thus, it is possible to relate it to education, experience and *ethos* in general. But the ends of action can only be determined by the noetic elements of *phronesis* whose principal goal is the attainment of the good life, i.e., the universal end of all other ends. In order to explain how *phronesis* provides the universal end, I have tried to clarify the relationship

[124] NE, 1140a25-35.

between *phronesis* and *sophia* and between practical and theoretical wisdom. Aristotle says that the good in itself is higher than the human good. The main implication of this appears to be that the contemplative life of philosophers is higher than the life of *phronesis*. Accordingly, the problem of happiness is related to the relationship between the human good and the good in itself on the one hand, and the difference between *sophia* and *phronesis*, on the other. Indeed, the relationship between the human good and the good in itself leads to the distinction between practical and theoretical reason, on the one hand, and the problem of happiness, on the other. This so-called problem can be resolved by harmonizing the contemplative and practical lives by integrating the two types of reason.

However, I should indicate that there is not such an explicit idea of harmony in Aristotle. The problem of the two different goods can only be resolved by appealing to both Plato and Aristotle. While Plato focuses on the idea of the good in itself, Aristotle introduces the significance of the human good. I argue that both philosophers were aware of the distinction and of the necessity of harmonizing the two goods. Obviously, we owe this point to Gadamer's interpretation of 'the idea of the good' in Aristotle and Plato. It must be noted that this common ground between the two philosophers becomes apparent in the *Philebus* where the relationship between the good and the human good is taken into consideration.

5.5 Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy

The Aristotelian tradition of practical philosophy has been dominated by the Kantian paradigm which introduced pure practical reason as the foundation of ethical theory. However, the situation has been reversed by the emergence of hermeneutics which has revived the tradition of Aristotelian practical philosophy.

> The great tradition of practical philosophy lives on in a hermeneutics that becomes aware of its philosophic implications, so we have recourse to this tradition about which we have spoken. In both cases, we have the same mutual implication between theoretical interest and practical action. Aristotle thought this issue through with complete lucidity in his ethics. For one to dedicate one's life to theoretic interests presupposes the virtue of *phronesis*. This in no way restricts the primacy of theory or of an interest in the pure desire to know. The idea of theory is and remains the exclusion of every interest in mere utility, whether on the part of the individual, the group, or the society as a whole. On the other hand, the primacy of "practice" is undeniable. Aristotle was insightful enough to acknowledge the reciprocity between theory and practice.[125]

As Gadamer suggests, the relation between Aristotle's practical philosophy and hermeneutics is not constructed from the content of his ethics, rather it stems from the relationship between theoretical interest and practical action. That is, it is constructed from the relationship between moral consciousness (*phronesis*) and moral being (*ethos*). The implication here is that ethics is the concrete result of the relationship

[125] Gadamer, H.G. 1981. *Reason in the Age of Science.* Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press. (Originally published Frankfurt 1976)., hereafter, RAS p. 111.

between theoretical and practical reason. So ethics as a theoretical interest provides conceptual analysis of practical reason. While it deals with action, it does not experience *phronesis*, even though its goal is still action, not pure knowledge. That is to say, ethics is neither pure theory nor pure practice, but it is the place where theory and practice are integrated while keeping their autonomy. This is the point at which hermeneutics becomes relevant to Aristotle's ethics, since moral being determines moral consciousness in the context of historical and practical conditions in relation to effective-historical consciousness. These conditions determine the moral being, which has a mutual relation with consciousness, expressed in language and transmitted through tradition.

Clearly, the relationship between ethics and *ethos* explicates the relation between any ethical theory and the norms and practices of a community. That is, ethics is the theory of *ethos* in the sense that it presupposes the validity of ethos in which the norms of ethical practices are embedded. I argue that philosophy can reflect on and criticize the norms and practices, even though it cannot determine their validity. It is the task of moral practices to create ethical norms. Thus the practice of ethical reflection presupposes that norms and ethical practices are valid. Philosophical ethics deliberates critically on these norms and practices. The validity of norms is constructed within the sphere of moral action; their universality, however, is actualized by theoretical reflection. Accordingly, ethics and *ethos*, or theory and practice, are inseparable. But the question

to what extent ethical reflection can contribute to the validity of ethical norms is still an open one. It is clear that these norms can be criticized by ethical reflection through the ontological structure of language. Rather than constructing a ground for the validity of norms, the dialogue can expand the scope of validity by adding new norms to the domain of *ethos*.

The distinction between theoretical and practical reason leads not only to the distinction between theory and practice but also to that between knowledge and action. Further, the distinction between knowledge and action can be recognized through reflection on the relationship between moral consciousness and moral being. For the relationship between the good and the human good grounds the distinction between practical and theoretical reason. These problematic relations can be understood more clearly by appealing to the fact that humans are finite beings who cannot attain happiness by means of the good in itself or pure contemplation. This is not to reject that contemplation is one of the most significant of human activities. On the contrary, my aim is to clarify the conditions in which human virtue, action and happiness are possible, and to identify the role of contemplation among them. Indeed, humans intend to acquire both the ultimate good as well as the human good. This is also what hermeneutics aims at. Hence hermeneutics as a theory is related to practice in that it is both a theory about practice and an instance of theory as practice.

> So when I speak about hermeneutics here, it is theory. There are no practical situations of understanding that I am trying to resolve by so speaking. Hermeneutics has to do with a theoretical attitude toward the practice of interpretation, the interpretation of texts, but also in relation to the experiences interpreted in them and in our communicatively unfolded orientation in the world. This theoretic stance only makes us aware reflectively of what is performatively at play in the practical experience of understanding. And so it appears to me that answers given by Aristotle to the question about the possibility of a moral philosophy hold true as well for our interest in hermeneutics. His answer was that ethics is only a theoretical enterprise and that anything said by way of a theoretic description of the forms of right living can be at best of little help when it comes to the concrete application to the human experience of life. And yet the universal desire to know does not break off at the point where concrete practical discernment is the decisive issue. The connection between the universal desire to know and concrete practical discernment is a reciprocal one. So it appears to me, heightened theoretic awareness about the experience of understanding and the practice of understanding, like philosophic hermeneutics and one's own self-understanding, are inseparable.[126]

More precisely: hermeneutics is a practice in itself, meant to be the practice of self-knowledge and the practice of historical consciousness. This practice cannot be confined to the interpretation of texts only, but is also related to experiences and to the thing (*Sache*) interpreted in the text. This relation to experience identifies the practical and the ethical dimensions of the theoretical activity of hermeneutics. Further, the relationship between hermeneutics and tradition determines the practical task of hermeneutics. Tradition is the subject-matter of effective-historical consciousness which has been transmitted through language.[127]

[126] RAS, p. 112.

Hermeneutics addresses the problem of tradition because it means to give an account of history by stressing the notion of historical consciousness. Here history has a connection with tradition. The fundamental task of hermeneutics is, thus, the transmission of tradition including literary, religious, legal and philosophical traditions. It is concerned with the transmission of tradition through texts which are significant as vehicles of tradition. Thus hermeneutics plays a crucial role in the transmission of tradition in that its role is not only understanding an obscure passage, "...it is not a mere teaching concerning a technical skill. Rather it has to be able to give an account of the exemplary character of that which it understands."[128]

Hence the relevance of Aristotle's ethics for hermeneutics can be discerned in the relation between hermeneutics and tradition. This concerns the problem of application for Gadamer, since Aristotle introduces the goal of ethics as action, not merely knowledge. This Aristotelian conception of ethics is related to hermeneutics which aims at understanding rather than pure knowledge alone. For understanding is interpretation situated in the context of practical application.

Here, understanding, interpretation and application are the acts of philosophical hermeneutics. The relationship between Aristotle's philosophy and hermeneutics becomes apparent, if we consider that while

[127] RAS, p. 97. Gadamer says: "Even the art of understanding the tradition, whether it deals with sacred books, legal texts, or exemplary masterworks, not only presupposes the recognition of these works but goes on further to shape their productive transmission."

[128] RAS, 97.

practical reason is determined by the imperatives of action for Aristotle, hermeneutic reflection is determined by the emergence of practice in the form of effective-historical consciousness. However, in order to understand how ethics is used as a model for hermeneutics, the relationship between *phronesis* and effective-historical consciousness must be elucidated. Although the same features and conditions constitute them, they are distinct concepts. Their common feature is that both are forms of practical reason, and thus they concern with the relation between the good and the human good. This last point concerns the relation between particulars and universals. *Phronesis* is concerned with particulars such as choice, action and deliberation. Indeed, it deals with the particular ends of single actions, and the universal end of all human action, i.e., the human good. In other words, *phronesis* aims at the universal through the particular. So it is through *phronesis* that not only theoretical and practical reason, but also the ultimate good and the human good become integrated. All these features of *phronesis* can be applied to hermeneutics, since it begins with particular texts and individual meanings. Besides, hermeneutics investigates the universal end of understanding which is both the good of human action and of the good life. The ultimate good and the human good are combined in the theoretical and practical activity of interpretation. That is to say, effective-historical consciousness aims at a universal tradition by means of the interpretation of particular vehicles.

Accordingly, effective-historical consciousness operates in the form of *phronesis* as ethical reflection. It is the self-consciousness of the dialectic of self-awareness and critical understanding. Action is the object of this dialectic which, in relation to other human practices, aims at the good life. Accordingly, practical philosophy combines the notion of the good life with the philosophical notion of the ultimate good. Thus philosophical ethics, as a reflection of practical philosophy, is related to philosophy as a whole since practical and theoretical reason are interrelated while retaining their autonomy. In this sense, the relation between practical philosophy and philosophy in general elucidates the context of hermeneutics as a practical philosophy for ethics. In fact, hermeneutics is concerned with the rehabilitation of the dialectic of the good in philosophy. It deals both with the practicality of philosophy and with philosophy as a practice.

In order to clarify this, let us consider practical philosophy in relation to *phronesis*. Hermeneutics analyses the concept of practice and tries to integrate in philosophy the good in itself and the human good. Gadamer here employs the concept of *phronesis* very broadly such that it is not unique to humanity, since all living beings have certain practices. However, there are unique human practices which are distinguished from the biological functions. These are action, philosophy, *techne*, and some other human activities that characterize the human rational way of life leading to the good life. Practices like *phronesis* involve deliberation on

their ends, but not all kinds of practices reflect on their ends. For example, *techne* and science are practices which do not consider their ends but are restricted to the means alone. Hence, *phronesis* is distinguished from practical philosophy. *Phronesis* is the reflection on the ends of human moral action including both particular actions and human actions towards the good life. However, moral action is only one form of human practice: others include *techne*, science, etc., each of which has its own end. Practical philosophy is concerned with the ends of different human practices, and with their ultimate ends, i.e., the good life. In short, while *phronesis* deals with the human good, practical philosophy considers all the human practices. But philosophy in general is concerned with the good in a broader sense, which is related to the idea of the whole as totality and unity. Within this general context, the good life, as a comprehensive concept, is the totality of all human practices. Accordingly, the notion of the good life is related to the concept of the whole, both of which relate to the concept of the ultimate good and philosophy in general.[129]

Philosophy thus aims at the attainment of the whole in relation to the good. According to Gadamer, 'the orientation to the whole' follows from the fact that reason needs to comprehend the whole, and that language has reconstructed the old metaphysical problem of the whole.

[129] RAS, p. 1. Gadamer says: "It is evident that what we call philosophy is not science in the same way as the so-called positive sciences are. It is not the case that philosophy has a positive datum alongside the standard research areas of the other sciences to be investigated by it alone, for philosophy has to do with the whole. But this whole is not merely, as is true of any other whole, the whole comprised of all its parts. As the whole, it is an idea that transcends every finite possibility of knowledge, and so it is nothing we could know in a scientific way."

That is, we become aware of the whole in language, for language is the medium of this whole. Further, reason comprehends the whole within the practice of language. However, although the whole is the presupposition of all particular practices, it is not given before practice, rather it is, as the universal practice, determined by these practices. Consequently, understanding the good life is the task of practical philosophy.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Final Considerations on Philosophical Ethics

I have looked for the possibility of a philosophical ethics by appealing to the hermeneutic tradition. Through the works of H.G. Gadamer, who has developed a conception of philosophical hermeneutics, this tradition provides us with rational insights into a moral philosophy. The central issue in our discussion of philosophical ethics has been the question of the good. This problem has not been evaluated as a mere theoretical issue, but as having practical implications, since it has direct affinities with the issue of human conduct. As Plato says, what we are to investigate is not a simple or an ordinary issue but how we should live.

I argued that the aforementioned problem has been conceptualized quite wrongly, since it has been characterized as an epistemological problem requiring some rational justification on a secure ground. This faulty approach goes back to Cartesian anxiety and the Enlightenment idea of an autonomous reason finding its strongest expression in Kant's

idea of pure practical reason. However, I have tried to demonstrate that it is impossible to establish a moral philosophy on the concept of pure or autonomous reason which is not situated in our moral being (*ethos*), and which transcends our being in the world.

I contend that such an absolutist conception of ethical truth stems from the threat of objectivism which is one aspect of the dilemma. Another side of the dilemma is the threat of relativism, according to which one cannot distinguish good from bad except relative to cultures and individuals.

In order to overcome the threats of both objectivism and relativism, and to provide a philosophical ground for ethics, I have employed the concept of "effective-historical consciousness" that operates in ethical reflection as *phronesis*. This is the self-consciousness of the dialectic of self-awareness and of critical understanding. Action is the subject matter of this dialectic in relation to other human practices that aim for the good life.

Our philosophical ethics as practical philosophy combines the good life with the idea of the good in itself. Hence, philosophical ethics as the reflection of practical philosophy tries to re-unite practical and theoretical reason while also keeping their autonomy. This unity is not explicit in the works of Plato, Aristotle or Kant. Just as Plato never explicitly made such a distinction, Aristotle could not convincingly combine theoretical and practical philosophy by unifying the human good with the ultimate good.

On the other hand, Kant emphasized pure reason rather than practical reason. I have tried to accomplish such a unity by employing our conception of philosophical ethics on the ground of a situated practical reason.

Kant introduced freedom as the basis of moral philosophy. However, freedom cannot be confined to the realm of moral action, it relates to practical philosophy as well. Here *phronesis* comes to exercise freedom including, both internal and external determinative factors. Thus freedom would not be actualized as absolute autonomy but as a self-determination, in that it is constituted through the ethical life. Moreover, I contend that freedom can be realized in the dialectical relationship between human freedom in action and the idea of freedom. Kant demonstrated only the theoretical aspect of freedom, which cannot guide human action as such. But freedom can only be an ontological condition of human action through the dialectical unity of human freedom with the idea of freedom. This, I argue, could be understood more clearly and systematically by appealing to the phenomenological description of human freedom that Merleau-Ponty calls "situated freedom." Situated freedom emphasizes the historicity of freedom by situating it in human action.

I employed Aristotle's concepts *phronesis*, practical philosophy, the human good, and consequently the concept of action for devising a philosophical ethics. The Platonic idea of the good and the model of dialectic give us a means to ground moral consciousness. It is Platonic

dialectic that makes Plato and Aristotle commensurable: the unity between the human good and the good in itself could thus be established. Therefore, the Platonic-Socratic model of dialectic is the essence of our philosophical ethics, and hermeneutics plays the role of unifying these different elements for establishing such an ethics. Indeed, ethical reflection is possible through this dialogical-dialectical model, as it aims at the pursuit of the human good within the good in itself. This model has certain ontological peculiarities which stem from the ontological structure of language. Gadamer has articulated this idea profoundly. Thus, in order to explicate the ontological conditions of the Platonic-Socratic dialogical-dialectical model, we must clarify the ontological structure of language.

Aristotle defines man as the living being who has logos. The western tradition conceives this definition of man as 'animal rationale,' or the rational being who has the capacity of thought. In a sense, this is a misunderstanding which stems from interpreting the Greek word 'logos' as reason or thought. Gadamer argues, "the primary meaning of this word is language."[130] Thus man's distinctive characteristic turns out to be having a language which makes it possible to distinguish between what is "useful and harmful, and therefore also what is right and wrong."[131]

Following this conception, three peculiar characteristics belong to language: the first essential characteristic involves the concept of "self-

[130] Gadamer, H.G. (1976). Man and language. In David E Linge (Trans. and Ed.). *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Berkeley: University of California Press., hereafter, ML, p. 59.

[131] ML, p. 59.

forgetfulness." We are not conscious of the language and its constituents, such as the structure, grammar and syntax, in the act of speaking. This is what the term "self-forgetfulness" explains.

Hence the real being of language is embedded in 'what is said' in language, in which our world and tradition are constituted. The second essential characteristic of language is its "I-lessness," which agrees with Wittgenstein's point in *Philosophical Investigations* that a 'private language' is impossible, since speaking is speaking to someone. Herein lies the dialogical character of language by means of which the spirit of communication governs the relation between I and Thou. Since language goes beyond the domain of 'I' and lets its being fall into the sphere of 'We,' the charge of both relativism and objectivism is avoided. This dialogical structure of language resembles the structure of play, since it is a dynamic process in which individuals participate freely. Even in the act of thinking, an individual is in a language game as an inner dialogue or a dialogue of the soul with itself called thought. The last ontological feature of language is expressed in what Gadamer calls "the universality of language." It signifies that there are no external limits of language but that it is "all-encompassing," i.e., it has limits only from within. One implication of this is that every language, and thus every dialogue, has an "inner infinity" in its process of questioning and answering.[132]

By endorsing this conception of language, I will try to clarify the ontological conditions of our dialogical-dialectical model. By 'conditions of

[132] ML, p. 67.

dialogue,' I do not mean transcendental conditions. Rather, I want to show how this model and ethical reflection function. A further point to be made is that the conditions of dialogue are identical with those of dialectic, since the theory of dialectic serves as a theory of the objective possibility of dialogue. The source of this model is Plato's dialogues, from which the ontological conditions of our model of an ethical dialogical-dialectical model stems.

The Platonic dialogues provide a sense of a reciprocal interrogation of ideas in the environment of discourse. The discussion between Socrates and Thrasymachus on the idea of justice in the *Republic*, for example, unfolds in such a fashion. In the dialectical argumentation, all the participants defend their views without coercion. Here, dialectic is used as a way of conducting a conversation and establishing different views which gain their concrete being in language. Further, the conditions of dialectic and dialogue are constituted throughout the examined practice of discourse in which the participants demonstrate openness to questioning and a willingness to pursue a dialectical unity of subject-matter. This is an ethical practice, since what motivates the participants is the question of how one should live. Herein lies the need to give an account of our life in relation to the quest for the good which aims at unifying all the different ideas. This need is thus a condition for both dialogue and dialectic. However, there is a serious problem here: why should we participate in dialogue? Or, how can we be sure that dialectic is not introduced as an

ideological device? There cannot be any conclusive answer to these questions, since man is a finite and fallible being. Here dialogue as a mode of being excludes a transcendental conception of philosophy which leads to authoritarian attitudes towards the concept of truth. In the Platonic-Socratic model of dialogue, there is no absolutely correct interpretation of any given text or any idea such as the good, since there cannot be an absolute good beyond our interpretation and appropriation of our own human good. Indeed, the good manifests itself in interpretations of the good throughout history; this is an expression of the sense of the continuity of the dialogical-dialectical model. Hence we have a hermeneutic response to transcendentally based moral philosophies. In making this response, we defend an ontological claim through dialogue and dialectic, these being the media of philosophical discourse. Moreover, the hermeneutic response, as a dialectical reflection with its ontological claims, enables the dialogue to continue. Since there is no end of dialogue or dialectic, they can never be precisely defined. Hence, dialogue remains indeterminate, and this frees the dialectic of the good and the human good from the threats of ideology, relativism and coercion. The lack of any determinate definition for dialogue or the good enables us to understand that our conception of the good is limited by our finitude and that the human good, as what we have actualized, is never the good in itself. Consequently, the good manifests itself and fulfils its function in the human good through open-ended dialogue.

norms and practices of the moral sphere or *ethos*, although it cannot determine their validity. Creating ethical norms and their content is the task of ethical practices, not that of moral philosophy. Hence, while the practice of ethical reflection takes norms and ethical practices as valid, philosophical ethics deliberates on these norms and practices. This is the level of reflection from which disagreement arises in moral philosophy. Even Kant presupposes the validity of maxims, but for a maxim to be a universal moral law, it must be critiqued relative to the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative does not aim to create moral principles, rather it aims to provide a formal justification of them. The validity of maxims is grounded in the sphere of moral action, and their universality is conceived through theoretical reflection. Therefore, ethics and *ethos*, or theory and practice, are inseparable and their unity creates a basis of validity for human action in the form of *phronesis*. Since language has a dialogical and dialectical ontological structure, ethical reflection has the power to criticize practices and norms in the domain of moral being or *ethos* without falling into a pseudo dichotomy between objectivism and relativism. The dialogical-dialectical model is able to expand the scope of norms and practices by admitting additional norms as the subject-matter into discussion.

Upon these considerations, I contend that philosophical ethics, in the form of philosophical hermeneutics, bears an anti-absolutist and a nontranscendental essence in itself even though that non-absolutist

essence may lead to the charge of relativism. It may be alleged that hermeneutics employs no criterion for distinguishing truth from falsehood, right from wrong and so on. This criticism stems from the view that a theory must provide a criterion or foundation in order to avoid relativism. It is plain that hermeneutics does not offer such a program of salvation; on the contrary, it begins with the rejection of any absolutist standpoint. Indeed, relativism, as the opposite of absolutism, is not a real problem for hermeneutics, since practical philosophy rejects both relativism and objectivism. It is the peculiar feature of hermeneutics that it functions without a foundation in the sense of epistemological justification, since it always has a subject-matter with which we are occupied. This subject-matter is the human good in relation to the good in itself, which can be captured by finite humans within the indeterminacy and infinity of dialogue.

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APPENDIX

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

İYİ DÜŞÜNCESİNİN HERMENEUTİK TASARIMI

Bu çalışmanın amacı 'iyi' sorununu araştırmak ve bunu hermeneutik olarak adlandırdığımız yorumsamacı felsefe çerçevesinde çözümlemektir. Bundan dolayı, temel amacımız hermeneutik ve etik arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyerek, 'iyi' düşüncesini hermeneutik bir çerçevede yeniden kurmaktır. Bu amaca ulaşabilmek için felsefi etik kavramı, Gadamer'in felsefi hermeneutik'i temelinde ve büyük eseri *Yöntem ve Doğruluk*'a göndermede bulunularak geliştirilmeye çalışıldı. Fakat şu soruların öncelikle yanıtlanması gereklidir: Etik nedir?, Hermeneutik nedir?, Etik sorunları genel olarak hermeneutik ve özel olarak felsefi hermeneutik açıdan nasıl yeniden kurabiliriz?

Etikin ne olduğunu anlayabilmek için öncelikle 'ahlak,' 'ahlak kuramı' ve 'meta-etik' arasında üçlü bir ayrım yapmak gerekiyor. Ahlak, cömertlik, dürüstlük vb. gibi moral değerlere ilişkin bireysel yargıları ve bazı özel durumlarda yapılması gerekenleri içerir. Bu açıdan, ahlak, belli uzlaşmalara dayalı ahlaki yargılar bütünü olarak tanımlanabilir.

Buna göre, ahlak bireysel savları gerekçelendiren bazı ilkelerle ilişkilendirilmiş olacaktır. Bu ilişkilendirme, bu tür ilkeleri dizgesel bir yapı içinde bütünleştiren bir ahlak kuramının oluşmasına yol açacaktır. Burada

iki nokta açıklanmalıdır: İlkin, bir ahlak kuramına başvurmadan da ahlaki bir sav ortaya atılabilir. İkinci olarak, bu ahlaki savlar farklı ahlak kuramlarıyla uygunluk içinde olabilir. Örneğin; deneyimsiz bir müşteriyi aldatmanın yanlış olduğu hiçbir dizgesel gerekçelendirmeye başvurmadan da ortaya konabilir. Bü türden bir sav deontolji ya da pragmatizm gibi oldukça farklı ahlak kuramlarına da uygun olabilir.

Meta-etik hem ahlaktan hem de ahlak kuramından farklıdır. Çünkü, meta-etik neyin doğru ya da yanlış, neyin iyi ya da kötü olduğuyla değil, ahlaki savların ve ahlak kuramlarının mantıksal durumuyla ilgilenir. Bundan dolayı meta-etik, ahlakla ilgili soyut düşünme biçimi olarak tanımlanabilir. Daha çok değerlerin nesnel olup olmadığı ve değerlerle ilgili düşüncelerden doğru bilgiye ulaşılıp ulaşılamayacağıyla ilgilenir.

Bu değerlendirmelerin ışığında temel savımızı şöylece ortaya koyabiliriz: Hem ahlak kuramı hem de meta-etik, felsefe ve etik için güvenli bir temel kurmayı amaçlayan bilimsel felsefe anlayışının bir ürünüdür. Oysaki, ahlak, ahlak kuramlarının ve meta-etik kuramların yapmaya çalıştığı biçimiyle rasyonel olarak temellendirilemez. Çünkü bu kuramlar insanın tarihselliğini olduğu kadar kültürel öğeleri de gözardı etmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla, ahlak bilinci, tarihsel koşulların oluşturduğu bir us anlayışını varsayan pratik bir felsefe çerçevesinde oluşturulabilir. Bize göre böyle bir yaklaşım felefi hermeneutik ve dolayısıyla felsefi etik tarafından oluşturulabilir. Felsefi hermeneutik, dünya, toplum, din, hukuk ve gelenek gibi temel konuları içeren metinlerin yorumlanması için felsefi kavramlar

geliştiren Hans-George Gadamer'in felsefi tutumunu ifade eder. Felsefi etik kavramı ise pratik bir felsefe tasarımı olarak Gadamerce ortaya atılmıştır. Felsefi etik kavramı daha çok felsefi hermeneutik kavramının bir yansımasıdır, ve aşkın ve dini etik anlayışlarından ayrı olma durumunu da ifade eder.

Felsefi bir etik kavramı kurabilmek için etik sorunların genel felsefi kuramlar açısından incelenmesi gereklidir. Çünkü, felsefi etike ait sorunlar bir çok açıdan genel felsefe sorunlarıyla örtüşür. Felsefe ve etik arasında diyalektik bir etkilşim olduğundan, sorun tartışılırken felsefe ya da etik başlangıç noktası olarak şeçilebilir. Felsefe ve etik arasındaki bu diyalektik ilişki çalışmamızın özünü oluşturmaktadır, ve felsefi anlayışımızın da temel taşıdır.

Felsefi etik kavramı pratik felsefe kavramıyla hemen hemen özdeştir. Bu kavram Platoncu, Kantcı ve faydacı normatif ahlak kuramlarıyla duygucu ve bilişsel olmayan meta-etik kuramlara karşı üçüncü bir seçenek olarak ortaya atılmıştır. Daha açık bir ifade kullanacak olursak felsefi etik, ahlak bilincimizin (*phronesis*) ahlak dünyamızla (*ethos*) varolan diyalektik etkileşiminin bir ürünüdür.

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı nesnel savlar içermeyen ussal (rational) ve düşünümsel (reflective) pratik bir ahlak felsefesinin olanaklılığını göstermektir. Bunun için yanıtını aradığımız sorunu şöylece ortaya koyabiliriz: Nesnelciliğe ve öznelciliğe sapmadan ussal ve düşünümsel bir ahlak felsefesinin olanaklı olduğu gösterilebilir mi?

Böyle bir olanağın varolduğunu gösterebilmek için, hermeneutik felsefe geleneği çerçevesinde Aristo ve Kant arasındaki uzlaşmazlığı ortadan kaldırmaya çalıştık. Hermeneutik gelenek nesnelciliğin ve göreceliliğin etkilerinden kurtulmuş, pratik ve ussal bir etiki diyalektik olarak yeniden kurabilme olanağını sağlamaktadır.

Aristo'yu ve Kant'ı uzlaştırmak gerçekte koşullulukla koşulsuzluğu uzlaştırmakla eş anlamlıdır. Koşulsuz etik pratik yaşamı dışarda bırakırken, koşullu etik özgürlük ve usa yer vermemektedir. Bundan dolayı Aristo ve Kant etiki arasında ortak bir temel kurmak ilk bakışta çelişkili gibi görünmektedir. Aristocu etik *phronesis* ya da pratik us kavramına dayanır ve gelenek ve ahlaki yaşamla ilgilenirken, Kantçı etik saf veya koşulsuz usa dayanır.

Uzlaşmazlığı ortadan kaldırmak ve dolayısıyla Aristo ve Kant arasındaki ortak temeli gösterebilmek için, Gadamer Kantın numen ve fenomen arasındaki ayrımına baş vurmaktadır. Bu ayrıma göre eylem, fenomen olarak, doğa yasalarının konusu olarak analşılabilir. Eylem, yine, numen olarak, özgürlük yaslarının konusu olarak analaşılabilir.

Bu dualistik eylem görüşünden felsefi etikin iki boyutu ortaya çıkar: Pratik ve kuramsal. Aristo'da eylem ve kararla ilgili somut bir ahlak felsefesi bulunurken, Kant'ta etik yaşamın eleştirel ve ussal düşüncesini buluruz. Bu düşünce, koşulluluğun veya sonluluğun dile getirilmesidir. Ahlak düşüncesinin sonluluğu sadece Aristocu ahlak felsefesinin değil aynı zamanda Kantçı ahlak felsefesinin de bir özelliğidir. Çünkü Kantçı

ahlak felsefesi, ahlaki yaşama yeni bir içerik kazandırmaktan daha çok sıradan insanın ahlaki deneyimlerini işlemek ve kritik etmeyi amaçlar.

Felsefi etikin ana teması olan iyi sorununu, hermeneutiği pratik felsefe olarak sunarak çözüme kavuşturmaya amaçladık. Böylece, diyalektik-dialojik bir model tasarlama olanağı ortaya çıktı. Bu modelin ayırdedici özelliği, araştırmayı yönlendiren sürekli bir konuya sahip olunması ve böylece bilginin, epistemolojik gerekçelendirmelere başvurmadan, temellendirilebilmesidir.

Felsefi etik, pratik felsefe olarak, iyi yaşamı, 'iyi' kavramýyla, ve pratik usu da kuramsal usla yeniden bütünleştirirken aynı zamanda bunların özerkliklerini de tanır. Benzer şekilde özgürlük, eylemdeki insan özgürlüğünün özgürlük düşüncesiyle olan diyalektik etkileşimi sonucu kavranabilir. Bu diyalektik bütünlük yoluyla özgürlük, eylemin yegane ontolojik koşulu olarak ortaya çıkar. Bu düşünce sistematik olarak, Merleau-Ponty'nin 'konumlanmış özgürlük' kavramıyla ifade ettiği ve özgürlüğün tarihselliğini insan eylemlerinde somutlaştıran vurgusuyla daha iyi anlaşılabilir.

Platoncu-Sokratcı diyalektik model felsefi etikin özüdür ve burada hermeneutik, böyle bir etik oluşturmak için farklı öğeleri birleştirme görevini üstlenir. Bu modelin ontolojik koşullarını açıklayabilmek için dilin ontolojik yapısını açıklamak zorunludur. Bunun için, Aristo'nun insanı *logos* sahibi varlık olarak tanımlamasını incelemek durumundayız. Batı felsefe geleneği, bu tanımla insanı, rasyonel hayvan ya da düşünme yetisine

sahip varlık olarak ortaya koymuştur. Bir bakıma yanlış olan bu tanımlama Grekçe bir kelime olan *logos*u us ya da düşünce olarak yorumlamaktan kaynaklanıyor.

Oysaki *logos* kelimesinin birincil anlamı dildir. Bu durumda insanın ayırtedici niteliği, neyin yaralı neyin zararlı, neyin iyi neyin kötü olduğu ayrımını sağlayan bir dile sahip olmasıdır. Dilin gerçek varlığı, dünyamızı ve geleneğimizi oluşturan dilin 'söylediği şey'de yatar. Dilin bu temel niteliğinde özne olarak 'Ben'in olamayışıdır. Burada dilin diyalojik niteliği yatmaktadır ve böylece iletişimin gücü Ben ve Sen ilişkisini yönlendirir. Dil 'Ben'in ötesine geçip varlığını 'Biz'in alanında somutlaştırdığı için göreceliliğin ve nesnelciliğin bozucu etkisi önlenmiş oluyor. Dilin bu diyalojik yapısı oyunun yapısına benzer. Çünkü dil bireylerin özgürce içinde yer aldığı dinamik bir süreçtir. Düşünme eyleminde bile birey bir dil oyunu içindedir. Bu içsel bir diyalogdur. Ruhun kendisiyle olan diyaloğudur. Biz buna düşünce diyoruz.

Dilin diğer bir ontolojik özelliği, evrensel oluşudur. Bunun anlamı şudur: Dili çerçeveleyen hiç bir dışsal sınırlama yoktur. Dilin sınırları kendi içindedir. Bu özelliğin temel anlamını şöylece ortaya koyabiliriz: Her dil ve dolayısıyla her diyalog sorma ve yanıtlama sürecinde içsel bir sonsuzluğa sahiptir.

Bu dil anlayışı diyalektik-diyalojik modelimizin ontolojik koşullarını da ortaya koyar. Diyalektik, diyaloğun nesnel olanaklılığı kuramı olduğundan, diyalogla özdeş bir kavramdır. Bu modelin kaynağı Platon'un

Diyaloglarıdır. Platoncu diyaloglar, söylem ortamında düşüncelerin karşılıklı olarak sorgulanması olanağını sağlar. Diyalektik usavurmada katılımcılar hiç bir baskıyla karşılaşmadan düşüncelerini ortaya koyarlar. Burada diyalektik, konuşmayı yönlendiren bir yoludur ve somut varlıklarını dilde bulan farklı düşüncelerin ortaya çıkmasını sağlar.

Diyaloğun koşulları söylemin pratik deneyiminde oluşur. Söyleme katılanlar sorgulanmaya açıktırlar ve konunun diyalektik bütünlüğünü kavrama isteğine sahiptirler. Katılımcıları güdüleyen şey 'nasıl yaşamalıyız' sorunu olduğundan, burada etik bir deneyim gerçekleşir. Öyle ki, tüm farklı düşünceleri bütünleştirmeyi amaçlayan 'iyi'yle kurulan ilişki açısından yaşamın bir hesabını yapma gereksinimi ortaya çıkar. Bu gereksinim diyaloğun ve diyalektiğin temel koşullarından biridir.

Bir varoluş modu olarak diyalog, doğruluk kavramını otoriter bir tutumla ele alan aşkın (transcendental) felsefe biçimlerini yadsır. Çünkü, iyi, tarih içindeki yorumlarında kendisini dışa vurur. Açıkçası, diyalog bir süreçtir ve tarih içinde farklı yaklaşımlarla içerik kazanır.

Bu değerlendirmeler ışığında, felsefi hermeneutiğin bir yansıması olarak felsefi etik aşkın ve mutlak olmayan bir öze sahiptir. Karşı bir sav olarak şu söylenebilir; hermeneutik yanlışı doğrudan ve iyiyi kötüden ayırtetmemizi sağlayacak bir ölçüt ortaya koymuyor. Bu türden bir eleştiri, bir kuramın görecelilikten kurtulabilmesi için bir temel ya da bir ölçüt sağlaması gerektiği düşüncesinin sonucudur. Oysa ki, hermeneutik bu türden bir kurtuluş reçetesi sunamaz. Tersine, hermeneutik böyle mutlakçı

felsefelerin eleştirisiyle yola koyulur. Ayrıca şunu da belirtmeliyiz ki mutlakçılığın karşıtı olan görecelilik de hermeneutik için gerçek bir sorun değildir çünkü pratik felsefe göreceliliği de nesnelciliği de yadsır.

Hermeneutiğin ayırtedici özelliği epistemolojik temellendirmeler olmaksızın çalışmasıdır. Çünkü bizi ilgilendiren sürekli bir konuya sahiptir. Bu konu 'iyi' düşüncesiyle etkileşim içinde olan 'insana ait iyi' düşüncesidir. Sonlu insan bu düşünceyi diyalog ortamının belirsizliği ve sonsuzluğu içinde yakalayabilir.

VITA

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