

PHILOSOPHIKE MARTYRIA. ARISTOTLE, GADAMER AND THE RELEVANCE OF PRACTICAL-ETHICAL KNOWLEDGE IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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Of what relevance is practical-ethical knowledge (*phronesis*) in a multicultural or plural society?¹ This question will be addressed, in the first place, by revisiting the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*. What is important here is the emphasis on practical wisdom and the mediation between the universal and particular. In his problematisation of a pure and universal understanding of knowledge, Aristotle distinguishes between practical-ethical knowledge (*phronesis*), scientific knowledge (*epistémé*) and technical knowledge (*techné*). In the second part of the paper it will be argued that Gadamer's hermeneutical criticism of an over-rationalised and technologised world gives an imaginative and creative twentieth century reading of *phronesis*. In the third and final part the issue of practical-ethical knowledge will be further examined by looking at the implications of Lyotard's arguments for a multicultural society. The thesis, briefly formulated, is that Aristotle's idea of *phronesis*; Gadamer's idea of hermeneutics; and the postmodern critique of universals are all valuable suggestions in a fragmented world, on the one hand, but they need to be challenged by some form of discourse ethics in order to discuss and evaluate differences and particular societal perspectives of knowledge and values, at the end of the twentieth century.

I

Before Aristotle the concept of *phronesis* was examined by Democritus, Socrates and Plato. For Democritus, the practical-ethical person has a threefold task: to speak, debate and act well. Socrates interprets *phronesis* as a quality of the soul concerned with action which realises itself as deliberation and which has above all the role of teaching humankind what is beneficial and good. Plato, on the other hand, was not satisfied with these definitions and he situated all true knowledge of the human good (*phronesis* and *sophia*) in a knowledge of the absolute good in itself. In the *Phaedo* he describes *phronesis* as the ability to contemplate the form of the

good which guides a person's actions by proposing this good in itself as the supreme norm and ideal for whatever he or she does.² This Platonic position, though, was abandoned by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the kind of "theoretical" knowledge of the absolute good, as proposed by Plato, was judged inadequate for the characterisation of the good. Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic idea of the universal good comes, therefore, as no surprise: "... for even if the goodness that is predicated in common is some *one* thing or has a separate existence of its own, clearly it cannot be realised in action or acquired by man" (Aristotle 1976: 1096b 32-35, emphasis mine). Against this Platonic conception, Aristotle develops an idea of *phronesis* which is closer to that suggested by Socrates and Democritus.

Phronesis is not a "general knowledge" of the good in itself or of being in its general form (*eidos*). It is a "particular knowledge", which involves the wealth and diversity of human desires, situations, judgements and actions. From this perspective, the prudent person (*phronimos*) selects those actions and ends which fulfil humanity's well-being or good.³ Aristotle's forthright acknowledgement of the particular and contingent nature of knowledge and ethics, though, does not presuppose arbitrariness. This is clear when he places human action within the framework of human rationality and a differentiated concept of *truth*. Aristotle (1976: 1139b18-1141b27) distinguishes between truth as science or scientific knowledge (*episteme*); art or technical skill (*techne*); prudence or practical-ethical knowledge (*phronesis*); intelligence or intuition (*nous*) and wisdom (*sophia*). When one looks more carefully at this differentiation it becomes clear that Aristotle distinguishes between practical knowledge (*techne* and *phronesis*), on the one hand, and theoretical knowledge or *theoria* (*episteme*, *nous* and *sophia*), on the other. Against this background *techne* is the realm of knowledge contingent to the acquisition of skills for the purpose of making tools (production). *Phronesis* is the practical-ethical knowledge of human beings and action, which is not just universal, but also contingent and particular and therefore part of the human existential praxis.⁴ *Theoria*, though, is concerned with the universal, eternal, and non-contingent knowledge of "nature" or the "divine".

One gains more clarity about *phronesis* when it is contrasted with theoretical knowledge and *techne*. In relating the differences between *phronesis* and theoretical knowledge, Aristotle uses the example of a doctor, to criticise Plato's idea of the absolute good

(Gadamer 1978). He asks: Can a doctor attend to his patients with only a general idea of the good without taking into consideration the particular circumstances of every case? This example indicates that *phronesis* is not the same as theoretical knowledge, especially science or scientific knowledge (*episteme*). Aristotle offers three reasons for this view. *Episteme* is, firstly, knowledge of a universal and necessary kind, while the practical world of the human praxis is characterised by contingency and difference.⁵ Hence "...prudence is not concerned with universals only; it must also take cognisance of particulars, because it is concerned with conduct..." (Aristotle 1976: 1141b15). *Episteme* depends, secondly, on deductive evidence. Aristotle, for example, argues that Pericles could not just use theory to teach his sons to become good statesmen. Lastly, subject and object are separated in the knowledge production of *episteme* (Gadamer 1975a: 285-290). *Phronesis*, on the other hand, desires to mediate - it is not objective knowledge. Aristotle's argument is that the universality of objective knowledge differs from the "universality" of one's knowledge of the human good. Knowledge of the human good does not impose itself on the particular. Practical-ethical knowledge is not merely abstract, necessary and deductively true (Schuchman 1979: 43-44).

If practical-ethical knowledge is not "universal" in the sense of theoretical knowledge, as indicated, the question is whether it is the same as technical skill or artisanship (*techne*). The Greeks used *techne* as a form of knowledge which guides action, for example, the artisan who applies his technical knowledge on his surrounding practice. Is *phronesis* technical knowledge? Although Aristotle (1976: 1140a24-28) is aware that both *techne* and *phronesis* are both dynamic forms of practical knowledge and action, there are also important differences. One can learn and forget the skills of *techne* (Gadamer 1975a: 300; 1975b: 383). *Phronesis* is not acquired in a prescriptive way like a technical skill. The general idea of the good in practical-ethical knowledge does, therefore, not compare with the blueprint (*eidōs*) of the craftsman. *Techne* also functions quite comfortably in a means-end-relationship (Gadamer 1975a: 304-305, 1975b: 286-287). Technical knowledge systematically works towards an end. This realm of knowledge is taught or even prescribed before it leads to action in a concrete situation. Practical-ethical knowledge, on the other hand, has no fixed goal, neither the right means nor is the right end known beforehand/Practical-ethical knowledge differs from *techne*, finally, in being self-knowledge of an ethical kind. This is a

form of knowledge that is influenced by our daily lives. *Phronesis* is, in this sense, related to the experience of an ethical (*arete*) or good life.⁷

This aim of the good life can only be achieved, according to Aristotle, within the context of a political society. Consequently, political theory is not sharply distinguished from moral theory. The state is not a type of coercive agency, external to the individual, whose powers to interfere and limit need to be justified. Aristotle's fundamental concept is the human good, and not an obligation to the state (Taylor 1995: 233-234). And a life that aims to be humanly good requires just and generous interaction with others (*ibid.*: 235). At this point, one could say that Aristotle was not critical enough about the position of women and slaves in the household, however, as natural forerunner of the *polis* and society, it must be acknowledged that he never viewed the *polis* as something that came into being for the sake of life only, but it came into being for the sake of the good life (*ibid.*: 237). On the same account one could also argue that Aristotle did not place the *polis* prior to the individual. For him the good life remains directed by *phronesis*, and its most perfect exercise is the application of that virtue to the common good of the community (*ibid.*: 239, 241). Given Aristotle's emphasis on the good life, it is possible to indicate that he would be critical of the kind of representative government that removes the individual or citizen too far from day-to-day-decision-making (*ibid.*: 242). It is therefore unfortunate that he did not satisfactorily resolve the tension between the principles underlying his participatory conception of the *polis* and the principle that the best form of constitution is the rule of the best rulers (*ibid.*: 246).

Notwithstanding this tension in the Aristotelian legacy, he has given us *phronesis* as a form of practical-ethical or existential knowledge; i.e. knowledge about human conduct in different practical situations. In this sense, Aristotle is the forerunner of "... a style of philosophising in which the practitioners put their own traditions, cultures, histories and languages into question and into dialogue with one another, beyond the perspective or objective of attaining eternal truths" (McNeill and Feldman 1998: 2).⁸ *Phronesis* is the *mediation* or *deliberation* between a particular situation and the universal ideas about human goodness. Although we may use theoretical knowledge or technical skill in our moral thinking, we do it without substituting practical-ethical knowledge. This situatedness of practical-ethical knowledge (or *phronesis*) gives substance to the idea of mediation and more specifically to the idea of *ethos* or, as we shall see in the next section, Gadamer's idea of solidarity.⁹ Finally, *phronesis* also has

relevance for multicultural, plural, and complex societies. Practical-ethical knowledge obviously has a place in societies which are characterised by various perspectives of truth and goodness. The mere existence of these perspectives makes an one-dimensional idea of knowledge and ethics problematic. In this sense, the son of the city-state Stagira (in northern Greece), who knew and experienced the turbulence of his own time, is still a valued interlocutor today.

II

It will be interesting to undertake a study of the influence of Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* on 20th century philosophy. Just by looking at four examples it seems to be considerable: Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958), Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960), Habermas' *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) and Lyotard's *The Differend* (1984) could all be considered as sympathetic responses to *phronesis*. Gadamer has made it his intellectual trademark to involve the world of the Greeks, and more specifically Plato's concept of the dialogue and Aristotle's practical philosophy, in the development of his philosophical hermeneutics. However, the question still remains: Are our contemporary problems not too far removed from the Aristotelian world? Modern scientific culture or technological knowledge, for example, are currently used with a great deal of sophistication. The method of means-end-relationships has become more monological and regulated in a world where the practical wisdom, resulting from deliberation between citizens, has moved to the margins. Various examples could be cited in this regard: the technological manipulation of the public media; the restriction of citizen's political action to mere participation in elections; and the difficulty of neutralising the interests of the economic power blocks and multi-nationals. Even the configurations of our social life, our solidarity, are mainly determined by the technical and economic organisation of the world. Spontaneous and creative social interchange is more and more an exception.¹⁰

Gadamer describes our contemporary age as one which is driven by catch-phrases such as economic viability and relentless change. The expert, consultant, methodologist, strategic manager and social engineer are the new "cultural heroes" of the technocratic society. In their strategic proposals, the adaptability of the individual is valued more than the individual's creative potential. This is also a society where the official is only involved in the administration of the own duties and functions. Each playing their respective part in the scientific, technological and monetary processes; a role subordinated

to the smooth functioning of the system in which praxis degenerates into technique (Gadamer 1976b: 59-60; 1981c: 73-74). The whole process of the technologisation of nature should thus be seen as the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world.¹¹ In articulating this position, Gadamer was obviously influenced by Heidegger in his critique of the technological world (*Gestell*), but there are also affinities with Weber's concept of "rationalisation"; Lukacs' concept of "reification"; Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of "instrumentalisation"; as well as Habermas' idea of the "colonialisation of the life-world" and Foucault's concept of "power technologies".¹² What is Gadamer's answer to the dangers that science and technique pose for human freedom? It is quite understandable that he criticises the theoretical constructs of the Cartesian-Lockean-Kantian epistemological legacy.¹³ An interesting aspect, though, is his argumentative alternative.

Gadamer is especially critical about de-contextualising, which he associates with a Western scientific consciousness which utilises facts as mere facts.¹⁴ It is not the fact itself, however, but the context which determines the meaning of a fact. Science is not a knowledge free from context. Gadamer's point here is that we cannot understand or have knowledge without an "effective-historical consciousness" (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*), which means that consciousness is at once "affected by history" and "open to the effects of history". This point, which Gadamer borrows from Heidegger, is that the understanding of oneself and one's possibilities as a being in the world is temporal and historically situated (Wright 1998). Human knowledge which does not relate to a concrete historical situation, according to Gadamer, is empty. Accordingly, we are not only perpetually busy interpreting or understanding (*verstehen*) a tradition, but we are also continuously *applying* it in our present theoretical and practical endeavours. Our temporal existence in the present is not divorced from the problems of the past. The necessity for application does not imply conservative traditionalism, but our present demands require a forward-looking tradition. Application also implies that one does not understand in a detached or unprejudiced way (Gadamer 1976b: 58-59). Rationality is a process of mediation between universal knowledge claims and our present and past practices. This brings us to a second important concept of Gadamer - the *hermeneutical circle*.

In the hermeneutical circle understanding is a circular process, because we come to understand the whole through the parts and the parts through the whole. Understanding in this sense is not an "act"

that can be secured methodically and verified objectively. It is an "event" (*gebeurtenis*) or "experience" that we undergo. It occurs paradigmatically in our experiences of works of art and literature. But it also takes place in our disciplined and scholarly study of works and theories of other human beings. In each case, understanding brings self-understanding. This mediated approach to self-understanding is based on the model of a conversation with the texts and works of others. The concept of dialogue employed here is one of question and answer and is taken from Plato. Such understanding never becomes absolute knowledge. From a cultural point of view, one could interpret the concept of dialogue or conversation in the following way; the understanding of another culture involves a challenge in so far as the truth claimed by the other culture is at variance with the truth of my culture. The point here is that my own cultural horizon should be opened up to the horizon of the other culture by allowing it to question my own prejudices. What ensues is an open dialogue (*oop gesprek*) of question and answer. The *fusion of horizons* that ends the dialogue occurs when the interlocutors understand differently. This may require altering or reaffirming one's prejudices depending on the situation (Wright 1998).

Human conflicts should thus be resolved in a "non-technocratic" and ethical manner. Such resolutions or rational judgements differ from pure deductive logic and fixed transcendental structures, by being able to change with the self-understanding of historical and linguistic situated individuals and communities.¹⁵ It is obvious that *phronesis* plays a crucial role here by providing contingent, historically-informed judgements about the "best" solution in a given situation (Gadamer 1979: 85). Such solutions are also the result of a pragmatic attitude: i.e. a persistent conversation or dialogue about those perspectives which might provide the best theoretical answers to the practical questions of a given tradition. This is, according to Wachterhauser (1986: 39-40) the power behind self-understanding and cultural change. Pragmatic solutions, though, are tentative, conditional and fraught with dangers, because *phronesis* enhances differences of opinion. On the other hand, we cannot avoid the practical judgements of the past, their present applications and their possible future directions. Despite the Western illusion that all human questions can be technically and scientifically addressed, mankind still consists of historical and temporal beings. It is thus fitting that Gadamer writes that philosophical hermeneutics is, "the heir of the older tradition of practical philosophy" which acts as a catalyst against

the domination of technology based on sciences (Gadamer 1975c: 316; see also 1981c: 52).

To recapitulate: Gadamer's 20th century reading of *phronesis* in his philosophical hermeneutics is not insignificant for multicultural societies. A preliminary list could look as follows: 1) We should not relate to the world in an exclusively theoretical or technical manner, but also in a practical mode. There are obvious dangers in handling a multicultural society only from a technical or technocratic manner. 2) Knowledge and understanding have a historical dimension (Chen 1987: 186). Gadamer's concept for this phenomenon is an effective-historical consciousness. The lesson for multicultural societies here is probably that any attempt at constructing an argument, theory or institution should be aware of its historical roots. 3) The hermeneutical circle implies that the dialogue or conversation between the different parts of a multicultural society should never cease. It should be an ongoing process even when a "fusion of horizons" introduces a consensus of sorts. 4) Finally, Gadamer seems to be optimistic that there will be some kind of resolution, mediation or consensus after a process of dialogue in a multicultural society.

III

It is worthwhile to debate Aristotle's idea of *phronesis* and Gadamer's specific interpretation thereof in our present day, where societies are becoming more multicultural and porous. Charles Taylor, for example, indicates that more and more citizens of societies in the northern hemisphere are from "foreign cultures" which question "our philosophical boundaries". Taylor links this phenomenon of multiculturalism in the North to the imposition of some cultures on others. According to him, Western liberal history is full of colonial narratives of marginalisation. To address this problem he (Taylor 1992: 63-64) introduces the concept of *recognition* - the demand to recognise the equal value of different cultures. Although Taylor shares some points with the postmodern critique of universalism in his contribution, he addresses the issue of multiculturalism by revisiting Gadamer's concept of the "fusion of horizons" which he interprets in combination with Herder's religious proposal of an "act of faith" (Taylor 1992: 66). Eventually Taylor (1992: 72) settles in a dialectical manner, like Gadamer, for a balance between the inauthentic and homogenising recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other. He does not, however, elaborate on his concept of the "fusion of horizons" or

"act of faith" except by concluding that " ... we are still very far away from the ultimate horizon from which the relative worth of different cultures might be evident" (Taylor 1992: 73).

Aristotle, Gadamer and Taylor, are not the only figures who have problematised the idea of universal knowledge and ethics. The American neo-pragmatist Rorty, and the British neo-Aristotelian MacIntyre are also critical about an universal ethics which is not qualified by the "contingent basis of consensus" of a particular tradition. Neo-Aristotelians in Germany, such as Liibbe and Marquard, also dispute the necessity of a post-conventional ethics and a universal criteria of reason to assess the conventions and institutions of one's own tradition. Finally post-structuralists, such as Foucault and Lyotard, and feminists, such as Kristeva and Irigaray, consider universalistic ethics undesirable. They are apprehensive about the forced violation of differences in the name of universalism.¹⁶ Apart from these "Western voices" of criticism, there are also critical voices raised in the "third world". Here a model of universal knowledge and ethics is judged to be "Eurocentric", and the result of economic and power interests of the countries of the "first world". The argument is that it is structurally impossible for the masses and intellectuals of the "third world" to articulate their interests in a relevant form. Even if one assumes that the development of a global market system of capitalism constitutes an irreversible achievement of human cultural evolution, it does not imply that the accompanying social and political conditions of current economic relations are morally justified (Apel 1993: 79-80, 82).

These various critical positions against ethical universalism indicate that multiculturalism is a burning issue in contemporary societies. One of the central points in this debate is whether Gadamer's soft formulation of consensus and Habermas' stronger defence of it, is still possible today. Lyotard, for example is very sceptical about any attempt, and specifically Habermas' attempt, to explain the hypothesis of universal validity of truth and moral norms as a regulative idea of argumentative consensus. Lyotard (1984: xxv) writes: "Is legitimacy to be found in a consensus obtained through discussion, as Jurgen Habermas thinks? Such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games. And invention is always born of dissension." Elsewhere he writes: "But as I have shown in the analysis of the pragmatics of science, consensus is only a particular state of discussion, not its end. Its end, on the contrary, is paralogy" (Lyotard 1984: 65-66). In the process of stressing the heterogeneity of language games and dissensus in a multicultural

society, Lyotard has clearly a different reading of consensus than Gadamer and Habermas. His principle concern here is the creative particularities of the various human "modes of life," which, according to Wittgenstein, form the context of the various language games. This particularity must be protected against the take-over and assimilation of the rationalistic form of thinking dominant today, particularly in Western capitalism, a point that Lyotard shares with the third world critique of Eurocentrism.

Is this a fair reflection of consensus and more specifically the discourse ethics of Habermas and Apel? Their standard reply is to ask what the status of Lyotard's defence of dissensus is. If he doubts the possibility of consensus, why does he want to convince us argumentatively (Apel 1993: 83)? On the other hand if Lyotard intends to put certain kinds of rationality (such as technological-instrumental, strategic and system-based functionalistic reason) in its place or distinguish between theoretical and practical reason, his position is not too far from their own discourse ethics. Habermas has been specifically critical of instrumental forms of reason in the life-world. But, if the criticism of rationality in the name of *difference* and pluralism boils down to discounting all unity and identity of reason, including the unity of reason which is presupposed in the hypothesis of consensus formation through argumentative reason, this criticism not only cancels itself out as criticism; it also turns against modes of life whose particularities are to be protected from Eurocentric takeover.¹⁷ For if there is really only an absolute diversity among modes of human life, if the recognition alone of their fundamental dissensus is the ultimate goal of human communication, what room is there for communication that could be an ethically relevant alternative to the strategic settling of conflicts of interests?¹⁸ These are very pertinent and important issues raised by the discourse ethics of Habermas (1993) and Apel.

In the current global situation, in which, for the first time, the various cultures and modes of life must live and work together in a peaceful order spanning the entire planet, pluralistic value ethics could be mediated with universalistic norm ethics. This is the neo-Aristotelian position in which we find ourselves at the end of the millennium. Should we leave the pursuit of happiness, i.e. the self-realisation in the sense of the good life and the corresponding selection of higher values, largely up to individuals and their particular modes of life, as Kant suggested; or should we concede that the realisation of the good life also involves the task of collectively realising our shared histories, as Aristotle suggested? Should we pit

particular differences and individual modes of life unnecessarily against universal procedures? In answering this question today, Aristotle's concept of practical-ethical knowledge (*phronesis*) is still relevant. Should we not perhaps mediate between de-ontological and universal norm ethics, on the one hand, and neo-Aristotelian value ethics rooted in the modes of living, on the other? Should we move into a field of tension with the type of negative dialectics Adorno and Lyotard seem to suggest; or should we adopt the "dialogical or communicative dialectics" of Gadamer and Habermas?

Notes

1. I would like to thank Anton Krueger and Johann Rossouw who provided valuable suggestions during the preparation of the final draft of this contribution.
2. Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* (62d-69c).
3. In order to strengthen his argument Aristotle (1976: 1097a 8-14) provides the following examples: "And there is another problem. What advantage in his art will a weaver or a joiner get from knowledge of this good-itself? Or how will one who has had a vision of the Idea itself become thereby a better doctor or general? As a matter of fact it does not appear that the doctor even studies health in this way; his concern is the health of a human being, or perhaps rather of a particular patient, because what he treats is the individual."
4. See Schuchman (1979 and 1980: 22-23), Self (1979: 133) and Hollinger (1985).
5. According to Aristotle (1976: 1139b24-25), "... the object of scientific knowledge is of necessity. Therefore it is eternal ..." Aristotle, though, doubts whether a form of knowledge (science) which uses mathematics as its model, is appropriate understanding human action and praxis.
6. Phronesis does not first exist as a complete body of propositions, but must be brought progressively to relative adequacy by continuous insight into the moral requirements and possibilities of our concrete and situated existence" (Schuchman 1979: 45).
7. On *arete*, cf. Gadamer (1976a: 18) and Schuchman (1980: 55-63).
8. This is also broadly speaking a definition of continental philosophy. "By contrast... the 'analytic' approach ... tends to proceed *sub specie aeternitatis*, entrusting itself to the modern scientific quest for truth and certainty and its accompanying ideal of clarity and transparency of language." For continental thought, though, and this is also the spirit of this contribution, "...the desire for scientific truth is no less historically contingent and questionable than any other purely 'logical' truth, and offers no eternal or ultimate solutions to the fundamental questions of human existence. An awareness of the intrinsic historicity of its own undertaking thus tends to be a distinctive hallmark of continental thinking" (McNeill and Feldman 1998: 2-3).
9. Gadamer (1983: 74-75; 1986: 165-168) and Schuchman (1980: 55) writes about *ethos*: "The word *éthiké* means 'that which concerns *ethos*' and the early usage of this word before Aristotle gives us a special insight into its later meaning ... in Homer ... as well as in later texts it means ... the abodes, haunts and habitual places of animals, a place of pasture, for example, where the shepherds dwell with their herds. In Hesiod *ethos* designates the dwelling places and habitations of men. From the basic sense of abode, dwelling place and home, there developed the meaning of the abiding itself, the dwelling and inhabiting, the being at home in a certain place. In Aristotle this latter sense is interiorised, and here *ethos* refers to the way and manner in which man is and can be at home in the world; it is the inner residing, bearing or compartment which a man has toward himself, toward others and toward his world. *Ethos* is thus the constant ground and foundation from which all doing flows forth, and as such is a central component in the being-structure of man." Gadamer (1981c: 71) writes: "Practice (praxis) is conducting oneself and acting in solidarity. Solidarity however, is the decisive condition and basis of all social reason." *Ethos* is for Aristotle the way in which humankind is housed. It involves conduct to oneself, other and the world. It is the basis of the ethical

nature and action of humankind. The world of *ethos* is noticeably different from the world of nature (*physis*): "Human civilization differs essentially from nature in that it is not simply a place in which capacities and powers work themselves out, but man becomes what he is through what he does and how he behaves, i.e. he behaves in a certain way because of what he has become. Thus, Aristotle sees *ethos* as differing from *physis* in that it is a sphere in which the laws of nature do not operate, yet not a sphere of lawlessness, but of human institutions and human attitudes that can be changed and have the quality of rules only to a limited degree" (Gadamer 1975a: 296; 1975b: 279). *Ethos* also relates to solidarity. Gadamer asks: what sense has a community without patterns of recognised solidarity between people, neighbours, family, and colleagues? It is such solidarity which Gadamer (1976a: 75-76; 1981a: 86) finds lacking in the overstimulated process of progress in our technological civilization.

10. Gadamer (1998:192) writes: "When we hear modern lovers talking to each other, we often wonder if they are communicating with words or with advertising labels and technical terms from the sign language of the modern industrial world. It is inevitable that the leveled life-forms of the industrial age also affect language ..."

11. Cf. Gadamer (1977: 534): "It would appear to me more correct, however, to say that science makes possible knowledge directed to the power of making, a knowing mastery of nature. This is technology. And this is precisely what practice is not. For the former is knowledge which, as steadily increasing experience, is acquired from practice, the life situation, and the circumstances of action. On the contrary, it is a kind of knowledge which for the first time makes possible a novel relation to practice, namely that of the constructed application ... it is of the essence of its procedure to achieve in all spheres the abstraction which isolates individual causal relationships. This is the unavoidable particularity of its competence, which it has to accept as part of the bargain. What in fact emerged, however, was 'science' with its new notion of theory as well as practice. This is a true event in the history of man, which conferred a new social and political accent upon science."

12. Both Heidegger and Dilthey criticized an impoverished concept of science and interpretation. Cf. Gadamer (1979: 75; 1967: 11-12; and 1983: 71-72).

13. Gadamer (1985: 21-22) writes the following critique of the Neo-Kantian defense of universal rationality and objectivity. "Paul Natorp was a member of the Marburg School. His numerous contributions to the history of philosophy as well as to the systematic philosophy itself were governed by a concern, shared with Herman Cohen, to renew and develop the critical act of Kant... we must briefly consider the basic idea of Marburg neo-Kantianism. This was the transcendental method, that is, the generation of reality by pure thinking. This was how Cohen formulated it. This formulation was guided by the methods of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science and especially by the model of its basic mathematical principle, the idea of the infinitesimal. The mathematical mastering of the continuum of motion, and the formulation of the law of generation of motion, led to the understanding that it was thinking itself that engendered reality. That this kind of generation is an infinite task constituted nothing less than the universal meaning of this principle for the fact of the sciences. These are methods for engendering objects and for determining reality. Cohen grounded even ethics in the fact of the sciences,

and he understood jurisprudence to be the logic of the human sciences." For a historical perspective on the neo-Kantians see Gadamer (1981b: 19-20; 1982: 21-22; and 1987: 452-455).

14. "... with respect to hermeneutics and humanities as a whole we have the task of subordinating both our scientific contribution to the cultural, and academic education to a more fundamental project of letting the tradition speak us" (Gadamer 1979: 83). The chief task of philosophy is to defend practical and political reason against the domination of technology based on science. The point of philosophical hermeneutics is to correct "... the peculiar falsehood of modern consciousness: the idolatry of scientific method and of the anonymous authority of the sciences and it vindicates again the noblest task of the citizen - decision-making according to one's own responsibility - instead of conceding the task to the expert" (Gadamer 1975c: 315-316).
15. "... 'know thyself still holds good for us as well. For it means 'know that you are not god, but a human being.'" The cultivation of such a modest demeanour in our contemporary world could help humankind on the road of better self-knowledge (Gadamer 1976b: 59-60; 1981c: 73-74).
16. Foucault advocates the rehabilitation of the classical Greek ethic of the self-realisation of the individual or care of the self "... to live a beautiful life and to leave others the memories of a beautiful existence" (Foucault 1983: 230). He describes such an existence as "... a strong structure of existence without relation with the juridical per se, with an authoritarian system, with a disciplinary structure" (Foucault 1983: 230-231). Foucault thus criticizes the stoic-Christian ethic, which was later radicalized by Kant as a "universal law imposing itself in the same way on all reasonable men". Foucault's defense of the particular and critique of any form of universalism remind us provocatively about those formations of power which manipulate subjects in multicultural as well as in relative homogeneous societies. Foucault (1984: 379) writes: "The furthest I must go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against nonconsensuality."
17. If the thousands of conversations in our everyday only strive for dissensus, instead of consensus, it is "catastrophic". The same is true if we assume that "the we" of human solidarity has been broken today. Apel is of the opinion that this unity of humankind and its history, which was only a vision of European philosophers of the 18th century, has today become an irreversible technological, economic, political, and ecological reality. It must also become a moral reality - in the form of solidarity and co-responsibility. From these considerations, Apel (1993: 85) conclude that Europe's universal mission remains a possibility and task in the fields of ethics, as well. Whether this task can be fulfilled and whether it can be sufficiently distinguished from mere Eurocentrism and a power ideology, remains to be seen.
18. Apel (1993: 84) asks provocatively: "... wouldn't the apriori assumption of the 'difference' and 'fundamental dissension' lead to conclusions similar to those which some of the early white colonizers tended to draw when first confronted with blacks? They are said to have in all seriousness pondered the possibility that these so completely alien creatures were not human at all and should therefore be killed or that it is thus permissible to instrumentalise them to slaves as to be used as labourers."

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