

GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY *

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Abstract. *The aim of the first text entitled «Hermeneutics and praxis» is to show the network of the most relevant concepts of philosophic hermeneutics and to present their inner essential interconnectedness with Aristotle's concept of practical philosophy. The elaboration of fundamental notions of **prejudice, hermeneutical circle of tradition, situation, effective-historical consciousness, fusion of horizons and application** can be found in the text.*

The explanation of the above mentioned notions intends to legitimize Gadamer's central thesis that our understanding is never mere subject-oriented behaviour. On the contrary, it is always historically limited. In this context, the notion of prejudice loses its negative connotation and represents not only the link with our tradition, but also the original source of all our judgements. Taking into consideration this notion as highly relevant, Gadamer intends to show that we can never fully escape from all of our prejudices, although it does not mean that we cannot encounter them critically. The ground for their understanding is exactly within our very historical being and union with our tradition. We cannot erase our own horizon when approaching someone else; we should rather find a common ground with them. Therefore, the process of understanding always has a dialogical character.

*The second text deals with the universal requirement of the method of natural sciences. Experiences of art, philosophy and social sciences (**die Geisteswissenschaften**) counterstrike it. One cannot recognize the meaning of social sciences once they are excluded from the horizon of **praxis**. Moreover, social sciences are moral sciences and the concept of progress, so common in the terminology of natural sciences, cannot be applied to them. Their very purpose is human self-understanding. At this point some possible consequences are being introduced, resulting from the standpoint of philosophic hermeneutics. Namely, the question of the possibility of rehabilitation of the practical phenomenon, as opposed to the methodological truth of natural sciences, is being problematised. Furthermore, an outline of some other crucial problems is given, such as revival of self-understanding of social sciences, universal competence of scientific experts and domain and objectives of contemporary education.*

Key words: *hermeneutics, practical philosophy, understanding, prejudice, horizon, tradition, social sciences.*

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* Hans-Georg Gadamer, famous German philosopher, was born on 11th February 1900 in Breslau (Germany) and died on 13th March 2002 in Heidelberg.

FIRST PART
HERMENEUTICS AND *PRAXIS*

One of the first lessons in philosophy is certainly Aristotle's division of philosophy into theoretical, practical (*praxis*) and poetical (*poiesis*). We will examine differences between the first and the second one: theoretical philosophy that includes mathematics, physics and the first philosophy (metaphysics) is occupied with eternal issues, while practical philosophy (ethics, politics, economy) is occupied with changeable, temporal issues that 'could be and could not be'. The difference is clear: what depends on man gets his temporal nature. In the field of practical philosophy, there are no universals given in advance that could be cognized and afterwards in an unchanged form utilized: the field of *praxis* depends on concrete situation. That is a logical consequence of Aristotle's comprehension of the mistake that Socrates made in his intellectual ethics – Socrates completely omits concepts of *pathos* and *ethos*, which leads him into identification of virtue and knowledge. Only in an ideal, eternal, divine world could knowledge and virtue be identified so that there would not exist a mere sign of possibility for the foundation of human action and the field of *praxis*. Practical philosophy would have been lost there and fully subjected to theoretical philosophy. The purpose of practical philosophy is not comprehension of the thing-in-itself, but learning how to relate to things, as it is in Aristotle's ethics – ethics does not investigate virtue in order to know what it is, but to know how one could acquire it. Cognition is here subjected to *praxis*, since it is impossible without it.

Aristotle divides virtues into theoretical and ethical, and the former into the ones related to cognition and others related to judgment. While the first are concerned with principles that are eternal and theoretical, the second treat the possible aspects of this changeable world. There are two of the latter virtues: *techne* and *phronesis* (practical reason). *Techne* corresponds to the poetical field (rhetoric, poetics, dialectics), since it refers to things that do not have an inner purpose, but their purpose is in produced works of art. On the other hand, *phronesis* is a medium that helps us to get our bearing in the world of *praxis*: it is concerned with action that has an immanent purpose, that is to say, whose purpose is in the proper action. There are no universal principles at disposal in this field, rather one should behave in a particular situation according to the general rules. So, the illogical and temporary character of human soul (Is there any other?, Gadamer would probably remark) is not omitted, as in Socrates' theory. The aim of *phronesis* is to find the appropriate measure for things. Practical knowledge cannot be developed as methodical science. It should not have the eternal ideas as a model, it should rather be presented in an outline (*typos*), due to the specific character of its 'subject'.

In the field of *praxis* the purpose is immanent and the aim cannot be separated from the means. Each part gives sense to the whole and the other way round. In other words: if a purpose is proper, that is to say, good action, the means by which we acquire it cannot be bad.

According to Gadamer, hermeneutic philosophy is the heir of an older tradition of practical philosophy. Its main question, how is understanding possible, is completely situated within the horizon of *praxis*. Starting from Heidegger's definition of being as time, and understanding as the mode of being or *Dasein*, Gadamer comes to an insight that the historical character of every understanding is a principle of hermeneutics. He

seeks something that is common to every understanding, and it is its definitive and historical character. Understanding is always temporary and, therefore, belongs to the field of praxis. This claim is outlined by a detailed explanation of a whole network of notions, which Gadamer uses to define hermeneutical experience.

Hermeneutics as practical philosophy: basic concepts **Hermeneutical circle and prejudices**

'The whole should be understood from the part, and the part should be understood out of the whole', this is an old hermeneutical principle originating from the practice of interpretation of ancient texts. People noticed long ago that certain concepts or elements of a text cannot be examined independently from the meaning of the whole text, for their meaning changes according to its unfolding. Dependence is mutual: individual text elements change their meaning following the whole, just like the whole changes with its parts. Thus, interpretation is characterised by a certain inner unfolding of meaning. In Heidegger's writings, hermeneutical circle has an ontological status. He emphasizes that this circle must not be interpreted as logical fallacy *circulus vitiosus*¹, but that it represents the basic structure of cognition in general. Hermeneutical circle, unlike the scientific method, does not require absolutely and once forever defined and limited concepts – quite the contrary, the scientific definition alone that seeks strict, fixed notions, leads, generally, to *circulus vitiosus* or axioms that cannot be defined. On the other hand, regarding the hermeneutical principle of the meaning mediation between the whole and its part, hermeneutical circle is ontologically positive. Hermeneutical circle, contrary to formal logic, allows a flow of time and a flux of meaning. It does not fix concepts eternally, but like practical philosophy, it develops them only in outline. They always remain elastic enough, so that their contents can support a certain change. Every understanding moves in outlines, since every understanding is finite and already in time. The claim concerning limits and temporal character of understanding implies that there is no 'zero understanding', which does not mean that there is no understanding at all, or that every understanding is incorrect. Therefore, the possibility of changes in understanding does not mean value neutrality, but the awareness of the limits of our preconceptions. The concept of preconceptions does not imply personal limitations, character or biased approach or what Francis Bacon named *idolae* of the cave. Preconceptions are called prejudices (*das Vorurteil*) by Gadamer and by using them he tries to explain the structure and the process of understanding.

An illustrative example of hermeneutical circle is the study of the history of philosophy. Every time we try to identify a certain standpoint as philosophic, we have already approached it with a more or less formed opinion what philosophy actually is. By adopting the meaning of the concept of philosophy characteristic to that standpoint, our original general concept moves and changes. Yet, our original concept determines what can be considered a concept of philosophy at all. So, the whole and the part mutually and

¹ *Circulus vitiosus* (lat.) – a definition is viciously circular when the term to be defined reappears in the definition, or where the notion that is being defined is implicitly contained in the definition (Blackburn, Simon. *The Oxford dictionary of philosophy*. Oxford University Press 1994)

productively determine each other. Contrary to the meaninglessness of *circulus vitiosus*, the openness and productivity of hermeneutical circle are transparent. Hermeneutical circle is paradigmatic for any understanding and we can enter it only by virtue of our prejudices. Prejudices represent the original structure of all our understandings that is always mediated by tradition. Considering the fact that understanding is constantly dependent on tradition by means of always present prejudices, Gadamer adds that understanding is never a mere subjective act.

The unfolding of understanding is situated within a circle – there is no Archimedes point outside of it. Thomas Kuhn, a scientist and the author of the famous book "Structure of Scientific Revolution (22)", concerned with the history of science comes across the concept of hermeneutical circle, and once, trying to explain it to his students, says: "When reading the works of an important thinker, look first for the apparent absurdities in the text and ask yourself how a sensible person could have written them. When you find an answer, I continue, when those passages make sense, then you may find that more central passages, the once you previously thought you had understood, have changed their meaning."

Definition of Prejudices

In his analysis of prejudices, Gadamer starts from the structure of German word '*das Vorurteil*' (pre-judice). Prejudice is a soil where our judgment is grown, e.i. judgment made before the final examination of all moments that determine a thing (9, p. 303). However, Gadamer tends to dismiss the negative connotation that haunts this notion since the Enlightenment movement. By investigating the relation to prejudices in this age, he tries to release them from the footprints of ideology.

Discrediting of prejudices is a necessary consequence of the thought that tries to make a complete break-up with tradition. That attempt is present in the Enlightenment assault on three concepts: tradition, prejudice and authority.

The story of breaking up with the Middle Ages style of thought is a commonplace today: the attempt of changing hundreds of years long dogmatism of the church with a brand new start is symbolized by, at least in the field of philosophy, Bacon and Descartes. The absolute doubt of Rene Descartes is exemplary for this break-up. Descartes considers our thoughts revolutionary enough for they alone can free us from all our limits. The pure method of mathematics should be the basis of this assignment. Francis Bacon introduces his famous critique of *idolae*. *Idolae* are deceitful pictures - concepts, solidly grounded in human reason, which disable us to approach the truth. He classifies them so that the people can recognize and eradicate them. There are four types of *idolae*: 1. *idolae* of the tribe – that originate from human nature and relate to the fact that people consider their senses and reason to be the general yardstick, and that the universe is such as we apprehend and perceive it. Our conception of the world is always human-like, and therefore, the value of science is not theoretical, but practically utilitarian: it serves to enlarge our power. 2. *Idolae* of the cave are concerned with individuals, their character, and education... so that everyone judges by himself and not according to the real nature of things. 3. *Idolae* of the square refer to language mistakes made in communication and to the limits of our reason due to a definite number of possibilities of expression 4. *Idolae* of the theater originate from the socio-historical nature of human life that is always

grounded in a philosophy, religion, way of thought.... 'Magna restauratio' is necessary for all these prejudices present in human thought. A more extensive examination of this classification would offer a more complete picture of the ground of the scientific thought in general. However, regarding our intention, it is enough just to emphasize the general reform-praising attitude.

The attitude to prejudice is even more explicitly expressed in the revolutionary era of France, the Enlightenment movement. This movement points at two sorts of prejudice: the prejudice of human observation and the prejudice of hurry. The source of the latter is negligence, the source of the former is blind subordination to authority. The Enlightenment movement seeks the final break-up with tradition by means of denial of its authority and by making one and only legitimate tribunal out of the human reason (*der Verstand*). Blinded by the faith in idealized omnipotent human reason, they examine tradition that they allegedly understand and assess more competently. They believe it is possible to free yourself from your prejudices and to become a valid judge by just one stroke of Cartesian doubt. The Cartesian method should smartly eliminate our burden of obsolete, preconceived ideas. Gadamer calls this attitude 'prejudice of prejudices', and says that it closes the possibility of understanding our historical and finite nature. Prejudice of Enlightenment is the prejudice of absolute reason that does not accept the historical limits of human beings. It is connected with a belief in the infinite might of reason that represents the looked-for Archimedes point. By radical refusal of Middle Ages-characteristic dogmatism, the Enlightenment movement enters a new form of dogmatism, glorifying itself alone.

Romanticism and historicism make the same mistake. Romanticism is overturned historicism (and therefore, another misconception): there is idealized *mythos* (romanticism) on one side, and absolute *logos* (Enlightenment) on the other. The mythical world has an advantage over the 'reasonable' one, and the tendency to restore the old is inadequately exaggerated. Historical science of 19th century is a parasite of this confrontation of *mythos* and *logos*, which by imitating Romanticism's praise of ancient times observes all epochs as relative. What all these cases have in common is a radical break-up with tradition and glorification of the omnipotent subject representing the one and only judge, either explicitly or implicitly. Gadamer asserts "...history does not belong to us, but we belong to it... The focus of subjectivity is a distorted mirror"(9. P.309) Before we gain understanding of ourselves through reflection, we understand ourselves intuitively within our family, society, state..."Self-understanding of an individual is glowing in a closed electric circuit of a historical life. Therefore, prejudices of an individual are, far more than his judgments, a historical reality of his being." (9, p.310) Here we encounter the central thesis of Gadamer's work again: the result of historical hermeneutical circle is that understanding is never a mere subjective act.

Contrary to the attitude characteristic of the Middle Ages, hermeneutics assesses prejudices both positively and negatively. There is no genuine negative connotation in the concept of prejudice. Gadamer wants to rehabilitate authority and tradition by showing that prejudices are universal conditions of understanding. He states that authority is by and far connected to cognition, and only then to obedience. That is the basis for the authority of teachers and experts and owing to their better acquaintance with certain fields we trust them. Yet, that belief is not blind, it is grounded on certain reasons that showed their competence in the field. Tradition is one of the forms of authority that was also

established due to certain valid reasons. (Gadamer says that the privilege of ancient ethics over the ethics of the Age of Reason lies in the very recognition of tradition that enables transition from ethics to politics. The moral of the Enlightenment epoch is abstract and revolutionary. Symbolized by the opposition of Being and Need, it disables moral consciousness to exit into reality without revolution). Gadamer claims that preservation of tradition is a free act as well as an act of change. As revolution requires legitimacy, tradition demands a constant rational re-affirmation. Recognition of tradition does not mean an uncritical acceptance, but a refusal of abstract opposition of tradition and history, history and knowledge. "In other words, it is necessary to cognize a moment of tradition in historical behavior and to ask about its hermeneutical productivity. (9, p.316) The practical world, Husserl's '*Lebenswelt*', always places us, owing to tradition, in a network of certain prejudices that are our starting point. Our finite understanding is always situated in a historical process. That flow of history is characterized by a permanent mediation of past and present. By means of prejudices that are at our disposal, we enter hermeneutical circle of understanding. One should be aware that they represent an outline that we always start our understanding with. They are a positive starting point, parts that move together with the sense of the whole. We should keep them at a constant critical distance. Similar to reading a text: we try to strengthen the author's arguments as much as possible, so that we could understand them. What is at issue is the unfolding of common, inter-subjective, historical meaning that we cannot encounter if we hold our own horizons closed. Our prejudices tie us to tradition and by means of them we open ourselves to it. Their positive sense lies in the fact that they enable us to understand history as well as ourselves. In opening our horizons we never come to a definitive situation; although the anticipation of meaning becomes clearer, hermeneutical circle cannot be closed. That is the effect of the temporality of human being and understanding. We cannot in advance separate positive and negative prejudices – we must not forget that we are always situated in the world of *praxis*. Practical knowledge does not consist of rigid principles, but of moveable outlines. Hermeneutics is an heir of practical philosophy.

Hermeneutics critically asks how positive and negative prejudices could be separated, yet only on the basis of the historical consciousness and examination of tradition. The understanding that unites what is present and different takes place only in a dialogue with tradition.

The concept of Effective-Historical Consciousness

Every historical horizon is situated within the frame of already existing effective-historical consciousness. It opens the past horizons to us in a particular, always limited manner. We should widen these horizons yet always warn ourselves against the deceitful pretension to absolute knowledge of the effective history.

The concept of effective-historical consciousness implies a certain ambiguity. Primarily, it represents the influence of effective history on us, but on the other hand, it is equal with our consciousness of hermeneutical situation. The consciousness of situation can never be full, since we are always its integral part. Situation cannot become the object of our cognition; we can only more or less illuminate it. That is the effect of our limits and limits of our understanding.

Every situation is characterized by a certain horizon. Husserl used to play with this notion in the final phase of his work, but always meant it as something that restricts our view on the environment. Gadamer explicitly denotes the concept of horizon positively – as a possibility to adequately comprehend and compare close and distant things. To have a horizon means to be able to clearly measure and understand the importance of things within their frame. Yet, concerning this issue, philosophic hermeneutics asks an important question: how do we approach different horizons, so that we could understand them?

It is crucial to note that Gadamer asserts that there is neither a present horizon-in-itself, nor distinguished historical horizons. Neither horizon nor situation can become part of 'objective' knowledge that would be analyzed, precisely defined and then used. A complete change of horizons that would make us forget our prejudices is impossible. What really takes place during the process of understanding is the formation of a common situation of communication. It is the only way to let the other side express itself. Present horizon is neither closed nor it can be separated from the past, but it grows inside of it – that is the real meaning of the above-mentioned assertion that there is no particular horizon-in-itself. Genuine interweavement of all horizons is at issue – by understanding the past ones, we build a huge, common horizon that is permanently on move. Likewise the above-mentioned hermeneutical circle is determined by the constant mutual influence of its parts and its whole, a huge horizon is influenced by a smaller and vice versa. When we try to understand someone, we never lose ourselves, but approach a more general ground that represents our common space. Similarly, as we interpret texts, we must not fix the meanings, so that the meaning of the whole could be outlined. Particular meanings give a new sense to the whole, but, on the other hand, the unfolding of the whole presents us with a new self-understanding. Only by understanding others, we approach ourselves. We cannot place ourselves in parenthesis if we want to meet the Other. We cannot remove all prejudices - even if we could, all paths of understanding would be inevitably closed. Gadamer's analysis of aesthetic and historical consciousness shows what difficulties these attempts imply. In "Truth and method", the process of approaching different horizons is entitled 'fusion of horizons'. By the fusion of horizons we encounter the Different, enabling it to speak freely.

The Problem of Application

Traditional hermeneutics divides the hermeneutical problem into understanding (*subtilitas intelligendi*), interpretation (*subtilitas explicandi*) and application (*subtilitas applicandi*). The concept of subtleness (*subtilitas*) implies a sophisticated skill and distance from purely intellectual method. It adequately corresponds to the complexity of practical *Lebenswelt* that includes, as Aristotle puts it, the illogical and temporary part of soul.

The three mentioned elements – understanding, interpretation and application – are always in an unbreakable unity. The way of approaching the Other, described as the fusion of horizons, shows that understanding is always interpretation. Understanding presupposes a particular horizon and prejudices and therefore corresponding restrictions as well. Thus, we always interpret the Other, never meeting the thing-in-itself. The unity of understanding and interpretation is the most apparent in the case of translation from foreign languages – every translator is forced to interpret the sense of a text given in another language, due to the limits imposed by his own language and his own understanding of the text, and to either highlight

or neglect some elements of the text. There is no identical, neutral translation – it is clear to everyone who ever tried to translate anything. Gadamer adds that a good translation is always simpler than the original.

Application, as an integral part of understanding, implies the above-mentioned concept of situation. We can never have an 'objective' knowledge of situation, since it is always open. The inclusion of application into understanding means that the hermeneutical situation is essentially practical: we cannot gain a general knowledge from which we would deduce singular cases. 'The whole must be understood from its parts and the other way round'. Hermeneutical knowledge is always given in an outline, as a direction, since it is the only way not to lose a singular case in the universality of principles. By means of application, understanding is transformed into historical events. Encountering singular cases, it becomes history. Therefore, it can never turn into science. Understanding is a form of experience.

Juristic hermeneutics is an excellent example of the unity of application and understanding. Justness of the court that allows one not to hold strictly to norms shows that law, as a practical field, cannot be applied like mathematics without losing its meaning. Human relations correspond to human issues. The unity of being and reason should be respected, otherwise the field of *praxis* turns into an empty universal concept – that is also the essence of Aristotle's critique of Plato's concept of Good. Once again, we encounter Aristotle's speech on practical and moral knowledge. Moral knowledge cannot become science since it cannot be applied dogmatically. The very manner of approach is central to moral knowledge. It does not have a particular purpose and cannot be subjected to it. The means cannot be subjected to the purpose in an inadequate way, for means and purpose in this field cannot really be separated. The fact that final purpose is unattainable and constantly 'open' makes purpose and means inseparable. Furthermore, moral knowledge cannot be acquired in a classical way, it is intrinsic. We realize and improve it by application and in 'dialogue with the Other and ourselves'. Full participation of personality is essential to moral knowledge and self-reflection is inevitable. Heteronomous morality is not to be defined as moral consciousness.

The integration of application into understanding indicates that knowledge and action are essentially interrelated and that subsequent application of principles to life is inadequate. What makes understanding possible is application, its interrelatedness with the *Lebenswelt*.

SECOND PART
NATURAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
(DIE GEISTESWISSENSCHAFTEN)

One of the 'results' of Gadamer's hermeneutics is the explanation of the position and meaning of humanities. Objectivistic-relativistic attitude present within aesthetic and historical consciousness, formed on the basis of the Cartesian idealization of method and 'getting rid of all prejudices' characteristic to the Enlightenment movement, has led to the considerable misunderstanding of the essence of humanities. Owing to the above-mentioned loss of meaning, humanities conform to the methodical demand of natural sciences in order to find a solid ground to stand on. However, the effect of this conformity

is that their own purpose becomes dubious. Out of the narrow horizon of the scientific method, it is simply impossible to recognize *raison d'être* of humanities.

Already in the preface to "Truth and Method" Gadamer emphasizes the fact that his intention is not to found humanities. It would be contrary to his whole project. What he actually wants is to answer the question "How is understanding possible?" and that leads him inevitably into the field of humanities. He does not want to say that the methodological work in humanities is needless, or to doubt in modern science and its rapid progress, but to find what is common to every form of understanding. Concerning that issue, he says: "The phenomenon of understanding permeates not only man's relations to the world, but it has validity within the framework of science as well, and it resists the attempt to be transformed into scientific method. The following research is linked to that resistance, that is, within the modern science, raised against the universal claim of scientific methodology... In that manner, humanities converge with other non-scientific forms of experience such as philosophy, arts and history. All of them are forms of experience that announce truth, which is not to be verified by methodological means of science."(9, p.21-22)

Humanities are, essentially, moral sciences, asserts Gadamer. In other words, he deems that they completely belong to the field of *praxis*. Their aim is not to cognize a particular and defined object and its purpose. Quite the contrary, their meaning is in human self-understanding. They are concerned with temporal issues, that is to say, human issues. Thus, they cannot be subjected to the idealized scientific method. By undergoing the control of method, they become meaningless, since they cannot be 'technified' as natural sciences – their immanent purpose cannot be made technically useful at all. Their meaning is in a characteristic experience of truth, which presents a universal genuine experience. They fully demonstrate to us the historical aspect of understanding. Hermeneutics describes what humanities really are, and in what way they are a part of our experience of the world. By placing humanities in the frame of their real meaning, hermeneutics shows that the difference between natural sciences and humanities is not the question of method, but the much greater issue of the aim of cognition. It is opposed to the monopoly of the scientific method that tends to deprive of truth all other sorts of experience. Moreover, its comprehension of the historical aspect of understanding as being of *Dasein* represents its pretension to universality. It does not mean questioning the results of contemporary science, but the uncovering of the horizons from which every science stems as primarily human. On the other hand, this research has practical important effects as well: restoring the credibility of the field of *praxis* and regaining its autonomy. It appears to be the only way of overcoming the above-mentioned crisis of meaning and preserving the human community.

Consequently, the interpretation of the title "Truth and Method" as opposed alternatives is invalid. Gadamer did not intend to oppose truth to method, but only to denounce the universal methodical pretension over truth. It seems that the given analysis suggests that truth is an essentially practical concept. According to the 'tradition' of modern philosophy, it means that there is no truth-in-itself (*an sich*): furthermore, truth is always human and temporal, and it cannot be considered outside its context. Yet, this does not imply its relativity.

The universal pretension of hermeneutics is based on the universally historical character of our understanding. Therefore, philosophy preserves a part of its traditional aims,

but, on the other hand, it is essentially restricted by the imperative of development of the hermeneutical consciousness. It loses a great deal of its former pretentious tasks: it has neither the obligation to constitute the world any more, nor to have the last word over our experience. It does not have the role of the highest tribunal for science - in the contemporary world it would sound, to say the least, comical: by enlightening our interweavement with horizons, it presents a corrective for our more or less blind comprehension and intentions. By virtue of understanding things, it tries to find an appropriate measure for them.

A major theme running through entire Gadamer's work is the claim that it is impossible to build a modern science out of the field of *praxis* in a sensible manner. Definition of humanities as moral sciences, whose subject is man and his knowledge of himself, implies their essential integrity. Owing to their common, immanent purpose, they cannot be truly studied as completely autonomous fields. That is one of the consequences deduced from the hermeneutical comprehension of humanities. Due to the fact that all of them are concerned with man's knowledge of himself and due to their identical orientation, their full and permanent cooperation is necessary. The renewal of this ancient union of the field of *praxis* seems to be the only way of regaining their lost credibility.

In other words: by separating them both from the pretension of proving the 'progress' in the sense of contemporary science and from subjecting 'idealised objects' to the inappropriate method, humanities will come back to their original sense and will inevitably be oriented towards each other. How is it at all possible to engage in politics, and not in the same time to deal with ethics, or to deal with ethics notwithstanding law? Observed from the hermeneutical position, that demand appears to be a mere universalism of methodical consciousness of humanities. The politics that does not care for ethics and the field of *praxis* always has a transcendental purpose.

Given to the perplexity of the field of humanities, contemporary science that surprises us with new achievements day by day, is even urged to give answers and make decisions that completely surpass its competence. The result is a characteristic reduction of the world to a scientific-technical gallop that must not be stopped, while natural science cannot really answer the issues of the field of *praxis*. In an old terminology, that fact strikes us as alienation. In this respect, a question should be raised: how should the rehabilitation of the field of *praxis* be realised?

On the Request for the Rehabilitation of the Field of Praxis

A more extensive study of contemporary society could probably very vividly outline the influence that the 'universal-methodical' scientific consciousness has on human self-understanding. Similar pieces of research have already been made: it would not reveal anything new. We would like to mention just one of Gadamer's examples: the analysis of the distortion of the meaning and diminishing of the significance of art caused by the prevailing acceptance of the aesthetic consciousness. Researches into the so-called technocratic societies, notwithstanding their justification, are exemplary as well.

Two other questions are particularly emphasized: Gadamer has already been occupied with both of them. The first one is the problem of contemporary education and the dilemmas connected with it, while the other is the question of the universal competence of experts. Later on in the text, an attempt will be made to show how these two questions could be considered from the horizon opened by philosophic hermeneutics.

Before focusing on the mentioned problems, it is necessary to draw one's attention to a dilemma and critique of Gadamer's hermeneutics. In short: in a rough formulation, the critique is related to the attitude that philosophic hermeneutics, regarding the central place of the application in the concept of understanding, inevitably goes beyond philosophy. Gadamer opposes that attitude completely. The questions, which will be elaborated here in short, and which Gadamer explicitly deals with (at least with the second one (19, p. 93-107)), elicit the mentioned dilemma. The problem is the following: Does philosophic hermeneutics has the right to be acquitted of the concrete consequences? In spite of Gadamer's denial, it seems that there is no real answer given, since in his text one may find *pros* as well as *contras*.

The Problem of the Universal Competence of Experts

The above-mentioned loss of meaning and therefore self-confidence of the humanities resulted in their surrender to the myth of progressive natural sciences. There is another effect similarly severe – decisions of social-political life are ever more being conceded to scientific experts. Their role is, certainly, of an undeniable importance: the field of knowledge has become so wide today, that it is impossible for an individual to access and remember all information. Therefore, it is inevitable to rely on the authority of experts. However, there is a question whether a competence in a certain field allows one to play a role of the civilization leader. There are many examples which appropriately illustrate this problem: the best one is maybe the area of human genetics. It seems that decisions which modern science tends to take have such relevance that they can change the entire social life on the planet. It is undeniable that the work of scientists cannot be separated from the social-political life and that a firm division of facts and values is just another human misconception. Yet, can they really make so important social-political decisions by themselves? Can they alone answer these so relevant questions, such as the question of the Good of the human race? Gadamer maintains that the question of Good cannot be answered by any expert or any science. That answer would presuppose that Good could be treated theoretically, which is the actual basis of every dogmatic doctrine. The knowledge of Good is always connected with an individual case, from which the whole draws its sense as well. Ethics cannot be practiced as a set of rules, without losing its meaning: what is necessary is responsible individual reasoning. Global decisions of experts threaten to endanger this responsibility: "Science and its responsibility should replace man's own responsibility." (10, p. 101) Modern science not only tends to answer the question of the whole society; it is also compelled to do it, since people expect it. The intention of this critique is not to question the responsible thought of scientists. Quite the contrary, the aim is to show that science alone cannot solve the subtlety of problems of the world of *praxis*, from the universal horizon of progress. It does not have the right to take the responsibility of the whole society on itself: for the purpose of science (its progress) cannot make the universal social decisions legitimate.

Which solution does Gadamer suggest? The rehabilitation of the autonomy of the field of *praxis* as a universal horizon of our lives is what according to Gadamer is to be done. Only in a dialogue with history and tradition, which humanities practice, is that possible. From this standpoint, it is clear that the request for the universality of the scientific method is invalid and that science appertains to the immanent purpose of the practical

philosophy. As Husserl puts it, science itself grows on the ground of a *Lebenswelt*. Hermeneutics adds that every question of science limits a certain horizon and consequently influences the *Lebenswelt*. This reciprocal influence between science and *Lebenswelt* prohibits their separation and fosters their unity. Science separated from the *Lebenswelt* is meaningless, yet it alone changes the *Lebenswelt*.

Serious problems related to this point begin with a question: "How?" How can we make the whole society feel so responsible that they appropriately respond to scientific dilemmas? How can the scientific language be translated into everyday language? Finally, how can we awake people from the individual sleep to questions concerning common social responsibility? In order that the field of *praxis* could follow the bloom of natural sciences, it must be independent. The question is whether we should produce experts in this field as well, so that we can rely on their answers? Previous lines imply that the answer is a negative one. It does not mean that there is no commitment or serious work in humanities, but it means something important for the very meaning of their work: they tend to contribute to human self-understanding and that refers to the whole society. Therefore, humanities pertain to offer their insights to the whole mankind that should responsibly accept them. In this respect, they do not want to turn a scientist into an expert, but into a man. Only by doing so, they do not miss their meaning.

Remarks Concerning the Problem of Contemporary Education

The above-mentioned problems directly raise the question of organization of contemporary education. We will outline just a few elements that connect this issue to the results of philosophic hermeneutics.

Apparently, western *Fach*-oriented education is becoming more questionable day by day. The request of modern society for experts is undeniable, yet it is becoming clear that such education is subjected to the imperative of universality of scientific methodology and progress. The effects of this orientation have already been mentioned: the amnesty of individuals from the responsibility for their society.

On the other hand, the issue of education at universities and corresponding studies of humanities is another crucial problem. If we access humanities in the manner hermeneutics observes them, that is to say, as moral sciences, in the broad sense of that word, a strict differentiation of individual departments does not reflect their purpose. It appears even that this illegitimate separation of "subjects" (how complex it is to define a "subject" in humanities has already been shown) is inappropriate to their purpose. Some European universities have been aware of this for a longer period and they practice combined studies of humanities. The return to this original sense of humanities should not mean a radical change, but only the recognition of their common purpose that always directs them one to another.

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GADAMEROVA HERMENEUTIKA KAO PRAKTIČKA FILOZOFIJA

Duška Dobrosavljev

Namera prvog teksta «Hermeneutika i praxis» je da se prikaže splet osnovnih pojmova filozofske hermeneutike i ukaže na njihovu suštinsku sjedinjenost sa Aristotelovim pojmom praktičke filozofije. Ovde se elaboriraju pojmovi predrasude, hermeneutičkog kruga, tradicije, situacije, delatno-povesne svesti, stapanja horizonata i primene. Objašnjenjem pomenutih pojmova nastoji se opravdati temeljna Gadamerova tvrdnja da razumevanje nikada nije puko subjektivno ponašanje, već da je uvek povesno određeno. Pojam predrasude ovde gubi negativnu konotaciju i predstavlja ne samo našu vezu sa tradicijom, već i prvobitno polazište svih naših sudova. Razmatrajući pojam predrasude Gadamer želi da objasni kako se svo naše razumevanje odvija. On nastoji da pokaže kako mi nikada ne možemo istupiti iz povesnog horizonta i u potpunosti se osloboditi svih predmnjenja, kako bismo pravilno razumevali, mada to ne znači da im ne možemo prići kritički. Baš u našoj povesnosti i stopljenosti sa tradicijom nalazi se osnova za njeno razumevanje. Ne možemo staviti u zagrade sopstveni horizont prilazeći drugom, mi moramo naći zajedničko tlo sa njim. Razumevanje je bitno dijaloški, a na čisti subjektivni akt.

Drugi tekst bavi se univerzalnim zahtevom metode prirodnih nauka, kom se iskustvo umetnosti, filozofije i duhovnih nauka suprotstavlja. Smisao duhovnih nauka ne može se uvideti ako se one izmeste iz horizonta praxis-a; duhovne nauke su moralne nauke i pojam napretka kakav susrećemo kod prirodnih nauka je na njih neprimenljiv. Njihova svrha je ljudsko samorazumevanje. U poslednjim delovima rada razmatraju se neke moguće konsekvence koje proističu iz stajališta filozofske hermeneutike, kao i nekoliko prigovora ovoj poziciji. Pre svega, postavlja se pitanje

moćnosti rehabilitovanja praktičkog kao protivteže metodologizovanoj istini prirodnih nauka. Naznačuju se neki značajni problemi i smernice: najpre, pravilno samorazumevanje duhovnih nauka, legitimnost univerzalne kompetencije eksperata i pitanje dometa savremenog obrazovanja.

Ključne reči: *hermeneutika, praktička filozofija, razumevanje, predrasuda, tradicija, horizont, duhovne nauke*