

# ARISTOTLE'S PHRONĒSIS AND GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS\*

paul schuchman

In the numerous writings which constitute his hermeneutical philosophy Hans-Georg Gadamer has often noted the significance of Aristotle's concept of *phronēsis* for his own analysis of human understanding.<sup>1</sup> The aim of Gadamer's hermeneutics is to uncover the ontological structure of understanding conceived as the fundamental, defining mode of man's being in the world. His purpose is not to elaborate a general theory of methods or interpretation, and still less to outline the general process of understanding in its contemporary, scientific mode. Rather, he seeks to penetrate the phenomenon of understanding insofar as it determines the being of man as capable of experience and truth as such, in all their different modes, richness, and diversity.

The phenomenon of understanding pervades every human relationship to the world, but if man's being in the world is finite and historical, so too is his understanding, and if the world be-

longs to the being of man as understanding, so also does understanding belong to the being of the world.<sup>2</sup> This a priori and ontological assertion is formulated by Gadamer in his principle of "effective history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). This means that in all our understanding we are always already within the horizon of particular questions, prejudices, interests, and viewpoints which are co-determined by what we want to understand in its effective-historical influence, i.e., in its influence as tradition. Gadamer's thesis would be that the element of "effective history" is operative in all human understanding as such.<sup>3</sup>

With this as a foundation Gadamer proceeds to develop the various conceptions of his hermeneutical philosophy: the reflexive dimension of understanding, its ineradicable historicity, the hermeneutical situation, understanding as a mediating fusion of horizons, understanding as an instance of application, the infinity of the unsaid, the signifi-

\* Copyright © 1979 by Paul Schuchman. Of interest to the readers of this article will be the book of Paul Schuchman appearing later this year, *Aristotle and the Problem of Moral Discernment*, from the Peter Lang Verlag, Münstergasse 2, CH-3000 Bern 7, Switzerland.

cance of questioning and dialogue, understanding as an historical process to which we belong, language as the medium in which understanding is achieved, and the overcoming of the standpoint of absolute subjectivity and its ideal of an objective, scientific knowledge. To elaborate on all of these conceptions is not our present aim; only one of them, the concept of application, has immediate import, because it is this aspect of understanding which relates Gadamer's hermeneutical interest to Aristotle's concept of *phronēsis*.<sup>4</sup>

It is Gadamer's contention that understanding always involves something like the application of a text to the present situation of the interpreter: if every situation is different, then the text, if it is to be understood properly, must be understood at every moment and in every particular situation in a new and different way. Thus if the heart of the hermeneutical problem is that the same tradition must always be understood in a different manner, the problem, logically speaking, is that of the relationship between the universal and the particular. According to this account, understanding should be conceived as the application of something universal (a text) to the hermeneutical situation of a particular interpreter. In this sense application is the central problem of hermeneutics.

How is application to be conceived? First of all, it must be maintained that application is neither a subsequent, derivative, nor occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding, but co-determines it in its entirety right from the start. This means, secondly, that the relationship between the universal and the particular is never a matter of a correct, objective understanding of the ideal meaning of a text, for example, which is related only afterwards and secondarily to the particular and limited

standpoint of the interpreter. If the principle of "effective history" is taken earnestly, then genuine understanding is not a matter of disregarding our own particular, hermeneutical situation in order to reproduce objectively and scientifically the original meaning of a text, but of relating the text to our own individual viewpoint through a questioning dialogue which reveals in part both our own horizon and the unsaid depths of the original text in a process of historical transmission mediating past meaning into the present context. To put it paradoxically, what we understand of a text must always be different if the text is to remain the same.<sup>5</sup> It is this hermeneutical relation between universal and particular which has drawn Gadamer's attention to Aristotle's doctrine of moral knowledge or *phronēsis*.

Gadamer finds in the concept of *phronēsis* a model of the hermeneutical problem, i.e., the problem of application.<sup>6</sup> Understanding as application means that a universal, such as a text, can only be understood as mediated by the particular horizon of the interpreter. *Phronēsis*, for Aristotle, represents the excellence of moral knowledge, of man's knowledge of the good. Following Gadamer we can now say that *phronēsis*, as an instance of hermeneutical application, would mean that particular judgments about the concrete human good are only possible as mediations of moral knowledge (the universal) with the particular and concrete situations involved. The question is: What kind of "universal" is moral knowledge? What kind of "mediation" is here at work? In the following pages I will attempt to summarize Gadamer's interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of *phronēsis*, and I will do so under three headings: first, moral knowledge and the universality of *epistēmē*; second, moral knowledge and the universality of *technē*;

third, moral judgment as a "mediation."

## I

Within the context of Aristotle's ethical thinking the designation of moral knowledge or man's knowledge of the human good as "universal" is indeed provocative. Chapter 6 of the first book of the *Ethics* is devoted precisely to a critique of Plato's conception of an absolute good in itself known in the manner of an abstract universal.<sup>7</sup> How could a knowledge, Aristotle asks, of the universal and essential structure of goodness itself help a physician to heal his patients? A doctor does not even study health in the abstract, but the health of man, perhaps even the health of a particular man, since it is individuals he is healing.<sup>8</sup> Moral knowledge, therefore, is not a knowledge of goodness as such in its essential and unchanging structure. In other words and to use Aristotle's own technical vocabulary, moral knowledge is not an *epistēmē*.

By *epistēmē* Aristotle means a theoretical knowledge and frame of mind characterized by insight and deduction about the essential, unchanging, and universal dimension of being.<sup>9</sup> This eminent mode of knowing and of truth has as its model the science of mathematics, but such a knowledge is wholly unsuitable for the realm of human action. In the first place, *epistēmē* is a knowledge of what is unchangeable; the doings of man, however, are subject to extraordinary diversity and change. Secondly, it is a knowledge which depends on proof, but particular decisions and the moral judgments which lie at their root are not attained by deductive inference. Thirdly, *epistēmē* as knowledge can be taught and learned, but not even Pericles can teach his own sons to be good men or worthy statesmen. Also, theoretical knowledge has its purpose in its

own pursuit and attainment; moral knowledge on the other hand exists for the sake of action, not for the sake of contemplation. Finally, in *epistēmē* one stands over against things, observing them at a theoretical distance, so to speak, but an existential situation, a situation of action, is that to which one essentially and intrinsically belongs, and it is to this kind of particular that moral knowledge and deliberation are to be applied.<sup>10</sup>

To put it in Gadamer's terms, *phronēsis* is not "objective knowledge" and thus is always inadequate to the situational character of human existence. We have already noted that *phronēsis*, as Gadamer sees it, is an instance of the hermeneutical application of a universal cognition to a particular situation. But the kind of universal represented by *epistēmē* is not the proper characterization of moral knowledge, for the concept of situation encompasses a logical structure which transcends the relation of law to case. To find oneself in a situation implies an experiential moment which objective knowledge can never fully grasp. Situations do not possess the characteristics of a mere object which one meets face to face. Even a knowledge of all objectively given facts relevant to a situation can in no way embrace the particular perspective of someone actually involved. The universality of objective knowledge or *epistēmē* is not the universality of man's knowledge of the good. The Platonic form of the good is an empty generality, and in rejecting it as the object of *phronēsis*, Aristotle is making the momentous step of separating ethics from metaphysics. It is true, of course, that Aristotle remains Socratic in that he holds on to knowledge as an essential component of man's moral being, but this moral knowledge is not the knowledge of the philosopher, characterized

by abstractness, changelessness, necessity, and deductive certitude.

## II

Aristotle's question, as Gadamer sees it, is the question of the role of knowledge for man's ethical being: What is the role that knowledge plays in man's being human? The answer to this question, generally speaking, is in terms of the application of this knowledge, considered in some sense as a "universal," to the particular situations of life, thus yielding true moral judgments which can guide our action in these situations. Our problem now is the precise status of moral knowledge as a "universal." Clearly such knowledge does not have the rank of *epistēmē* understood as a pure objective cognition detached from the kind of human beings which we are. (It is Aristotle's thesis, in fact — and we will come to this matter again in greater detail — that *phronēsis* does not stand in isolation from the moral being of man but belongs to it intrinsically as determined by it and determinative of it).<sup>11</sup> If moral knowledge, then, is not "universal" in the sense of *epistēmē*, is it perhaps identical with *technē*, the exemplary form among the Greeks of a knowledge which governs action? In other words, is *phronēsis* a skill or a craft?<sup>12</sup>

If moral knowledge were of the same type as the knowledge of the craftsman, this would mean that it is a knowledge of how to "make" oneself, of how to fashion one's own humanness. It would mean that human action is a fashioning of oneself in relation to an *eidos* or form of oneself in the same way that a craftsman carries within himself an *eidos* of what he seeks to make and to embody in his material. If *phronēsis* were designated as a *technē*, it would mean that moral knowledge is universal in the same way as a plan or blueprint is

universal, and that application is nothing more than an "informing" of the "matter" represented by the potentiality of concrete situations.

It is undeniable that in certain major respects *technē* can serve as a model for moral knowledge. Both of them, after all, are representatives of genuine knowing. Also, both *technē* and *phronēsis* are knowledge of a dynamic kind, i.e., their purpose is to determine and guide action, and consequently they must include the application of knowledge to the particular task. Indeed, it is this element of application which has drawn Gadamer's notice in his efforts to define the structure of hermeneutical consciousness and understanding. Furthermore, *technē* is a practical knowledge understood as a genuine mastery of the kind of thing to be made, and in this regard it is especially similar to *phronēsis* which Aristotle characterizes as the capacity to think well for the sake of living well.<sup>13</sup>

There is no doubt that a real analogy does exist between the perfections of moral and technical consciousness, but they are certainly not the same. Obviously, man does not make himself in the same way as he fashions a product. For this another kind of knowledge is needed, a knowledge which man has of his moral being, a knowledge which is of himself and for himself.<sup>14</sup> To characterize moral knowledge in its universality as a "self-knowledge" immediately distinguishes it from *epistēmē*, for this "self-knowledge" is in no way identical with a theory of man in his timeless, unchanging, and universal structure. But to distinguish it from technical knowledge is a more difficult task. The objects of *phronēsis* and *technē*, ontologically speaking, are the same: a particular something which can always be different from what it is. Likewise, a person who has to make moral decisions has

been so formed by education and custom that he knows in general what is right, can apply this knowledge to particular situations, and by taking the right means can thus reach a right moral judgment on how he is to act. All of this also characterizes *technē*. How, then, is moral knowledge different from its technical counterpart?

Aristotle lists three points of divergence between *phronēsis* and *technē*. First of all, we learn a *technē* and can also forget it, but we do not learn moral knowledge in this way nor can we fail to remember it.<sup>12</sup> And why is this the case? Because we do not stand over against moral knowledge as if it were something which we could acquire or not, in the way that we choose to acquire or to neglect an objective skill. Rather, we are always already in the situation of having to act, and hence in some way must already possess and be able to apply moral knowledge, at least to a certain degree. But we do not possess this knowledge in such a manner that we already have it fully in advance, so to speak, and then apply it to specific situations. Our general notion of what is right can serve to some extent as a guiding idea to which we can look in the determination of right moral judgments. But there is a basic difference between this general notion and the craftsman's blueprint. What is right cannot be wholly determined independently of the situation that requires right action from me, whereas the form of what a craftsman desires to make is already fully determined independently of any particular instance of what is made.<sup>13</sup> We will return to this point again when we come to examine more closely the kind of mediation characteristic of the moral judgment.

Secondly, a difference between moral and technical knowledge can also be discerned in regard to the relationship

of means and end.<sup>14</sup> Moral knowledge has no merely particular and determinate end, but is concerned with right living in general, whereas all technical knowledge is particular and serves particular ends. Moreover, with regard to moral knowledge one must deliberate with oneself precisely about the object of this knowledge, i.e., about what is right in concrete situations, but with *technē* we learn it first and then find the means for putting it into action. And so *phronēsis* can never be eliminated through the extension of technical knowledge, since what is right to do in a particular situation can never be known previously to that situation, and hence cannot be taught. The same is also true about our knowledge of the right end; there can be no anterior certainty concerning that to which the good life as a whole is directed.

Neither the right means nor the right end can be known as objects of knowledge. *Phronēsis* 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. By embracing both means and ends, moral knowledge once again shows its essential otherness from *technē*. The consideration of the means through self-deliberation is a moral consideration and hence belongs to moral knowledge as specifying the dominant end of human "well-being." Thus it makes no sense in the case of *phronēsis* to distinguish between practical knowledge and the experience of particular situations, as can be done in the case of *technē*. Moral knowledge is a kind of experience, and this to such an extent that Gadamer would term it the fundamental form of experience, in comparison with which all other experience represents a dilution or derivation.

And lastly, moral knowledge is distinct from technical cognition insofar as it is self-knowledge, i.e., insofar as it is aware of itself as determined by the moral being of man and determinative of it.<sup>10</sup> This unique self-relation of *phronēsis* resides in its awareness of itself as bound to *aretē* or as directed to moral ends. Gadamer tries to clarify this by alluding to the various modifications of moral reflection which Aristotle introduces in the later chapters of Book VI of the *Ethica*. The virtues of *synesis* ("understanding"), *gnōmē* ("insight"), and *sygggnōmē* ("fellow-feeling") are only possible if moral knowledge is aware of itself as related intrinsically to man's achievement of his moral being as good.<sup>11</sup> This "transcendental" relation between *phronēsis* and *aretē* becomes clear from Aristotle's analysis of practical knowledge in its absolute debasement. The *deinos* is the shrewd fellow who has all the natural prerequisites and gifts for genuine moral knowledge, who is able with remarkable skill to get the most out of every situation, who is able to seize his advantage everywhere. But he is also characterized by one appalling fact: he exercises his gifts without being led by a good character and hence without any orientation at all to the moral good. All of these examples throw into relief the final point of divergence between *phronēsis* and *technē*: technical knowledge has no intrinsic, existential relationship to the being of the craftsman; one can have *technē* and yet deliberately do a bad job, but if a man deliberately and habitually does what is wrong, he does not possess *phronēsis*.

Moral knowledge, therefore, in its "universality" is essentially different from both *epistēmē* and *technē*. It does not have the universality of a premise from which a conclusion can be deduced, nor of a law in its application to a case,

nor of a form in its application to a material. Rather, the universality of moral knowledge is a "hermeneutical universality" in the sense developed in Gadamer's philosophy. We speak of universality only because understanding itself was determined as an instance of application, i.e., of the application of what is to be understood (the universal) to the particular situation of the knower, precisely because the present situation, with all its prejudices, limitations, and standpoints, is the productive ground of all understanding whatsoever. The universality, therefore, of what is to be understood lies in the fact that it is always understood in a different way. In regard to *phronēsis* this would mean that moral knowledge, man's knowledge of the "well" of his being, is universal only insofar as it is effective differently in various particular situations. This character will become more clearly manifest if we turn to the moral judgment conceived as a mediation of moral knowledge as universal with our present circumstance.

### III

What has Gadamer told us so far about *phronēsis*? *Phronēsis* is the *aretē* or excellence of practical, existential knowledge, a knowledge of what is good and bad in human action. This means that *phronēsis* is above all a self-knowledge, a knowledge concerned with one's own being human; it is a knowledge of what is right for human doing in all the various situations of life. But a situation is not something which stands before me like a determinate object; a situation is something in which I always already belong, and what is good for me is that which the situation requires or promises in its moral and creative potentiality. Thus moral knowledge is not "objective knowledge"; it is not a knowledge of what is objectively distinct from

me but of that which the situation demands and offers; in other words, the good which is known in moral knowledge is in the last analysis something which I have to do.

The implication of this insight is clear: the human good, as that which is always concrete, individual, and conditioned, is not to be known independently and prior to the situations in which we exist. *Phronēsis*, then, as moral self-knowledge, is an experiential knowledge of the particulars of human life which *allows us to think* about what the human good might be in various individual circumstances. This thinking is called deliberation. Hence, *phronēsis* can be understood as a deliberating capacity rooted in an experiential self-knowledge which we are able to "apply" to the different situations of life. But we do not "apply" this knowledge as a totality which we already possess. As we have just noted, moral knowledge is not objective knowledge; it is not a theory, it is not a body of laws, principles or commandments, it is not moral philosophy. Ethical reflection can serve to illumine moral knowledge and experience, but it is not identical with them. For if the good were known prior to our encounter with different situations, no self-deliberation would be needed. The problem of application as regard moral knowledge is the question of how our experiential apprehension of the human good can tell us the particular good demanded of us; it is the question of how our awareness of human "well-being" can enable us to achieve the "well" of our being in what we do. The problem of application, therefore, is the problem of moral judgment as mediated truth.

We have said that moral knowledge is not theory, not a body of principles and commandments, not an imperative, not a blueprint for molding situational possibilities. We now ask: What does

this mean with respect to the problem of application? In the previous section we have already made several allusions to this matter, and it is now time to consider it in greater detail. If moral knowledge had the status of *epistēmē* or *technē*, what the good is would always in essence be known prior to any encounter with concrete situations with all their demands and potentialities for good action. Application would then be reduced either to the recognition of something as a particular case of a universal principle or the fashioning of human life in accordance with some model of behavior. In other words, the mediation of moral knowledge would be understood either as instantiation or imitation. In both cases application would be a matter of *determining* the particular situations from an objective standpoint.

But if it is true that a situation is always something to which we belong, and if as a consequence no objective knowledge is adequate for comprehending it, and furthermore, if this character of our being necessitates a deliberation with oneself for the sake of knowing what is right in the context of concrete living, then we are able to say that application with regard to moral knowledge is *not determinative but heuristic*. Moral knowledge must be applied to the particular situation through a heuristic process of self-deliberation, made possible by moral experience, in which we can *discover* the particular good to be performed. Moral knowledge requires the concrete situational context in order to complete it, and it is the particularity and uniqueness of a situation which, through the process of deliberative inquiry, mediates and makes effective our general knowledge of the good for human life. Application, therefore, is a matter of heuristic mediation, not objective determination, and it is

ARISTOTLE PHRONESIS AND GADAMER • • •

precisely for this reason that Gadamer has noticed the "hermeneutic relevance" of Aristotle's conception.

Another aspect of this mediation must also be considered. Heuristic mediation means that the good can never be fully recognized apart from the situation in which I find myself. Now, this situation is always my own situation, i.e., it is one in which I belong in all my own individual and historical concreteness. What I have made of myself, therefore, all my dispositions, habits, and desires — in a word, my character or *ēthos* — is a determining factor for every situational encounter. The phenomenon of desire or striving (Aristotle calls it *orexis*) is fundamental for any adequate comprehension of his moral philosophy. Gadamer recognizes quite clearly that the basis in man for moral knowledge or *phronēsis* is precisely this striving and its development into a fixed attitude or disposition.<sup>20</sup> The quality and direction of our moral being insofar as we are disposed to respond and to act in one way or another is called our character or *ēthos*.

The term *ēthos* was subject to an interesting transformation of meaning from the earliest times to Aristotle.<sup>21</sup> The word is found in Homer, and there as well as in later texts it means (in its plural form, *ta ēthea*) the abodes, haunts, and habitual places of animals, a place of pasture, for example, where shepherds dwell with their herds. In Hesiod *ēthos* 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 interiorized, and here *ēthos* refers to the way and manner in which man is and can be at home in the world; it is the inner residing, bearing, and com-

portment which a man has towards himself, towards others, and towards his world. *Ethos* is thus the constant ground and foundation from which all action flows forth, and as such is a central component in the moral being of man.<sup>22</sup>

The ontological status of *ēthos* is that of a *hexis* or disposition. Like all natural beings, man is possessed of a radical and primordial impulse or striving to actualize his potentiality for being the kind of being that he is; in other terms, a striving to actualize his humanness in all that he does. Through repeated actions and omissions there is established in human life a fixed attitude to respond and act in a certain way, and this developed disposition, viewed as a total and dominant substructure of man's responsiveness, is called his *ēthos* or character. What is decisive, however, is the relationship of character to *phronēsis*, and it is this which Gadamer emphasizes when he asserts that the basis of moral knowledge in man is precisely this striving and its development into an habitual stance or bearing. Therefore, the world of human meaning is essentially different from the world of sheer nature (*physis*); human existence is not a place in which capacities and powers merely work themselves out, but man becomes what he is through what he does and how he does it, and he behaves in a certain way because of what he has become. In the sphere of *ēthos* the laws of nature do not operate, and yet it is not a sphere of lawlessness but of human institutions and attitudes which can be changed and which have the quality of binding rules only to a limited degree.<sup>23</sup>

The best state of man's *ēthos* is called its excellence or *aretē*, and Aristotle states that there is no *phronēsis* without *aretē ēthikē*, and no *aretē* without *phronēsis*.<sup>24</sup> The point which he is



making is very simple: our practical thinking is given its direction by the fundamental manner of our disposition. If we are so disposed that we habitually reach out for the "well" of our being in what we do, then practical thinking will attempt to realize this "well-being." In other words, our moral knowledge conceived in its excellence as the power of good deliberation with ourselves would degenerate to a frightening and uncanny cleverness without the conscious orientation of our desire towards the genuine good which can be recognized only through thought. Our practical knowledge of the human good is mediated from the standpoint of our own individual situation, a situation which can not be objectified, thus forbidding to moral experience the status of objective knowledge. But our own individual standpoint is preeminently a matter of *aretē* and of its strength and pervasiveness, and precisely in the orientation which it gives to our thought and action lies its mediating force in the issuing of a moral judgment. Without *aretē* our deliberative inquiry would never learn to see a situation "in the light of what is right."<sup>25</sup>

Mediation as heuristic rather than as determinative means two things. It means, first of all, that our knowledge of the good is never a prior totality of objective propositions which we bring to all the perplexing encounters of human life in the same way as we bring a universal law to its possible instances, or a blueprint to materials; rather, this knowledge as *moral experience* must be completed, fulfilled, mediated, and made effective in and through our particular, situated standpoint. And secondly, it means that the excellence of moral knowledge as *deliberation* is granted its basic orientation to goodness by our underlying, affective attitude or *aretē* which, as an ontological element of man's being in the world and with others, influences thoroughly his entire historical existence.

Moral knowledge as a universal and the moral judgment as a mediation are the two aspects of Aristotle's conception of *phronēsis* which Gadamer's own hermeneutic horizon has allowed him to penetrate most acutely. Our own attempt in this essay has been nothing more than to summarize his interpretation.

## REFERENCES

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 4. Aufl. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1975), pp. 295-307, 511; Idem, *Kleine Schriften*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1967-1972), I:84-85, 167-174, 179-191; III:200. (*Wahrheit und Methode* will be cited henceforth as WM).
2. Der Sinn meiner Untersuchungen ist . . . zu zeigen, dass Verstehen . . . zum Sein dessen gehört, was verstanden wird" (WM, p. xix).
3. Ibid., p. xxi.
4. Ibid., p. 295. For Gadamer's treatment of "application" see pp. 290-295.
5. "Es genügt zu sagen, dass man anders versteht, wenn man überhaupt versteht" (WM, p. 280).
6. Gadamer's interpretation of *phronēsis* as a problem of application forms the essential content of the section "Die Hermeneutische Aktualität des Aristoteles," in WM, pp. 295-307.
7. *Eth. Nic.* I, 6, 109a11-1097a14.
8. *Eth. Nic.* I, 6, 1077a10-13.
9. WM, p. 297. See also *Eth. Nic.* VI, 3, 1139b18-36.
10. For the concept of "situation" see especially WM, pp. 285-290.
11. WM, p. 295.
12. Ibid., pp. 296-307. The distinction between *phronēsis* and *technē* is the main point of Gadamer's interpretation.
13. *Eth. Nic.* VI, 5, 1140a24-28.

ARISTOTLE PHRONĒSIS AND GADAMER • • •

14. "... ein Sich-Wissen, d.h. ein Für-sich-Wissen ..." (WM, p. 299). Gadamer refers here to Aristotle's text: *Eth. Nic.* VI, 8, 1141b33, 1142a30.
15. WM, p. 300.
16. At this point in his text Gadamer touches upon the concepts of law, natural law, and "equity" (*epiēkeia*) in Aristotle's thought. What is important for us to note in this discussion is that, granted Aristotle's rejection of *epistēmē* as the paradigm of moral knowledge, a "natural law ethics" based upon a theory of human nature is excluded right from the start. Such an ethics could go back to Plato for its philosophical justification but not to Aristotle.
17. WM, p. 304-305.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 306-307.
19. The validity of Gadamer's interpretation of these virtues is another question.
20. WM, p. 295-296.
21. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 766.
22. Helene Weiss, *Kausalität und Zufall in der Philosophie des Aristoteles* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft, 1967), p. 101; Harimut Buchner, "Grundzüge der aristotelischen Ethik," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 71 (1963-64), 233-234.
23. WM, p. 296.
24. *Eth. Nic.* VI, 13, 1144b30-32.
25. "... im Lichte dessen, was recht ist" (WM, p. 305). Gadamer's analysis of moral knowledge is very brief, and so he does not enter upon the question of the ontological foundation of "what is right" in human doing.

St. John's University Library, Jamaica, N. Y. 11439.