

HOW IS ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF PHYSIS IMPLICATED IN HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY? – WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO HUSSERL'S THOUGHT CONCERNING ETHICS

We know Aristotle divides sciences (*episteme*) into three parts: physical science (*theoretike*), productive science (*poietike*), and practical science (*praktike*). (*Metaphysics*, 1025b 19–25) They concern themselves with different classes of things: *physis*, *techne*, and *ethos*. *Physis* is of those things that are generated by nature. That from which they are generated is matter. That which they become is form. So *physis* is characterized such that the form is generated from the matter itself (1032a 16–18). *Techne* is those things that are generated artificially. In contrast to *physis*, the form of *techne* is not generated from matter itself, but from the soul of a human being. (1032b 1–3) However, is it that *techne* stands inevitably in contrast to *physis*? Aristotle's example of health can answer this question.

The process of medical healing is a kind of *techne*. The physician follows and really does his conception of process as to how a patient is to be healthy. Aristotle's following saying is very meaningful: "If the subject is to be healthy this must first be present, e.g. a uniform state of body." (1032b 5–7) This process is called production, not a natural, but an artificial "making" (1032a 26–28), which is meant by *techne*. According to Aristotle, the process from a final something which the physician himself can produce towards health is called "making" (1032b 10). The whole process consists in "thinking" and "making". The point is that the physician should realize his medical thinking in a present patient which Aristotle stresses as "that" (*tode ti*) (1032b 20). The present patient is something that preexists. What preexists is of the level of matter that Aristotle especially characterizes as an invalid person, namely a person in the

“privation” of health. Aristotle points out that a man becomes healthy from disease as the privation or absence of health. For health is the substance (*ousia*) of disease. (1032b 30–1033a 14) If a man becomes healthy, its process is the actualization or recovery of the absent health. So the physician must take care of this meaning of health as follows: he produces health according to the form, but in consideration of the matter from which the form is generated. We see this as a combination of *physis* and *techne* in how *techne* is oriented to *physis*.

4 A person would doubt whether Aristotle thinks the generation of all *techne* is oriented to the generation of *physis*. We believe in general, for example, a man builds a house whose form is not generated from bricks or wood itself, but from his soul; a house is not the substance of bricks, because bricks can become something other, e.g., the Great Wall of China. In this sense Aristotle could not say the privation of house is in bricks, as if the bricks inescapably could become a house. But why does Aristotle still say: “Where the privation is obscure and has no name – e.g. in bronze the privation of any given shape or in bricks and wood the privation of the shape of a house – the generation is considered to proceed from these materials, as in the former case from the invalid” (1033a 5–10)? Our answer is: When, for example, a house is the privation in bricks, we could assume that a craftsman produces the house, as if it would be generated by nature. We remember that in his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes: “Beautiful art must look like nature, although we are conscious of it as art (craft).” (§ 45) When we read further: “Genius is the talent which gives the rule to art,” and “Genius is the innate mental disposition through which nature gives rule to art” (§ 46). We see it as possible that a product (e.g., a house) can become what it is from bricks as it ought to be, because a genius gives the rule and the form of the house as if they were generated by nature from bricks. This house is a product of beautiful art. From such a viewpoint, we can say the generation of *techne* is oriented to the generation of *physis* through the medium of beautiful art.

In parallel to this thesis: *techne* is oriented to *physis* since, for Aristotle, physical science is to be preferred to the productive and practical sciences, and theology is to be preferred to the physical and mathematical sciences (1026a 10–20). So according to this relationship, theology is the leading science over the other sciences. In *The Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle shows a similar position. Here he evaluates theoretical or contemplative activity as the highest activity: the contemplative life is better than the life of enjoyment and the political life (1095b 15). Wisdom as complete knowledge of the first principles is beneficial for all animals and beings, while prudence (*phronesis*) is concerned

only with human goods (1141a 16–1141b 10). Prudence is inferior to wisdom (1143b 34) or prudence does not exercise authority over wisdom (1145a 6). And finally, when Aristotle sees happiness in accordance with the highest virtue, it is a contemplative activity, for it implies leisure, it is continuous rather than a practical activity, and it is self-sufficient (1177a 12–30).

We must still emphasize that the contemplative or intellect activity is the divine element in human nature (1177a 12–18, 1177b 28). In the view of a human being as a kind of *physis*, the divine element as the pure form is generated from the matter of a human being. But this generation really is not merely by nature, but is often involved by choice through human will. This is mostly the human production. The process is set in motion not only by intellect and thought, but also by prudence and moral virtue (1139a 35). In other words, “the full performance of man’s function depends upon a combination of prudence and moral virtue” (1144a 6). But Aristotle already points out that the product is only a particular end, not an end in itself, and the end in itself can be reached only by the contemplative activity. In this meaning, *techne*, regarding the production of human will in our practical life, still must be oriented to *physis*, regarding the generation by nature in the direction of the contemplative activity. In this combination of *physis* and *techne*, we see that *phronesis* as a doctrine of art (Kunstlehre) plays a middle role between *physis* and *praxis*.

Under this discussion, we come to the theme of *philia and sophia*. Here I want to concern myself with two points:

First point: *Sophia*, or wisdom, is the complete knowledge of the first principles. We know the first principle is for Aristotle something that moves without being moved. He has determined it as the object of desire and the object of thought. But although he says: “It causes motion as being an object of love...” (*kinai de hos eromenon*)(1072b 3), it is debatable whether the expression “love” is a real activity or only an analogue. Some scholars believe that the first principle is self-perfect actual, so that its presence provides a pursuer with actualization of potentiality; therefore, the relation of the moving pursuer to the unmoved mover is similar to, but really not, love itself (Volkmann-Schluck 1979: 195–196). This interpretation is originally based on the understanding that Aristotle values the physical (natural) generation from the moved to the unmoved rather than the generation out of human activity, despite the different meanings of love regarding Greek words “*eros*” and “*philia*”. So “philosophy,” originating from “*philia-sophia*,” seems to be understood as pursuing wisdom rather than loving wisdom. We are moved to pursue wisdom, just as we love wisdom.

Second point: In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, *philia* can be also conceived as friendship. Friendship between relations might be distinguished and be of many kinds, but they all ultimately derive from paternal affection. The reason is “parents love their children as part of themselves” and “because that which comes from something else belongs to that from which it comes.” (1161b 12–24) Similarly, we see for Aristotle that friendly feelings are distinguished, but their feeling for others are an extension of our feelings towards ourselves (1166a 1–2). But this self-love is not selfish, for man does it for his own good. A friend is another self. So when the good man acts for the sake of a friend, it belongs to the process of actualization of his own good. (1166a 15–20; 1167b 30–35) Because the *sophia* is the ultimate goal of natural generation of one’s own good, *philia* now can be understood as derived from *sophia*.

How, then, is the conception of the priority of *physis* in regard to *techne* and *praxis* implicated in Husserl’s phenomenology?

6 II

The phenomenological maxim “Back to the things themselves!” provokes us to think what the things themselves are or are not. Why does Husserl criticize expressions without meaning which should be obtained from the lived experience (*I. Logische Untersuchung*) or empty word-analysis under the influence of some scholastic philosophy (*Philosophie als Strenge Wissenschaft*, 27)? According to the discussion above, we can say that the meaning, which they express, is not generated from the matter of things themselves, but from the soul of a human being. Husserl’s phenomenological thinking that the meaning of every predication must be originated from the pre-predicative experience is really based on the conception that form is generated from matter itself. We apply the phenomenological method *epoché* temporally to cease to conceive the meaning just constructed by the human soul. The phenomenological term “constitution” authentically signifies the generation of *physis*, not only in respect to the ontological genesis, but also in respect to the epistemological evidence of the things themselves.

Further, the phenomenological kernel word “intentionality” certainly indicates a human activity, but it reflects the matter characteristic of the human consciousness itself. Husserl originally views human consciousness itself as a kind of *physis* of which the primary character of intentionality is understood to let its correlate “thing” be given as itself. The self-given-ness of a thing is shown completely according to its natural generation from matter to form. The

question is whether or not the intentionality can let the thing be given in our consciousness without our technical (productive) contribution to the form or meaning, which could distort the authentic meaning generated from the matter of the thing itself, as Heidegger doubts in his *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (62–64, 132–133, 146–147). We understand that Husserl later penetrates into his genetic phenomenology in order to accomplish his idea of intentionality. In this way, the theme of passive synthesis of association indicates to us a starting point where the transcendental ego pole and its correlate both meet in an indifferent, co-present matter (*hyle*) phase and begin together their formation of meaning (Sinnbildung) by following their own generation of form from matter itself.

Based on the passive synthesis, eidetic intuition manifests Husserl's conception of *physis*, too (*Analysen zur Passiven Synthesis, Hua XI*, 23). Either the ideation by the earlier Husserl or the eidetic variation by the later Husserl begins with an experienced instance. It plays also the role of matter by which generation aims at forming essence. The question as to how the essence as invariant can be acquired after multiple variations could be replied to more profoundly, when we explain it in view of the above-mentioned starting point, where every essential meaning develops and appears through the consciousness of differentiation in the face of the abstract moments that contrast with each other within a concrete gestalt-structure. This could make clear what Held has as an answer to that question: According to the rules that the essence as invariant brings to light, the reference of the consciousness of horizon is structuralized (*Die Phänomenologische Methode*, 29). For the essential rule and the horizon structure, both are generated from that starting point as gestalt-structure of the matter phase.

Before we leave for the topic of ethics, two points should be highlighted. Firstly, Aristotle's concept of matter is different from Husserl's. Aristotle conceives the matter as a substance of outside thing, while Husserl understands the matter as sensible *hyle* within our sensibility and feeling, namely within our experience (Vetter [ed.]: *Wörterbuch der phänomenologischen Begriffe*, "Hyle", S. 267). I concede this difference, and see Husserl's treatment of the kinesthetic consciousness assures this difference. Therefore, I do know what Husserl in the *Ideas II* asserts: "The traditional understanding of the *hyle*, sensations concerning features [Merkmale] of the thing, presupposes the kinesthetic sensations" (*Hua IV*, 56–57).

Secondly, as already mentioned, the self-given-ness of a thing is shown completely according to its natural generation from matter to form. Does my

thesis take only one side of what Husserl asserts in the *Ideals II* in account: Nature is the foundation of the constitution of the personal world as the spiritual world, but ignore the other side: Spirit or soul (Geist) leads the constitution of the nature and the body and mind? My answer is just that the spirit must comprehend the direction of the natural generation from matter to form; the spirit lets nature generate itself as if that leads this. The spirit can do it, because it carries out the *epoché*, which lets itself and the nature be in an original hyletic relation. Leading of the spirit is not a “top-down” activity, but a “bottom-up” generative process.

III

8

Now, we want especially to demonstrate that Husserl’s conception of *physis* is reflected in his thinking of ethics. Naturally, because Husserl develops his ethics on the analogy of logics, we see already that the idea of *physis* is implicated in his introduction to the pure logics. In *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertethik 1908–1914 (Hua XXVIII)* and *Logische Untersuchungen: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik* (1900), Husserl shows us, like Aristotle, three kinds of doctrines: theoretical, practical, and artistic. He says, according to some traditional understanding, the theoretical doctrine is concerned only with form and the practical as the artistic doctrine (Kunstlehre) is concerned also with material; but the artistic doctrine is mostly dependent on the psychology. (*Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, 7) As a result, it is still in dispute whether logics or ethics is an empirical artistic doctrine or an idealistic theory. (*Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertethik*, § 2) Husserl makes clear that what is really at issue here is whether such artistic doctrine is dependent on a theory a priori or is itself an independent doctrine. (*Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, 37–38) Husserl follows the first position, as he explains, “every normative and naturally practical discipline presupposes one or several theoretical disciplines as fundaments that must possess a theoretical content which is separable from all normalization.”(47) This theoretical discipline is certainly not psychology, so we see Husserl’s criticism of the logical psychologism and of a morality of sentiment (Gefühlsmoral). On the contrary, Husserl proposes pure logics and pure ethics, in order to provide criteria for the absolute normalization of logic and even science in general (255) on the one hand, and for ethics on the other hand. (*Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertethik*, § 2)

But Husserl doesn’t stick to a morality of understanding (Verstandesmoral) as an opponent of the morality of sentiment. Just as he favors Kant’s and espe-

cially Leibniz's understanding of logics as pure and a priori, he sees it as his task "to construct the idea of pure logics on a sufficient broader basis" (*Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, 223). He values Kant's contribution to the universal principles of ethics, but he sees it as a problem if this principle is only formal (*Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertethik*, § 5). Husserl actually does not refuse ethics as an artistic doctrine. He aims to connect the formal and material moments of ethics.

Let us bring more implications of Husserl's conception of *physis* in regard to ethics to light. Artistic doctrine is originally *techne*, which, as we know, is generated artificially. Just as we note artistic doctrine is not generated from the matter itself but from the soul of the human being, so Husserl simply defines the artistic doctrine with respect to our goal positing (*Zwecksetzung*) (*Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, 47). Regarding his newly published *Einleitung in die Ethik. Vorlesungen Sommersenester 1920 und 1924* (*Hua XXXVII*), Husserl offers more details on the difference between artistic doctrine and theoretical science, namely the former is for the practical and the latter is for the theoretical interest (14–24). We understand artistic doctrine primarily as serving the concrete practical situation in relation to the different goals (14-15) and theoretical science as having the ultimate goal, though it would lay in infinity (17). When ethics is understood as artistic doctrine, it seems that what Husserl primarily cares about is whether the practical normative principle is only formal, not material, because this principle is generated just from our human soul, including our goal positing for the temporary concrete situation, but not for the ultimate goal. Husserl actually concedes that artistic doctrine ethics must be based on theoretical discipline. We could now interpret that *techne*, regarding the artistic doctrine, is oriented to *physis*, regarding the theoretical discipline. In other words, man produces the ethical doctrine to realize some goals in front of a certain situation or material condition, as if that doctrine could be generated from material or matter itself; the artistic doctrine is oriented to the natural ultimate goal.

Since Husserl's conception of *physis* reflects the issue of genetic phenomenology and ethics, it is not odd that Husserl treats the topic of ethics more and more in connection with the genetic phenomenology:

First, we see that *Einleitung in die Ethik* indicates this direction. By Husserl's complementary explanation of the ethics as artistic doctrine, he "extends the ethical judgment of the will or the goal of will to corresponding habitual property of the personality and to the underground of helpful or unfavorable dispositions" (8-9) and says: "So far as one personality has the faculty of self-evaluation, self-determination and self-education, and has also the faculty to

10

be consciously guided by the ethical obligatory norms in the self-formation, then all properties, including the intellectual property of a personality evidently fall within his/her own ethical domain” (9) (emphasis added). So we see the ethical artistic doctrine now in a more profound meaning, as it resides in the self-education of personality. In the process of self-education, we learn, as Aristotle shows in his *The Nicomachean Ethics*, how we are not to be moved (on the ground of our feelings (*pathos*)), but to be disposed (on the ground of our dispositions (*hexis*)) toward moral virtue (1106a 1–12). The word “faculty” (Fähigkeit) that Husserl uses above denotes actually what Aristotle means by *ergon* as a product of faculty (1098a 16), rather than by *dynamis* as mere faculty (1105b 22). In order to have *ergon* regarding a human being as a human being, our conduct should be regulated through *phronesis* (intellectual virtue), which is generated from *hexis* under our exercise and practice. In connection with Aristotle’s conception of ethics, we understand that Husserl now makes an ethical judgment more from the viewpoint of properties of personality, which include feelings, faculties, dispositions, and intellects. It means, basically, that human goodness is not separable from human nature and that essence is generated from the matter itself. So we see that Husserl’s conception of *physis* reflects the connection between his ethics and genetic phenomenology. Second, Husserl concerns himself with not only the individual ethics, but also the social ethics (*Einleitung in die Ethik*, 12–13). He emphasizes indeed that in the difference from morality, it is then that ethics is an artistic doctrine of right actions and the goals of such, and more so a general range of ethical right and wrong is to be determined. Husserl notices that the absolute ought/necessity for a man is characterized by “doing well to his next, his community, and lastly the humanity,” inasmuch as “he does or will do it from his love intention (Liebesgesinnung)” (10). This thinking corresponds with what Husserl says in his lectures on Fichte (1917/18): “And the more truth life, the more love and eudemonia” (Und je mehr wahres Leben, umso mehr Liebe und Seligkeit) (*Aufsätze und Vorträge 1911-1921, Hua XXV*, 285), while we know the themes in Fichte’s *Lectures* are developed in relation to his ideas of renewal and critique, which are presented in the Japanese *Kaizo* articles of 1923–24 (*Aufsätze und Vorträge 1922–1937, Hua XXVII*, 3–124). Certainly, the topic of ethical love reflects Husserl’s conception of the judgment of ethics in consideration of the property of a personality. But we agree with what Janet Donohoe shows in her *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity* (2004) – that the ethical love should be understood in view of Husserl’s genetic phenomenology. According to her, the community of ethical love belongs to the secondary level, which is derived from an intersubjectivity

at the most fundamental level, and the constitution of such intersubjectivity “is grounded in the anonymous constituting of time that allows for a more originary connection between the ego and Other” (144). This is another point of the connection between Husserl’s ethics and genetic phenomenology.

IV

As a neo-Aristotelian, Alasdair MacIntyre writes in his *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990): “For part of what put the philosophical tradition which runs from Socrates to Aquinas at odds with the philosophical thought of modernity, whether encyclopaedic or genealogical, was both its way of conceiving philosophy as a craft, a *techne*, and its conception of what such a craft in good order is.” (61) We see he follows Aristotle’s words: “Every good is *ergon* of a *techne*” (*The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1152b 19), and he points out that the end products of *techne* are characterized by “reasoning, which it requires both intellectual and moral virtues.” (61; 1140a 20–21) Besides that, he notes our “enquiry into the nature of what is the good and the best” is a science (*episteme*) and a “master-craft” (61; 1094a 27). At the beginning of the *Metaphysics* is *techne*, and the “master-craftsman” is “the person with *sophia*” or “*philosophos*.” (61)

11

So, a teleological process runs through Aristotle’s three sciences—physical, productive, and practical science—of which we at the opening of this paper spoke: from productive to physical, by way of practical science. How they correspond: of *physis*, *techne*, and *ethos*, *techne* is oriented to *physis*, but through the media of *ethos*.

Under another perspective, the character of *techne* is not only confined within the productive science, but extended into the scope of the practical science. Because the ultimate goal of the physical science is not only theoretical understanding of the human good, but also the practical embodiment in the life of the theory enquirer himself (*Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 63), the virtue is needed for the practice of *techne*, which is oriented to the genuine good as the ultimate goal. The virtue self is a *techne*, or *techne* is extended as a “virtue-guided craft” (63). We know the moral virtue and the intellectual virtue (*phronesis*) interact and determine themselves and each other during our practice and exercise. The ultimate goal is the *telos* of *physis*.

In view of MacIntyre’s reflecting back to Aristotle’s thinking, we understand with certainty that Husserl estimates his ethics as an artistic doctrine in the sense that our thesis in this paper shows: *phronesis* plays the mediate role between *sophia* and *praxis*, which includes *philia*.

References:

- Aristoteles: *Metaphysik*, übersetzt und herausgegeben von Franz F. Schearz, Stuttgart: Phillip Reclam, 1970.
- Aristotle: *Metaphysics*, translated by W. D. Ross, eBooks@Adelaide, 2007.
- Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by J.A.K. Thomson, England: Penguin, 2004.
- Donohoe, Janet: *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity: From Static to Genetic Phenomenology*, New York: Humanity Books, 2004.
- Heidegger, Martin: *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, Gesamtausgabe Bd. 20, Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1988.
- Held, Klaus: "Einleitung in *Edmund Husserl, Die phänomenologische Methode, ausgewählte Texte I*, mit einer Einleitung herausgegeben von Klaus Held, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Logische Untersuchungen: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1980.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Logische Untersuchungen: Untersuchungen zur Phanomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis (II-1)*, Tübingen: Neimeyer, 1980.
- 12 Husserl, Edmund: *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1965.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, Hua. IV, Hrsg.: M. Biemel, Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1952.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis – aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918–1926, Hua XI*, herausgegeben von M. Fleischer, Den Haag, The Netherlands: M. Nijhoff, 1966.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911–1921), Hua XXV*, herausgegeben von Tom Nenon and Hans Reiner Sepp, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1986.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937), Hua XXVII*, herausgegeben von Tom Nenon and Hans Reiner Sepp, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre, 1908–1914, Hua XXVIII*, herausgegeben von Ullrich Melle, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988.
- Husserl, Edmund: *Einleitung in die Ethik: Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1920/1924, Hua XXXVII*, herausgegeben von Henning Peucker, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004.
- Kant, Immanuel: *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Hrsg., K. Vorländer, Hamburg: Meiner, 1974.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair: *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry – Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, Notre Dame/Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.
- Vetter, Helmuth (Hrsg.): *Wörterbuch der phänomenologischen Begriffe*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2004.