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Technê and Hermeneutics in the Context of Platonic Philosophy

Abstract: This article explores the interplay between *technê* and hermeneutics within Platonic philosophy. It begins by delving into the origins of hermeneutics, stemming from the Greek term *hermeneutikê technê*, and how Plato's dialogues serve as a model for philosophical hermeneutics. It discusses the practical nature of Socratic knowledge and the role of *technê* in Plato's works, emphasizing the unity and diversity of virtues and the ethical implications of professional and virtuous knowledge. The article also examines the hermeneutical significance of *technê* in Plato's works and its influence on philosophers like Schleiermacher and Heidegger. Schleiermacher's mistranslation of *poiêsis* as poetry instead of creation is highlighted, along with Heidegger's interpretation of *technê* as a bringing-forth, revealing the deeper hermeneutical dimension of Platonic *poiêsis*. The article concludes by reflecting on the relevance of hermeneutics in our technological society, emphasizing the need to incorporate modern technology into our understanding of the world.

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Artikel untersucht das Zusammenspiel zwischen *technê* und Hermeneutik innerhalb der platonischen Philosophie. Der Artikel vertieft sich in die Ursprünge der Hermeneutik, die vom griechischen Begriff *hermeneutikê technê* stammt, und wie Platons Dialoge als Modell für die philosophische Hermeneutik dienen. Er diskutiert die praktische Natur des sokratischen Wissens und die Rolle der *technê* in Platons Werken, wobei die Einheit und Vielfalt der Tugenden und die ethischen Implikationen des beruflichen und tugendhaften Wissens betont werden. Der Artikel untersucht auch die hermeneutische Bedeutung der *technê* in Platons Werken und ihren Einfluss auf Philosophen wie Schleiermacher und Heidegger. Schleiermachers Fehlübersetzung von *poiêsis* als Poesie statt als Hervorbringung wird hervorgehoben, ebenso wie Heideggers Interpretation von *technê* als ein Hervorbringen, das die tiefere hermeneutische Dimension der platonischen *poiêsis* offenbart. Der Artikel schließt mit einer Reflexion über die Relevanz der Hermeneutik in unserer technologischen Gesellschaft und betont die Notwendigkeit, moderne Technologie in unser Verständnis der Welt zu integrieren.

摘要： 本文探讨了在柏拉图哲学中技艺（*technê*）和诠释学（阐释与理解）之间的相互作用。文章首先讨论了诠释学的起源，表明它源自希腊术语 *hermeneutikê technê*，以及柏拉图对话如何成为哲学诠释学的典范。

作者进而讨论了苏格拉底知识的实践性质以及 *technê* 在柏拉图作品中的作用，强调了德性的统一性和多样性以及专业知识和道德知识的伦理内涵。此外，文章还探讨了柏拉图作品中 *technê* 的诠释学意义及其对施莱尔马赫和海德格尔等哲学家的影响。施莱尔马赫将 *poiêsis* 误译为诗而非创作，而海德格尔则将 *technê* 解释为"产出"（*hervorbringen*），这些都揭示出柏拉图 *poiêsis* 的更深层次的诠释学维度。最后，作者反思了诠释学在我们技术社会中的重要性，强调了将现代技术融入我们对世界的理解之中的必要性。

Keywords: Hermeneutics, Technology, techné, Plato, Dithey, Schleiermacher, Heidegger

I.

One of the most influential epistemologists of the 20th century, Roderick Chisholm, became famous for his assertion that the most important epistemological questions had already been largely clarified in ancient philosophy: "Most of the problems and issues constituting the 'theory of knowledge' were discussed in detail by Plato and Aristotle and by the Greek skeptics. There is some justification, I am afraid, for saying that the subject has made very little progress in the past two thousand years." (Chisholm, 1982, 109)

Hermeneutics as a universal discipline of epistemology in the humanities is derived from the Greek term *hermeneutikê technê,* and as such means the art of interpretation and understanding. The structure and context of Plato's dialogues was an inspiration for all thinkers of philosophical hermeneutics, from Schlegel and Schleiermacher to Dilthey and Gadamer, who all considered Plato's dialogues as a model of hermeneutical reflection. In his classic essay 'Origin of Hermeneutics' (1900), Dilthey wrote that Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher were particularly fascinated by Plato's philosophy because for Plato, reflection on life was the most important guiding principle of his philosophising:

> "Plato must be understood as a philosophical artist. The goal of the interpretation is the unity between the character of Plato's philosophizing and the artistic form of Plato's works. Philosophy is here still part of life, life intermingled with conversation, and its literary exposition is only a way of fixing it for memory. So it had to be dialogue, and a dialogue of such an artistic form that it requires its readers to

recreate the living interchange of thoughts. Yet at the same time, according to the strict unity of Platonic thought, each dialogue must be a continuation of something earlier, must prepare for something to come, and thus spin out the threads of the various parts of philosophy. When one follows the relations of the various dialogues to each other, there comes into view the overall nexus of the main works, which reveals Plato's innermost intention. According to Schleiermacher, a real understanding of Plato can only be achieved by grasping this skillfully constructed nexus." (Dilthey, 1924, 328).

Hermeneutics as practical philosophy always starts with the concrete situation in which we find ourselves and then asks what is reasonable there, what is to be done in the sense of what is right. We ourselves must determine what is to be done by consulting others and entering into an exchange of experience with each other. We cannot control our praxis by means of schematic instructions; praxis always implies the choice of different possibilities and we must make our decision instantly most of the time. Gadamer admitted in his self-portrayal written in 1975, that he learned the most important things from Heidegger, especially in the Freiburg lectures "Ontology – Hermeneutics of Facticity" (1923): "At that time, '*phronesis*', the *aretê* of 'practical reason'... became a true magic word for me" (Gadamer 1986, 485).

In order to understand the hermeneutic context of the Greek term *technê*, Socratic knowledge (*epistatai*; ἐπίσταται) is important, which implies practical, non-propositional knowledge. It is understood in terms of the practical ability to know how to swim, ride a horse, play the harp, dance well or know how to treat a patient. In explaining this principle, Socrates refers to an analogy between the knowledge of virtue (*aretê*), which motivates us to achieve a moral way of life of ethical excellence, and the knowledge we find in specialists, experts in certain skills (*technê*). Bruno Snell claims that in contrast to the Ionian dialect, where the words for knowledge and cognition had a theoretical implication, Socrates already "got hold of the model of the craftsman with the Attic word for knowledge *epistēmē*... as well as knowledge and skill, which is also applied to the skills of the trades" (Bruno Snell, 1955, 252). This form of craftsmen's knowledge, of which Socrates is enthusiastic, implies not only practical knowledge,

but also dispositional skills, expertise and familiarity. Someone who "knows" how to repair a machine, an appliance or some tool, has practical knowledge, just as someone who "knows" how to dance well, play the piano or steer a ship. An expert (*technikos*) who knows and understands his work remains a role model for Socrates when assessing a concrete situation with regard to moral action. Socrates, as described by Plato in the early dialogues, often cites as an example the knowledge of cobblers, shipbuilders, cooks, tailors and, above all, doctors, for each of them understands the work he is doing and knows how to do what is expected of him. The fundamental characteristic of the medical, building, pottery or other craft is that it is not primarily for the person practicing it, but for the general benefit of others. A person who has specialized practical knowledge (*technê*) always has an advantage over a person who does not have such knowledge. The same applies to someone who has integrated a certain virtue, i.e. has ethical knowledge, he usually has an advantage over a person without virtues. Reflections on *technê* accompany Plato's work from the *Apology* to the *Nomoi*. Plato unfolds the philosophical meaning on various levels.

In the *Gorgias*, Plato even explains the linguistic relationship that exists between professional and ethical knowledge. A person who knows about construction (*ta tectonika*) is rightly called a master builder (*tektonikos*) because he is qualified for such an activity. A person who is able to judge what is just (*ta dikaia*) and to shape his life according to this judgment and to serve as an example to others is called just (*dikaios*). The fundamental characteristic of professional and virtuous knowledge is that it is not imbued with egoism, but primarily has the general benefit in mind. The goal of medical skills is not personal gain and one's own livelihood, but the health of others. For practical knowledge related to *aretê* and *technê* to be truly effective, a prerequisite is its correct application, i.e. its proper use (*orthê chrêsis*; *Men*. 88a; *Euthd*. 280b-281e), which is achieved through education. In order to emphasize the unity and diversity of the virtues (*aretai*), in the dialogues Plato deliberately contrasts Socrates, who argues that virtue is knowledge, with people who are known as experts on the topic dealt with in the dialogues.

Closely related to Socrates' ethical principle of the identity of virtue and knowledge is his famous argument of functionality, which is presented in detail in the first book of the *Republic*. Using the example of functionality, i.e. efficiency (*ergon*), Socrates attempts to explain that everything that has a certain function also has a virtue. We can only see with our eyes if they are healthy, we can only use our bodily organs if they are healthy, we can only weave on a loom if it is in good condition. Applying this analogy to the human soul, Socrates will say that its functioning is manifested in the practice of life and that justice is its main virtue (*aretê*), a virtue that guarantees success. From this, Socrates concludes that the one who lives well and virtuously will be happy and content, and the one who lives the opposite will remain unhappy and restless. So the same fate awaits him as anything that is inadequate or deficient (*kakia*) in any way and cannot fully achieve its goal due to its dysfunctionality.

Schleiermacher sees the analogy between *technê* as the production of artifacts and the poetic activity that produces literary works as an intention in the spirit of Socratic philosophizing. In the early dialogues, the Platonic *technê* has an intentional and teleological relationship to its object: it is directed towards something for something or for someone. The goal to be achieved through the performance of the *technê*, the *ergon*, is ultimately always functionality as the intention of the *technê*. We will encounter a similar argument later in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1095a 16), when he explains human virtues using an analogy with the correctness and functionality of objects. A well-built ship has its functionality because you can travel on it on the sea or river. For Plato, the doctor, the gym teacher and the helmsman are representatives of different types of technical expertise. Such specialist knowledge only fulfills its purpose when it has to prove itself in a specific individual case.

The skill of medicine is a particular focus of Plato's reflections: Just as the medical skill (*technê*) is necessary to restore the disturbed natural order in a sick organism, so analogously, according to Plato's Socrates, intellectual care is necessary to restore to the soul the original order (*taxis*; *kosmos*) that it has lost through its unvirtuous lifestyle (cf. *Gorg*. 503d-507a).

German Expert for Ancient culture Werner Jaeger (1888-1961) argues that medicine had a significant impact on philosophical reasoning in Plato's time because it became part of the general culture of education. The physician's task, Jaeger argues, is first to try to restore the natural state of things, i.e., disturbed symmetry and proportion in the human body. This was later expressed by the sentence of Juvenal "mens sana in corpore sano," which is already found indirectly in Plato's *Apology*. According to Jaeger, Plato uses this when he speaks of a healthy soul and a healthy *polis* as ideals to be established according to the natural order of things: "Nature strives to attain that intelligible standard (for that is how we must describe it); and from that point of view it is easy to understand how Plato can call strength, health, and beauty the 'virtues' ἀρεταί of the body and speak of them as parallel to the ethical virtues of the soul. What he means by *aretê* is that symmetry of parts or forces in which, according to medical ideas, normal health consists." (W. Jaeger 1957, 27). Plato transferred another dimension from medicine to philosophy: a physician cannot distance himself so much from his professions that he ceases to be a physician. His professional competence determines him as who he is. Furthermore, the reference to practice is of enormous importance for medicine, which Plato transferred to philosophy. In Plato's dialogues the medical doctor, the gymnastics teacher, and the helmsman are representatives of different kinds of technical knowledge (*technê*). Such specialized knowledge fulfills its purpose only there, where it must prove itself in the concrete individual case. For this reason, it can never be fully captured in general rules or laws. For it is a knowledge that belongs to the type of skills and abilities.

The physician who knows the rules of his profession only *in abstracto* is far from mastering his discipline. The same is true for the philosopher, who knows the ethical norms, but does not strive to apply them in practice, is not yet a true philosopher. In a beautiful ship metaphor, Plato tries to show what happens when populists are at the helm of the ship, especially in the danger of sea storms. It is not democracy and the vote of the people that will help us here, but the expertise of the helmsman. We can learn this in practice from medicine, where the competent doctor treats the disease and tries to cure the sick person.

Socrates, as the founder of European philosophical morality, compares the ethical activity of the actor, known as moral intellectualism, with the activity of the physician, who always acts by striving for practical knowledge or good diagnosis. Health is the term Plato uses most often when arguing about the effects of virtue on the soul of the individual. For example, in the Republic (*Rep*. 610 d-e) it is explained how injustice (*pleonexia*) harms the soul, and as such it has been compared to disease, which destroys our organism, while righteousness of the soul is compared to health which restores natural condition.

Plato wants to emphasize that the original aim of philosophizing is the establishment of the unity of the human person and the elimination of everything that makes this impossible. In the context of cultivating one's own personality, Socrates regards virtue as an integrated part of the soul. The virtues are not only an essential characteristic of the human soul (cf. *Apol*. 20a), but also a fundamental determinant of his actions.

In the dialogue *Protagoras*, Socrates asks the respected sophist Protagoras to clarify his position on knowledge (*epistêmê*), namely whether knowledge is decisive (*archikon*) for most people or whether anger, lust (*hedonê*), suffering or perhaps fear prevail among them. In distinguishing between good and evil, will we be guided primarily by knowledge and wise judgment (*phronêsis*; cf. *Prot*. 252 b-c), and not be guided by our emotions.

In the Socratic early dialogue *Ion*, the interpretative activity of the rhapsodist is described as a *technê* right at the beginning of the dialogue. *Technê* is mentioned here as the "skill of specialists" (530 b; 531 e; 532 c; 537 d, e; 538 a, e, 540 e) or as "practical knowledge, skill" (532 e; 533 d, e; 534 b, e; 537 d, e, 538 a, 540 b; 541 a). Furthermore, *technê* is defined as an art in the sense of skill (530 c; 532 e) or as a "methodical activity based on knowledge" (532 c, d; 536 c, d; 537 a, c). Furthermore, a connection is made in the dialogue between *technê* and *epistêmê* 532 c; 541), whereby the adjective *technikos* is also used in the sense of "equipped with practical knowledge" (542 a, b).

After Socrates' ironic remark that he has always admired the rhapsodes for their art of interpreting great poets, especially Homer as the greatest of them

(530 b), in the context of the Socratic elenchistic examination the theme of understanding (*dianoia*) is placed in the foreground. A physician understands his art in order to be able to practice it, i.e. to help the sick; the same applies to the shipbuilder and to experts in other *technai*. Accordingly, Socrates makes an analogous claim that "no one can be a rhapsode if he does not understand (*ei me syneiê*) what the poet means" (530 c).

The intention of the Socratic elenchus is to prove, with the help of the explication of the structure of *technê*, that Ion has by no means 'presented many beautiful interpretations of Homer' because he is unable to make a correct judgement on the Homeric text, which he should do as an alleged expert. The competent interpreter should proceed like an expert (*technikos*) in his *technê* and be able to distinguish between what is right and wrong, good and bad. Anyone who wants to be an expert in a particular technique must be trained for it: the same applies to anyone who wants to be an interpret, *hermeneus*, of the Homeric text, to understand (*synienai*) the intention (*dianoia*) of texts, and not just individual words without context. In the course of the conversation, Socrates convinces Ion that because he does not understand the text sufficiently, he is also unable to judge whether Homer is telling the truth. In other words, Ion does not have a general professional art of interpretation in the sense of a skill (*technê*).

The argument of the Socratic elenchus consists in the assertion that it is only 'because of art (*technê*) that one can speak well of Homer,' not because the interpreter is moved by divine power and enthusiasm (cf. *Ion* 533 d 1-3). In contrast to the poet, who produces excellent poetic works through divine power and enthusiasm of the soul, the interpreter should soberly grasp the meaning and intention of the text. In the later dialogue *Phaedrus*, Plato claims with regard to interpretation that the written text, *logoi gegramenoi*, has a substantial disadvantage in that it cannot protect itself from misunderstandings and deliberate misinterpretations: 'And if the writing (*graphê*) is insulted or undeservedly insulted, it always needs its father's help (*boêthou*); for it is neither able to protect itself nor to help itself.' (*Phaedrus* 275 e)

As the founder of modern hermeneutics, Schleiermacher analyzed both passages from the Platonic dialogues *Ion* and *Phaedrus*. In his lecture, delivered on August 12th, 1829, at the Prussian Academy of Sciences "On the Concept of Hermeneutics, With reference to F. A. Wolf's Allusions and Ast's Textbook," Schleiermacher analyzes the hermeneutic procedure of the Platonic rhapsodist and claims that "the interpreter puts himself as far as possible into the whole constitution of the writer and therefore not infrequently behaves in fact like the Platonic rhapsodist, who however confesses very naively that he is able to explain Homer excellently, but often does not really want to elucidate another poet or prose writer" (Schleiermacher 2002, 612). The purpose of putting the interpreter in the author's position is to reconstruct his creative intention.

Following on from Plato, Schleiermacher recognised that human understanding consists of two segments: on the one hand, the meaning of words or the sense of sentences is explored in the context of the wholeness of language. On the other hand, hermeneutics consists of the realisation that in the process of understanding, individual thought formation is thoroughly explored and reconstructed. The focus on the general and universal aspects of language is characterised as grammatical interpretation, while the 'technical' or interpretation is primarily aimed at the author's thought process or individual production. In his *Lectures on Ethics* (1812/13), Schleiermacher emphasized this twofold dimension of language as the basis of hermeneutic interpretation:

> "Viewed from the side of language, however, the technical discipline of hermeneutics arises from the fact that every speech can only be regarded as an objective representation, inasmuch as it is taken from language and can be understood from it, but that on the other hand it can only arise as the action of an individual, and as such, even if it is analytical in its content, nevertheless carries free synthesis in itself from its less essential elements. The balancing of both elements makes understanding and interpretation an art." (Schleiermacher, 1990, 116).

The process of understanding the reconstruction of the author's thought development expresses the dual function of understanding, firstly the intentional

reference to the language through grammatical interpretation and secondly the recording of the thought formulation through "technical" or psychological interpretation. Both forms of interpretation are interdependent and form the unified act of understanding. Understanding is made possible by the "togetherness" of these two elements of interpretation, whereby the grammatical and the "technical" interpretation are "completely equal" to each other (cf. Schleiermacher 2012, 121).

In his *Lectures on Dialectics*, Schleiermacher takes up Plato's topos from the dialogue *Phaedrus* that the task of the interpreter is to help the text. Schleiermacher points out the essential difference between a text to be interpreted and a dialogue partner present: the book cannot 'answer for itself,' whereas the person with whom one is discussing can do so at any time. Therefore, it remains the hermeneutical responsibility of every reader and interpreter to deal with the work as with a dialogue partner in an appropriate effort to understand it and 'to place oneself entirely in the author's point of view and soul' and to take responsibility for the text in such a way that the author, 'if he himself were present, would not be able to say anything against [...] objections' (KGA Schleiermacher, II/10, 2, 403).

As a translator of Plato's dialogues, Schleiermacher recognized that it is no coincidence that the semantic fields of ability to perform art (*technê*) and knowledge (*epistêmê*) overlap. In any case, the concept of knowledge also encompasses its non-propositional forms. It is therefore possible for Plato to see a form of knowledge in the competence of the skilled craftsman.

Schleiermacher saw an analogy between the productive activity of the craftsman and that of the poet. Just as the shipbuilder constructs a ship out of wood with his *technê*, the poet creates a poetic work of art from the universal language, the special feature of which is a particular style. Both works are characterized by a specific, unique form. Schleiermacher sees reconstructing this creative process of the thinker and poet, the creative unfolding of his thoughts, as the task of "technical interpretation," which is derived from the original meaning of the value *technê*. According to Schleiermacher, the primary task of technical interpretation in hermeneutics is to reconstruct the author's individual style. The task

of technical interpretation is the complete understanding of style in the context of written language. In the compendium-like presentation of hermeneutics from 1819, Schleiermacher writes: "We are accustomed to understand style as the treatment of language. But thought and language merge everywhere, and the peculiar way of conceiving the object merges into the arrangement and thus also into the treatment of language" (Schleiermacher 1974, 104). Thoughts are individualized forms of language that are reconstructed and grasped through technical interpretation. The construction process, which Schleiermacher derived from the Grecian *technê*, remains the primary task of hermeneutic understanding, i.e. the reconstruction of technical or artistic production (cf. Schleiermacher 1974, 31). Metaphors, allegories, word and language games are, according to Schleiermacher, characteristics and peculiarities of an author's technical production. In contrast, Schleiermacher claims that "there is no technical interpretation for myth, because it cannot originate from an individual" (Schleiermacher 1974, 81). Plato wrote dialogues because he wanted to reproduce the lively conversations of his teacher Socrates and produced works of art from them. Plato's choice of the form of dialogue was decisive for the emergence of hermeneutics in Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher because the main task of the Platonic dialog is to appeal to the reader's self-activity and to enter into conversation with him. The Platonic dialogue is an invitation to hermeneutic reflection.

Schleiermacher brings the hermeneutical dimension of *technê* to light paradoxically through his mistranslation of the famous passage from Plato's *Symposium* (205 bc.) For the sake of plausibility, we first give the Greek text, then Schleiermacher's translation and finally my English translation of the Greek text:

> *Symposium* 205 cd: οἶσθ᾽ ὅτι ποίησίς ἐστί τι πολύ. ἡ γάρ τοι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὂν ἰόντι ὁτῳοῦν αἰτία πᾶσά ἐστι ποίησις, ὥστε καὶ αἱ ὑπὸ πάσαις ταῖς τέχναις ἐργασίαι ποιήσεις εἰσὶ καὶ οἱ τούτων δημιουργοὶ πάντες ποιηταί.

Schleiermacher:

> „Du weißt doch daß Dichtung etwas gar vielfältiges ist. Denn was nur für irgend etwas Ursache wird aus dem Nichtsein ins Sein zu

treten ist insgesamt Dichtung. Daher liegt auch bei den Hervorbrin-
gungen aller Künste Dichtung zugrunde, und die Meister darin sind
sämtlich Dichter." (*Platon Werke*, *Band 3: Phaidon. Das Gastmahl.
Kratylos*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1990, 325)

"You know that the '*poiêsis*' [creation] is manifold: after all when
something comes into existence which has not existed before, the
whole cause of this is 'creation' [*poiêsis*]; so that the production of
every kinds of expertise [*technai*] are creations [*poiêsis*]; and their
craftsmen are all creators".

It is curious that Schleiermacher translates *poiêsis* here as poetry, which in itself
is a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word. Consequently, he goes on to
translate *technê* as the poet's artistic activity. In Schleirmacher's sense, it is a
technical, i.e. artistic activity according to which the poet is the master of the
producing art, of poetry. Hermeneutic understanding is a reconstruction of the
author's creative process. One of the important achievements of Schleierma-
cher's hermeneutics is the insight that in the process of understanding, individual
thought formation is thoroughly analyzed and reconstructed. The focus on the
general and universal aspects of language is characterized as grammatical inter-
pretation, while the "technical" interpretation is primarily aimed at the author's
act of thought or his individual production. Language, in its universality, proves
to be the substantial *hypokeimenon*, the basis on which individual creations and
thought developments take place. This happens mainly in the creativity of poets
and poetic philosophers like Plato.

If we interpret *technê* as *poiêsis* in the sense of the cause, that something that was not
before becomes something through production and then is, as Heidegger did in his epochal
essay "The Question Concerning Technology (1954)," we open up the deeper hermeneuti-
cal dimension of Platonic *poiêsis*:

"It is of utmost importance that we think bringing-forth [*Her-vor-brin-
gen*] in its full scope and at the same time in the sense in which the
Greeks thought it. Not only handicraft manufacture, not only artis-
tic and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery, is a
bringing-forth, ποίησις. Φύσις, also, the arising of something from
out of itself, is a bringing-forth, ποίησις. Φύσις is indeed ποίησις in
the highest sense (Heidegger, 2000, 12).

An account of Heidegger's hermeneutic relevance of technê requires special analysis because it is a condition for understanding his practice-oriented hermeneutics. Heidegger's lectures on the Platonic dialog Sophistes testify to how he discovered in the Greek understanding of non-propositional segments of being-in-the-world: "In the case of τέχνη, knowing oneself is directed towards the ποιητόν, towards what is yet to be produced, i.e. what is not yet". (Heidegger 1992, 40).

Heidegger's "Hermeneutics of Dasein" implies first and foremost the analysis of the being that we ourselves are and that "is understood in its existence (being) in relation to this being and as such exists in the world." For Heidegger, "being-in-the-world" as an existential, represents a process of cognition in which everyone analyzes their possibilities "in the world," whereby understanding is not limited to being, but also to getting to know the "things" that are an integral part of our existence in the world. This implies that "recognizing" the "mode of being of the human being as being-in-the-world" also presupposes our practical, everyday exploration of the world, whereby the horizon of understanding is conditioned by the understanding of certain things in the world that are of particular significance for our world as that which is available to us.

Understanding as the articulation of the meaningful-functional context of things in the world is only possible thanks to the fact that the "self-interpretation" of one's own possibility is an essential part of the being of Dasein. The articulation of meaning represents the framework in which the understanding of one's own existence and practical action in the world takes place by getting to know and discovering things in their original usefulness. Heidegger speaks metaphorically of the circle of understanding, in which the "positive possibility of original knowledge" is contained, and poses the question of how one enters it in the first place so that the process of understanding can take place:

> "The 'circle' in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of Dasein that is, in the understanding which interprets. An entity for which, as Being-in-the-world, its Being is itself an issue, has, ontologically, a circular structure." (Heidegger 1962, 195)

Through the ontologization of hermeneutics, Heidegger brings about a complete transformation of traditional hermeneutics. The question of the meaning of the text, what is the main subject of discussion in the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and F. Schlegel, is transformed in Heidegger's philosophy into the question of being, i.e. existence (*Dasein*). 'Being-in-the world' (das In-der-Welt-Sein), as an existential, for Heidegger means the process of grasping in the course of which the Dasein explores its potentialities 'in the world,' where its understanding is not limited to the existence, but also relates to cognising 'the things' of which our very existence in the world consists (Heidegger 1977, 71).

When Heidegger claims that 'cognisance' (*Verstehen*) is the human's 'modus of being as the being in the world,' this implies our practical, everyday coming to terms with the things, our orientation in the world, where the horizon of understanding rests on the understanding of individual entities in the world that do not amount to insignificant, empty pieces with no relevance for the world in which we live; they are the given that marks us existentially.

The world I cognise and grasp by existing is indeed a significant, internally connected totality in which the individual objects assume their significance through their practical use, and also refer to each other. Heidegger's famous example of a hammer shows that even the most ordinary Thing (*Zeug*) earns a special hermeneutical dimension by its practical use, by hammering a nail into a piece of wood, as it discloses the world as "the totality of references" (*Verweisungszusammenhang*).

In this context, Heidegger refers to the practical significance of the Greek word πράγματα (*Being and Time,* §15). A hammer may be an ordinary thing we do not understand, but those who are aware of its practical purpose and use will clearly see in it the hammering of nails, the pieces of wood, the house-building, the hammering of horse-shoe, or the shoemaker's practice. Heidegger's idea of „understanding how to do something" („Sich-auf-etwas-Verstehen") implies a type of „know-how" of competent, practical dealing with things.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger cites examples and practices from everyday life that illustrate our hermeneutic relationship to the things that are at our disposal. Man exists every day by grasping the door handle and opening the door. The door

handle is not just an object, it is on the door, the door is in the house, the house is my home in the city where I live, with known and unknown people. The world that I know and understand by existing is in reality a coherent whole of meaning in which certain things receive their meaning through their practical use and at the same time refer to one another. Heidegger's famous example of a hammer shows how the most ordinary thing (*Zeug*) in the world acquires a special hermeneutical dimension through its practical use, the hammering of nails into boards, because it reveals the world as a "context of reference" (*Verweisungszusammenhang*). A hammer can be an ordinary object that we do not understand, but for those who get to know its intended purpose (*Worumwillen*) and understand its practical use, it becomes clear that in the hammering of a hammer we recognize nails, boards, the building of a house to live in, the making of shoes or the shoeing of a horse.

Heidegger's hermeneutic discovery is contained in the insight that the meaning of words comes from the practice of life and represents the articulation of practical dealings with things as they are arranged in their functional context. It can therefore be said with full justification that man is a hermeneuticist from birth who, in living together with other people, tries to get to know, know and recognize the concrete meaning and diverse role of "things" in the world in which he lives.

If you take a smartphone instead of a hammer as an object of daily use, it becomes clear how much this device determines people's everyday lives today. Many people carry a device with an internet connection with them at all times. This has led to a sharp increase in the use of social networks and instant messaging in everyday life, as well as web search engines, online maps and navigation systems, online shopping and mobile payments. The smartphone has thus become the epitome of the digital lifestyle, determining our way of being in the world (*das In-der-Welt-sein*).

Hermeneutic reflection, in other words, if it is going to remain a relevant approach to our technological society, ought to incorporate products and achievements of modern technology as an integral part of our concept of a "world." Our everyday "being-in-the-world" would be unthinkable without the sophisticated products of technology familiar to us today, from cell phones to the worldwide web and cloud computing. Our understanding of the contextuality and interrelationships of the things which determine our "being-in-the world"

today is not made possible only or even primarily by the hammers and nails, handles and doors which Heidegger has analyzed in detail in *Being and Time*, but first and foremost by laptops and cellphones, e-mails and the Internet (cf. Zovko, 2023). Our Being-in-the-world is also the world of technological instruments, which have also character of *Zuhandensein* (the Ready-to-hand) because they are available to us in our practical life

In his essay "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954), Heidegger sums up his explication of the original meaning of the term τέχνη:

> "Τεχνικόν means that which belongs to τέχνη. We must observe two things with respect to the meaning of this word. One is that τέχνη is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. Τέχνη belongs to bringing-forth, to ποίησ; it is something poetic. The other thing that we should observe with regard to τέχνη is even more important.

> From earliest times until Plato the word τέχνη is linked with the word ἐπιστήμη . Both words are terms for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it. Such knowing provides an opening up. As an opening up it is a revealing." (Heidegger 2000, 14).

This reflection by Heidegger on the structure of modern technology, which should be thought through in the future from the original meaning of the Greek word τέχνη, opens up new dimensions for the design of technology in the future of our life-world.

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