Phronesis and Philosophical Hermeneutics in Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication Praxis: A Pastoral Implication

NICHODEMUS OKAFOR

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PHRONESIS AND PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS IN RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION PRAXIS: A PASTORAL IMPLICATION

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Nichodemus Arinze Okafor

May 2023
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ABSTRACT

PHRONESIS AND PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS IN RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION PRAXIS: A PASTORAL IMPLICATION

By
Nichodemus Arinze Okafor

May 2023

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Janie M. Harden Fritz

The overarching telos of this dissertation is walking the humanities into the marketplace. Its specific purpose is seeking how to enact the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication. In keeping with Calvin Schrag's “communicative praxis” and Ronald Arnett’s “responsive, learning rhetoric,” this research considers phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tools of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. It seeks the implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in the pastoral field visualized as a marketplace, since the marketplace is not merely a place of capitalism, but a real world where people engage their concrete human condition/existence in every historical moment. Attentive to postmodernity and the emphasis of Gaudium et Spes for the Church to always be mindful of the “signs of the times” in her pastoral work, this qualitative research attends to the
questions: How is *phronesis* and philosophical hermeneutics related to rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis? What might be the implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in the pastoral field? This dissertation finds that to avoid reifying rhetoric and philosophy of communication as an abstract, theoretical activity indifferent to the marketplace, is to view it as *phronesis*/philosophical hermeneutics. The pastoral implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis enables the interpretation of the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel.

*Keywords:* Phronesis, Philosophical Hermeneutics, Rhetoric, Philosophy of Communication, Praxis, Pastoral
DEDICATION

To my late father, brother, uncle, aunt, and niece,

Cyril, Joachim, Godwin, Theresa, and Prisca
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With a profound sense of gratitude to God, I say: “Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen” (Eph.3: 20-21).

To the Superior General, Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Christian O. Okwuru, his predecessor, Very Rev. Fr. Dr. George M. Okorie, the Councilors and the entire members of Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy Congregation (SMMM), I remain indebted for this rare privilege to go higher in search of knowledge. In a very unique way, I appreciate the American Region of SMMM Congregation who journeyed all the way with me in this program. What an awesome gift of fraternity!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Given the position of Ronald Arnett and Annette Holba that “philosophy of communication takes us to the interplay of ideas, people and the historical situations that shape the dwelling of human meaning” (3), and the fact that postmodernity is “a juncture in human history that challenges the assumption that there is only one form of reasoning and one understanding of the right and good” (Arnett, Fritz and Bell, 13), there is no one way, style, technique or method for enacting the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication. In other words, “philosophy of communication is not method centered, but rather is a form of multi-centered communication” (Arnett and Holba 6). With philosophy of communication as a form of multi-centered communication which invariably underscores difference, Arnett and Arneson consider “the engagement of alterity as fundamental for communicative understanding in the twenty-first century. [Thus], the ethical prescription for communicators in the twenty-first century is the meeting of and learning from radical alterity” (2014, xi). Here, “alterity assumes a radical sense of difference; it implies something alien to taken-for-granted assumptions about the human condition” (x-xi). Alterity entails a radical Otherness, which Arnett and Arneson consider in the twenty-first century as “a commonplace rhetorical interruption, demanding that we learn from difference” (ix). In this framework, to be able to enact the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication in the twenty-first century, “we must understand alterity, the radical sense of difference, that grounds an Other” (xi). This suggests that a radical Other can be differently situated and so, can be driven by a
different philosophy of communication. This leaves us with the question: How does one understand alterity or another’s philosophy of communication?

Among other ideas, perhaps, an answer to this question recoils on attentiveness to what matters or content, for “radical alterity, or extreme otherness, does not begin with the person we meet; it commences in what we contend matters in content and value. We dwell within otherness, a diversity of positions that we bring to the Other. This position on communication does not glorify process, but returns to content” (Arnett and Arneson 2014, xi). Stated differently, “radical alterity suggests that there are multiple forms of content that we can call philosophies of communication – they are the communicative engines for what matters” (xi). In this sense, to understand alterity, we need to pay attention to content, or what matters to another. To intensify the importance of content or what matters as key in philosophy of communication, Arnett and Arneson describe the study of philosophy of communication as “a communicative art of discerning what matters to oneself and to others. A philosophy of communication informs one’s approach to interaction and works as a fulcrum that gives energy, direction, clarity, and strength to one’s communication. Philosophy of communication reminds us that content matters” (2014, xi). The fact that content matters, and that multiple forms of content give rise to different philosophies of communication, return us to our initial claim that there is no one way of enacting the praxis of philosophy of communication given the multiplicity of philosophy of communication.

Sequel to this, Arnett and Arneson highlight that “a caricature of the study of communication is that if only we can find the correct processes, we will guide the discourse properly” (2014, xii). This description of the search for “the correct processes”
of communication as a caricature is undergirded by their view that “processes are not neutral, and they, too, are types of philosophies of communication” (2014, xii). In the same vein, they describe process as “a foreground issue that is helpful after communicative partners have done the background work of understanding what content and values matter to one another” (2014, xii). Their position on process seems to resonate what led Aristotle to phronesis, and Gadamer to philosophical hermeneutics, which are ways or means that apply when there is no “correct” process. Stated differently, “correct process” is similar to what Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics (NE)* calls scientific knowledge which is a necessary knowledge that cannot be otherwise; but, understanding ties in with intelligence (phronesis) which is knowledge of what can be otherwise (1140b); and Gadamer emphasizes understanding as the goal of philosophical hermeneutics.

To reiterate the fact of the search for “the correct process” of communication/or philosophy of communication praxis being a caricature, Arnett points out that “the limits placed on a practical philosophy are not specific dictates, but general guidelines that shape without totally framing the appropriate form of action. In short, practical philosophy is grounded in a context of concern and action for the common good” (1990, 211). In this, while philosophy of communication praxis is considered a form of practical philosophy, “common good” assumes the status of content or what matters. This entails that there is no template or designated method of fruitfully interacting with the other or enacting the praxis of philosophy of communication. One has to be attentive to the moment, to the content, to what matters, and discern a fitting response to that moment. This emphasis on the response being fitting to the moment is because the response might
be otherwise in another moment; hence, it is not necessary or fixed, that is, it is not 
scientific. In this sense, it is intelligence (phronesis) that drives this form of response tied 
to a moment rather than scientific knowledge; and this echoes Aristotle’s distinction of 
intelligence (phronesis) from scientific knowledge in which he noted that “no one 
deliberates about what cannot be otherwise or about what cannot be achieved by his 
action. Hence, if science involves demonstration, but there is no demonstration of 
anything whose origins admit of being otherwise . . . and if we cannot deliberate about 
what is by necessity; it follows that intelligence is not science. . . because what is done in 
action admits of being otherwise” (NE 1140b). This portrays intelligence as oriented to 
actions that can be otherwise, in which case, fitting response amounts to an action that is 
considered proper in a particular moment and not in all moments, unlike scientific 
principles that are necessary or fixed. This ties to Arnett and Holba’s notion that “a 
philosophy of communication presupposes that there are multiple ideas and stories while 
rejecting the assumption that one can discern the reality of existence from the vantage 
point of the one grand and dominate idea or metanarrative” (4). Unlike philosophy of 
communication in postmodernity, however, science privileges metanarrative.

Further, the fact of attentiveness to the moment, in view of a fitting response, ties 
to Calvin Schrag’s notion of “communicative praxis” in which “theory, action, and 
contextual discernment,” invariably, yield a fitting response (as cited in Arneson 2007, 
154). Similarly, intensifying the value of contextual discernment or attentiveness to the 
historical situations, Arnett affirms that “a practical philosophical orientation cannot fall 
into the trap of over-reliance on simple solutions propelled by techniques insensitive to a 
given environment. When answers to complex problems are viewed as a priori to the
event being examined, we move away from the practical impulses of Aristotle and the beginning of the discipline of speech communication, and open the door to propaganda” (1990, 215). This re-echoes the fact that there is no method or technique for doing the work of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, except to be attentive to the given historical situation, the particular moment or context, the idea (content) and the people. It is in this light that Aristotle projected *phronesis* (practical wisdom) as the preferred path in a criterionless moment or situation where issues or responses can be otherwise than necessary. Like Aristotle, Gadamer projected philosophical hermeneutics as a way of reaching understanding through attentiveness to the issue (text), the historical situation and the interpreter (Arnett and Holba 85); and notes that it is not a method; hence, it is akin to phronesis. In corroboration, Shaun Gallagher writes that “for Aristotle, as well as for Gadamer, phronesis, which is neither cleverness nor *techne*, is to be relied upon when no formular is available in advance, in those situations where we must act *kata ton orthon logon* (according to right reason)” (303). Phronesis is neither a method nor a piece of *techne* (303). Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics also shares this attribute of phronesis—neither a method nor a piece of *techne*.

Mindful of these attributes of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics, it is important to note that an understanding of communication as an interaction or exchange between people where meaning emerges from the between of the interaction, announces the need for attentiveness to Levinas’s position in his *Totality and Infinity* that the Other, is not an *alter ego* (another-self), but a radical alterity that is unknowable, and can never be totalized because the Other is infinite. In the *Encyclopedia of Communication Ethics*, Amit Pinchevski summarizes Levinas’s position on Otherness: “The Other is not an alter
ego, a version of the self; rather, self and Other are separated by an irreducible difference.

. . There is always something about the Other that remains beyond the self’s grasp—the Other’s alterity—and that alterity demands acknowledgment and respect. Denying the integrity of another as Other signals the beginning of aggression and violence” (279). On this basis, “Levinas deems the ethical relation as responsibility—responsibility to and for the Other. He further claims that responsibility is the formative experience of subjectivity: the self is responsible before being self-serving, exposed to the outside prior to being concerned with itself” (279). The self can always be otherwise since it cannot be totalized. This leaves us with a question on what a fitting response to the face of the Other, which calls us to responsibility, would be. Rephrased differently, since the Other is infinite, hence, cannot be totalized (because he is unknowable), is there a method or template for responding to the face of the Other? To this, Jen Jones, writing on the leadership lessons from Levinas notes that there is no technique or strategy for such relations “for the phenomenological encounter cannot be predicted” (52). In affirming Jones’s position, Arnett writes that in responding to the face of the Other, “leadership has no template, no code” (2016, 47). Like Arnett, Janie Fritz in responding to Jones’s position states that “the response is not thematized and is unplanned and unprepared for” (2016, 49). This implies that there is no principle or method or code or template or technique in responding to the face of the Other.

The fact of the lack of method or template or code or technique for responding to the face of the Other announces Aristotle’s concept of phronesis, as significant in such moments; where phronesis is understood as a way out when there is no designate principle, theory or technique to navigate a particular situation. Given that Aristotle does
not consider phronesis as a method in his practical philosophy, Gadamer takes it as a foundation for his philosophical hermeneutics; for Gadamer does not view his philosophical hermeneutics as a method. It is within this framework of conceptualizing the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication in the interaction between individuals marked by radical alterity that this project considers phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tools, and to seek the pastoral implication.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Gadamer, in his *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, as translated by David Linge (1976), “as triumphant as the march of modern science has been, and as obvious as it is to everyone today that their awareness of existence is permeated by the scientific presuppositions of our culture, human thought is nonetheless continually dominated by questions for which science promises no answer” (109). Restated differently, human thought is continually dominated by questions about issues which in Aristotelian terms can be “otherwise,” that is, issues outside the domain of science. These issues are usually reflective of the human condition or existence in its concrete everydayness (Heidegger); that is, issues that confront man as he navigates the “mud of everyday life” (Arnett and Holba 20). Unfortunately, it seems to have become a norm that man now attempts to meet these issues in the mud of everyday life, that can be otherwise, as though they cannot be otherwise, due to the pervasiveness of science in every sphere of human life.

On this basis, Gadamer notes that “we live with the awareness of a world that is changing in unforeseeable ways, and in conflicts and tensions we expect science, out of its own resources, to constitute the decisive factor. . . Society clings with bewildered obedience to scientific expertise . . . [that] dominates every sphere of life even down to
the level of molding public opinion” (1976, 111). Given this pervasiveness of science, “the social order develops forms of such power that the individual is hardly conscious at all any longer of living out of his own decisions, even in the intimate sphere of his own personal existence” (1976, 111). Invariably, for Gadamer, “the culture of inwardness, the intensification of personal conflicts in human life, and the pent-up expressive power of its artistic representation is gradually becoming alien to us” (1976, 111). This suggests that man is losing his humanity by embracing science over the intrinsic dimension of his humanity which is reflectiveness. This amplifies what Heidegger in *Being and Time* called the “forgetfulness of being,” where man no longer pays attention reflectively to the “everydayness” of his being or existence, but rather looks to science for answers to issues that can be otherwise in his everyday life or existence.

In this context, Gadamer posits that “we must sharpen the question in our own time as to how man can understand himself within the totality of a social reality dominated by science” (1976, 111). There is need to reawaken the kind of intelligence that helps in attending to issues that can be otherwise. To make this clearer, Gadamer appropriates Jaspers’ notion where he “contrasted the concept of certain knowledge, ‘world-orientation,’ as he called it, with the illumination of existence, which comes into play in the boundary situations of the scientific as well as every human capacity for knowledge” (1976, 124). Accordingly, Jaspers, as cited by Gadamer, notes that “boundary situations are those situations of human existence in which the possibilities of being guided by the anonymous powers of science break down, and where, for that reason, everything depends upon oneself. In such situations something comes out of a man that remains concealed in the purely functionalized application of science for the
purpose of dominating the world” (1976, 124). Simply stated, boundary situations are situations that can be otherwise; they summon man to reflectively embrace his humanity rather than a total reliance on science. Although Jaspers points to situation of death and situation of guilt as some of the boundary situations that confront man with his concrete existence of which science cannot offer a fitting response (Gadamer 124), we might think of everyday life as a boundary situation given the uncertainties that almost always abound in it. In this vein, Gadamer explains existence as “the emergence of what is really up to us, where the guiding power of anonymous science breaks down” (1976, 124). He clearly asserts that “situations – even boundary situations – require a kind of knowledge that is doubtless not an objectifying knowledge and thus cannot be diminished by science’s anonymous possibilities of knowing” (1976, 124). This implies that a situation that can be otherwise requires a different kind of knowledge that is not scientific knowledge.

In this connection, Richard Bernstein interprets Gadamer as arguing that “the modern obsession with method has distorted and concealed the ontological character of understanding” (xi). Hence, interpretively tying together the three works: Paul Feyerabend’s Against Method; Gadamer’s Truth and Method; Sheldon Wolin’s essay “Political Theory as a Vocation,” as “a common attack on method,” Bernstein states that “each of them opens up the way to a more historically, nonalgorithmic, flexible understanding of human rationality, one which highlights the tacit dimension of human judgment and imagination and is sensitive to the unsuspected contingencies and genuine novelties encountered in particular situations” (xi). In this purview, one considers how we can overcome this situation which Bernstein describes as “the ‘deification’ of science in
the contemporary life” which he believes is the core of Gadamer’s task (xi). Faced with this kind of situation about the pervasiveness of what can be otherwise in human life, of which science cannot offer a full answer, Aristotle came up with the concept of phronesis, while Gadamer, in a similar situation, came up with philosophical hermeneutics. As a result, Bernstein writes that “Gadamer’s inquiries keep drawing us toward the fusion of hermeneutics and praxis. Gadamer’s model for hermeneutics is the tradition of practical philosophy that has its sources in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and Politics. Understanding according to Gadamer, is a form of phronesis” (xiv-xv). This, invariably, announces the affinity between phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics, that is, between Aristotle and Gadamer.

Given the information at hand, this project seeks to avoid the “deification’ of science in contemporary life” (Bernstein xi) in the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication. The fact of Aristotle’s definition of praxis as theory informed action (NE 1140a5) and the distinctions he made between different forms of knowledge, require further examination of the concept of “theory”. Thus, an attempt to make sense of what Aristotle means by theory as applicable in praxis appears to find nuanced explications in the work of scholars. On the one hand, Lenore Langsdorf, as cited by Arneson (2007), writes that “theoria is not practical and is not productive; [that is], it is concerned with general knowledge, without regard for either its applicability to acting (doing) in particular circumstances or to fabrication (making) particular products. Theoria may well inform our knowledge of particular things; but it does not entail any particular knowledge claim or produce its subject matter” (Langsdorf “In Defense of Poiesis,” 288-289; Arneson 5). For Langsdorf, in contrast to “theoria’s strict concern with thinking, praxis is
concerned with acting as informed by thinking. This ‘informing’ is a matter . . . of using cognitive procedures intrinsic to *theoria* – but now in relation to very different subject matter” (289; Arneson 5-6). Seemingly, this implies that for Langsdorf, the action of praxis flows from the cognitive procedure of *theoria*; that is, it is not a different form of theory that informs action of praxis. She also points out that praxis displays the kind of knowing called *phronesis*; where “phronesis as a mode of reasoning focuses on the process rather than product; on human doing and deeds that intrinsically develop in our doing” (289; Arneson 6). Apparently, for Langsdorf, phronesis is a form of cognitive procedure intrinsic to *theoria* that is used in praxis.

On the other hand, Calvin Schrag points out that “Aristotle provided a specific semantical pivot first by contrasting *praxis* with *theoria*, distinguishing praxis, the sphere of human action and accomplishment, from theory as the domain of rigorous science” (2003, 19). For Schrag, “*theoria*, which lies along the path of demonstration yielding apodicticity and the achievement of knowledge for its own sake, follows the requirements of *episteme*. From this distinction between theory and praxis, however, Aristotle does not draw the conclusion that praxis is irremediably bereft of cognition” (19). To make sense of this cognition [theory] that guides praxis, Schrag states that “praxis comports its own insight in the guise of a practical wisdom. Aristotle’s term for this is *phronesis*, which although distinguished from the contemplative knowledge of pure theory is a type of knowledge, more broadly conceived, nonetheless” (19). In this way, he concludes that “praxis displays a different sort of knowing than that which issues from *theoria*” (19). This reiterates his stance in his *Radical Reflection and the Origin of the Human Sciences* (1980) that “idealism, even in its more attenuated varieties, tends to diminish the
dimension of praxis because of its disposition towards a perspective of pure theory” (117). Thus, Schrag argues for an expanded form of reason that is beyond pure theory, idealism or technical rationality as the place of emergence of the insight or cognition operational in praxis.

In line with Schrag’s view, Arneson writes that “the subject matter of praxis is the action in which humans engage as they go about their everyday lives as members of communities” (6). She cites Schrag’s stance that “praxis as the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding. . . Praxis, as I understand it, is always entwined with communication” (6; Ramsey and Miller 21). To clarify this link between praxis and communication, Schrag explains that communication involves “the manner and style in which messages are conveyed and imparted always against the background of the tightly woven fabric of professional and everyday life, with its shared experiences, participative relationships, joint endeavors, and moral concerns” (2003, 22). Given the emphasis on action, Schrag notes that “the amalgam of communication and praxis has been designed to orient reflection on discourse and action as being about something; as being initiated by someone; and as being addressed to and for someone” (2003, ix). Stated differently, communicative praxis “takes shape as a three-dimensional or tripartite phenomenon. Discourse and action are about something, by someone, and for someone. Communicative praxis thus displays a referential moment (about a world of human concerns and social practices), a moment of self-implicature (by a speaker, author, or actor), and a rhetorical moment (directed to the other)” (2003, xii). These three moments— about, by and for, are constitutive of communicative praxis, and contextual
discernment is essential to its proper enactment. For Ramsey and Miller, communicative praxis lies “between the theoretical and the practical as they are generally understood” (21). Hence, praxis as theory informed action is not to be understood as the mere application of a universal to a particular.

Unless one grasps what Aristotle meant by theory dimension of praxis, the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis will seem to be an abstract or science driven endeavor and, hence, undermine the fact of communication as a lived experience. This is because rhetoric and philosophy of communication deal with issues that can be otherwise unlike science, which deals with issues that cannot be otherwise. This finds resonance in Arneson’s assertion that “philosophy of communication regards the world with a condition of openness and space for possibilities inherent in communication” (2007, 8). For Arneson, “our intellectual heritage provides ideas that can help us make sense of everyday” (1). Here, making sense of everyday involves finding temporal answers to issues that confront us in everyday life/existence, which is at the core of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. Susan Mancino writes that “in the questions that define a given historical moment, philosophy of communication offers temporal insights as answers. In this manner, philosophy of communication moves from an abstract notion to embedded responses situated within the particularity of a moment” (20). This project seeks ways of making this move from abstract notion to praxis — an embedded response that is situated within the particularity of a moment. For Mancino, “occurring in the exchange of questions and answers, philosophy of communication enacts a philosophical hermeneutics engagement attentive to human experience, culture and meaning” (20). Mancino points to philosophical hermeneutics just like Langsdorf and
Schrag pointed to phronesis above; hence, both phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics are vital in praxis.

Following from this, the task of this project becomes to explore phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tools in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, and to seek the pastoral implication. This study will undertake an exploration of the concept “phronesis;” seek to connect phronesis to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics; seek to consider phronesis as an intersection of the limits of rhetoric and hermeneutics; seek to envision phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tools of rhetoric and Philosophy of communication praxis; and seek the pastoral implications of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis using phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as the pragmatic tool.

1.3 Aim of Study

In Walking the Humanities into the Marketplace: A Communicative Call, Arnett stresses that “a major communicative task of the 21st century is to interpret the humanities to the marketplace. [For] without such conversation, we leave the market to its own devices” (2003, 187). This task and conversation are considered important and significant because by taking and accepting “the marketplace as human fact,” as he argues, [then] “human life without some form of marketplace is beyond imagination” (187). The marketplace is constitutive of human concrete everyday-life, or the mud of everyday life that man grapples with. In the task of interpreting the humanities to the marketplace, Arnett states that “communicative praxis and a responsive, learning rhetoric brings the humanities into an alien world of radical alterity, calling the ‘I’ of the humanities to learn from and protect the Other of the marketplace” (187). It is consistent with this posture
taken by Arnett on the relevant practices in walking the humanities into the marketplace, that this study aims to consider phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tool of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, and to seek its pastoral implication. Stated differently, this study strives to understand the relevance of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis from the perspective of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as they confront the marketplace or mud of everyday life.

This project understands the praxis dimension of rhetoric and philosophy of communication as the posture of rhetoric and philosophy of communication as they encounter or engage the marketplace – the mud of everyday life. In the same vein, while the pastoral life of the Church is considered the marketplace to which the humanity of rhetoric and philosophy of communication is to be interpreted in this study; phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics are being considered as pragmatic tools for undertaking this task. For this study, the pastoral life of the Church is the marketplace to which the humanity of the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is walking into; and phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics are being considered as pragmatic tools or ways through which rhetoric and philosophy of communication accomplish this task in praxis.

In a more succinct way, this study aims to explore rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis through the lens of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics. This study seeks to understand how a rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis that is attentive to difference in postmodernity or a given situation might be driven by phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics. Consequently, this study intends to envision phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tool in rhetoric and philosophy of
communication praxis that is attentive to a given situation or difference in postmodernity. Also, it seeks to understand the significance of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in the pastoral life of the Church.

1.4 Research Questions

This study is mindful of Arnett’s stance that Michael Hyde’s *The Call of Conscience* (2001) “calls upon the conscience of the communication discipline, asking: ‘How can we make a difference with communication ideas and methods?’” (186). In response to this question on how rhetoric and philosophy of communication ideas and methods can make a difference in the pastoral life of the Church, this study will explore these research questions: What is the role of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis? Or how might we understand rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis through the lens of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics? How might one understand the significance of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in pastoral work and care? Worded differently, how might rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis apply or be applied in the pastoral life of the Church?

1.5 Argument of Study

This study seeks to argue that a way of keeping rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis from being an abstract activity, indifferent to the marketplace, is to understand it via the lens of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics. It argues that phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics are pragmatic tools in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. In this way, this study strives to concur with Gadamer that “the ideal of method, which was the universal claim of the modern era and the natural
sciences, and which attempted to eliminate prejudice, any preoccupation, any predetermination of experience from the standpoint of the observer, was totally inadequate in meeting the demand to ground human experience and humanity as such (1982, 6). This is “because the ideal of method presupposes full self-control and the elimination of all the conditions of the observer” (1982, 6). This aligns with the focus of philosophy of communication that attempts to understand “the nature and function of human communication as lived experience” (Arneson 2007, 8), where the conditions of the observer are important in discerning a contextual meaning in a particular historical moment.

In corroboration, Arnett writes that “the opening of the door for conversation and interplay between the humanities and a radical form of alterity, the marketplace, simply acknowledges the necessity to walk into multiple places, not knowing which may actually offer more good or evil to the human community at a particular time, in a particular place” (2003, 186). This necessity to walk into multiple places, not knowing which may actually offer more good or evil announces the need for a virtue that is helpful in navigating uncertain situations, which this study considers to be phronesis and or philosophical hermeneutics in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. Given that rhetoric is basically significant in the domain of the probable or uncertainty, according to Karlyn Campbell (1– 4), this study visualizes phronesis and or philosophical hermeneutics as the way rhetoric and philosophy of communication practically engages uncertainty or probable situation. Corroborating this vision, Shaun Gallagher writes that “phronesis, as either Aristotle or Gadamer explains it, is not the mechanical application of preestablished rules to a ‘world already in place.’ Phronesis is precisely the virtue that
one can fall back on within a hermeneutical situation which is uncertain. . . Phronesis is neither a method nor a piece of *techne*” (303). Arnett’s description of the marketplace as “the premiere unknown context for the humanities” (186), renders the marketplace an uncertain place or situation for humanities, hence, the need for phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics driven rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in engaging this marketplace.

1.6 Significance of Study

Following Aristotle’s stance on the use of phronesis, and Gadamer’s stance that philosophical hermeneutics is not a method, the significance of this study is to establish that rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis goes beyond professionalism. Worded differently, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is not simply a preserve of the professionals trained in the field, but goes beyond that, for through phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics, people are already in the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication. Aristotle valorized experience in phronesis, and experience is not a preserve of professionals. In this way, rhetoric and philosophy of communication overcome the usual critique of academic philosophy as abstract and inattentive to doing (praxis). As praxis, rhetoric and philosophy of communication become more significant in the pastoral life of the Church. On this basis, Gadamer stresses that “when we cease to pursue the ideal of method and objectivity, we admit of introspection, personal experiences (‘Erlebnis’) as the foundation of human insights” (1982, 5). Phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics will help us to gain this kind of insight emergent from experience, which is available, not solely to the professionals, but to everyone.
In affirming this vision of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, Gallagher, citing John Caputo, writes: “Insofar as phronesis cannot be specified outside the situation which always remains hermeneutical, and insofar as it is ‘impoverished in the abstract. . . and acquires texture only in the application,’ and ‘takes on meaning only in the concrete situation,’ phronesis does not lend itself to metanarratives. . . [and] does not attempt to legitimize a particular discourse, position or paradigm” (304). Phronesis/or philosophical hermeneutics, like a learning rhetoric, lives by engaging moments/contexts or situation, not grand schemes (Arnett 2003, 184). The relevance of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is significant for the pastoral life of the Church, taken as a marketplace, in the understanding that “the marketplace is not simply a place of capitalism. The marketplace is the home of competing visions of the good life, visions that affect people, the audience in a given historical situation” (Arnett 2003, 184). As such, “to engage the marketplace is to meet the audience of a given historical moment, people working to make a living within given structures at a given time. To ignore the marketplace is to ignore our largest rhetorical audience, an audience that historically transforms societies” (Arnett 184). Meeting or engaging the marketplace of the pastoral life of Church is significant for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, especially at this moment in the life of the Church, following the position of Craig Maier that “our moment does not call for absolute, unthinking devotion, but instead calls the Church to the thoughtful, prayerful, and courageous discernment in a moment of great change” (xxiii). This move becomes, perhaps, significant to Neuhaus’ challenge to American Christians, and indeed all
Christians, to pursue a new ‘public philosophy’ that brings the truth of the Christian faith into contact with the ambiguities of everyday life (Maier xxiii).

1.7 Preview of the Chapters

In this study, Chapter One focuses on the clarification of the background of study and an explication of the problem to be explored in the work. This project is attentive to the fact that despite the dominance of modern science in virtually every sphere of human life, human thought is still preoccupied by questions to which science has no answer, as Gadamer pointed out in his *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1976, 109). Such questions stem largely from man’s everyday life laden with alterity and difference as man navigates his human condition marked by finitude. In terms of finitude, John Arthos writes: “The fact that there is practice at all and not just theory, the fact that we live in the realm of the particular and only gesture toward the ideal, the fact we need to reason practically rather than just contemplate, is because we are finite, historically situated, material beings bounded by mortality, formed by interests, passions, and perspectives, and left to work out our meanings and identities with frail and compromised capabilities” (xvii). Describing the inability of modern scientific method to attend to the fact of radical alterity occasioned by human finitude, Arnett states that “failure to understand, to engage, and to learn from “radical alterity” typified a modern world of increasing nationalism, industrialism nourished by division of labor, and the Enlightenment hope for unified knowledge ever progressively pursued” (2003, 184). Thinking about phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tools or ways through which rhetoric and philosophy communication praxis engage alterity guides this chapter in the articulation of the aim, argument, and significance of study, as well as the research questions that guide
this inquiry. Chapter One contains the previews of other chapters in this work, as well as the operational or working definitions of some key terms.

Chapter Two centers on the literature review of the concept “phronesis,” which Gallagher describes as “a purely prescriptive judging without appeal to theoretical criteria” (299). Citing Lyotard and Thebaud’s *Just Gaming* (1985), he notes: “This is, after all, what Aristotle calls prudence. It consists in dispensing justice without models. . . phronesis involves a dialectics which requires judging ‘case by case’ ‘because each situation is singular’ and there are no external criteria to guide judgment” (299). In line with this understanding of phronesis, Arnett observes that “life situated in the ongoing existential moment offers muddy, blurred vision as the natural form of everyday clarity. Decision making without agreed-upon guidance requires action without the illusion of complete knowledge, understanding the lack of narrative background agreement. Temporal learning becomes the mantra of our time, beginning with the meeting of difference, adding texture with knowledge not previously encountered” (2003, 179).

Phronesis, arguably, rises to the occasion at such moments lacking in agreed-upon guidance and provides a temporal learning in that moment. Thus, Chapter Two will largely center on Aristotle’s notion of “phronesis” (practical wisdom), how he distinguished it from other forms of knowledge, and its relation to practical philosophy. Other scholarly positions on phronesis will also be explored to help portray the connection between phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics.

Chapter Three is a literature review on the concept of “philosophical hermeneutics” as articulated and postulated by Hans-Georg Gadamer. In this, David Linge writes that “the task of philosophical hermeneutics, is ontological rather than
methodological. It seeks to throw light on the fundamental conditions that underlie the phenomenon of understanding in all its modes, scientific and nonscientific alike, and that constitute understanding as an event over which the interpreting subject does not ultimately preside” (xi). In philosophical hermeneutics, “the question is not what we do or what we should do, but what happens beyond our willing and doing” (xi). Similarly, David Hoy writes that while “traditional hermeneutics conceived interpretation as rendering familiar everything that at first appears strange and unfamiliar; Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, on the other hand, is structured to preserve the differences and tensions between the text’s and the interpreter’s horizons of belief, while at the same time affirming the possibility of the interpreter’s claim to have understood the text” (6).

In this light, Arnett and Holba state that “philosophical hermeneutics unites three coordinates – the interpreter, the text, and the historical moment – in dialogue” (85). Hoy observes that “any student or scholar of the humanities will want to know whether this new philosophical hermeneutics gives a reasonable description of the processes of understanding and interpreting” (4). Thus, this chapter will explore the shift from hermeneutics to philosophical hermeneutics; as well as Gadamer’s treatment of understanding in relation to language and dialogue. Equally, it will dwell on Gadamer’s treatment of tradition, prejudice, the hermeneutic circle, fusion of horizons and the place of art in the understanding of philosophical hermeneutics. Following the exposition of the two main concepts that drive this study— phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics—the next chapter will focus on how they merge into rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.
Consequently, Chapter Four will explore rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis through the lens of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics. This will involve an exposition of Calvin Schrag’s notion of communicative praxis, the link between rhetoric, hermeneutic and phronesis, consideration of the relationship between reasonableness and rationality, and the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. This chapter, and indeed the entire study will privilege Calvin Schrag’s assertion that “the ancient Greeks had already come upon the insight that the tasks of philosophy and rhetoric are entwined. This insight informed the institution of the medieval trivium, in which logic, rhetoric, and grammar were viewed as intercalating disciplines” (2003, vii). Similarly, Lenore Langsdorf explains that “the reasoning arts recall the time of Socrates when philosophy, poetic, and rhetoric were unified (Greek paideia). Following the death of Socrates, Plato advocated the separation of these three disciplines, which was further propelled by Aristotle and the literacy revolution” (cited in Arneson, 3-4). On this basis, Arneson writes that “philosophy of communication is best understood as a reasoning art” (3). This study will understand rhetoric and philosophy as entwined rather than separate endeavors which “the dualist mindset endemic to Western rationalism, what Walter Jost calls the ‘disabling oppositions’ of modernity” made them seem (Arthos xv). For Schrag, the “modernity’s effort to ground all knowledge on a criteriological concept of rationality, oriented towards unimpeachable truth conditions, left little room for the function of a praxis-oriented rationality that has always been the hallmark of rhetorical understanding” (vii). Perhaps, this praxis-oriented rationality is equally the domain of philosophy of communication praxis that focuses on communication as a lived experience. While Thomas Farrell states that “for philosophers, rhetoric is becoming
unavoidable and even enticing, since the quest for ultimate principles and absolutes has stalled in a kind of intellectual dead heat of agreeable agnosticism” (1); Schrag concludes that “indeed, to know and to communicate are not as neatly separable as some of the architects of modern philosophy had assumed” (viii). It is in this framework that this study takes rhetoric and philosophy, and indeed, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, as entwined.

Chapter Five will seek the implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in the pastoral life of the Church. Mindful of the place of diversity in the pastoral life of the Church, this chapter seeks to understand the pastoral implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis following the position of Arnett and Holba that “philosophy of communication assists meaning construction in a world defined by diversity, difference, fragmentation, and the importance of learning from alterity, otherness” (4). It privileges their stance that “philosophy of communication is necessary, pragmatically called forth, when life seems to sever the communicator from sensibility, demanding that a person attend to temporal and existential connectedness. Philosophy of communication functions as an existential dwelling for such temporal meaning awakenings” (Arnett and Holba 5). This becomes significant because the pastoral life of the Church is often replete with moments or challenges in which the pastor or pastoral agent or the communicator is apparently severed from all sensibility, and all pastoral principles seem suspended, and unfit; and he or she has to make a significant decision and attend to that concrete moment. In this light, Arnett reminds us that “communicative praxis opens particulars, revealing the texture of ideas in a given setting” (283). Equally, a consideration of the relevance of rhetoric and philosophy of
communication praxis in the pastoral life of the Church, is attentive to Craig Maier’s emphasis that “without communication, the sanctifying grace of the sacraments \( \textit{munus sanctificandi} \) and liberating power of Catholic teaching \( \textit{munus docendi} \) would be unintelligible, and the Church’s rich institutional life \( \textit{munus regendi} \) would be impossible to sustain” (xxxi). This is because “communication as com-\textit{munus} is the very stuff by which the Church makes and remakes itself and forges the delicate balance between permanence and change” (xxx1). As such, this chapter will explore the understanding of pastoral work/care from the narrative of Catholic intellectual tradition. This entails that the chapter will review relevant ecclesiastical documents on pastoral work and communication, and equally explore Henri Nouwen’s understanding of pastoral care. This pastoral implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis will form the final part of this study.

1.8 Definition of Terms

This section centers on the working or operational definitions and understanding of the key terms that will guide this research.

1.8.1 Phronesis

Aristotle, in his \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, understands \textit{phronesis} as intelligence – “a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about what is good or bad for a human being” (1140b5). He writes that intelligence is concerned with action, and hence with particulars, stating: “Intelligence, by contrast, is about human concerns, about what is open to deliberation. . . but no one deliberates about what cannot be otherwise, or about what lacks a goal that is a good achievable in action. Nor is intelligence about universals only. It must also come to know particulars, since it is concerned with action and action is about particulars” (1141b10&15). This portrays
phronesis as action oriented. However, Aristotle points out that action is not limited solely to particular knowledge, stating that “since intelligence is concerned with action, it must possess both [the universal and the particular knowledge] or the [particular] more [than the universal]” (1141b20). In this sense, Steve Schwarze writes that “right action demands more than knowledge of a set of rigid rules supposedly applicable to all situations; it also demands keen perception of relevant particulars” (82). Similarly, Thomas Shinto affirms that “right action demands keen perception of particular situations rather than mere knowledge of general principles which are applicable everywhere. This is called the ‘eye’ in Aristotelian concept, to identify the particular situation as worthy and bring the best course of action” (3; Halverson, 2004, 92). Phronesis attends to the particular; it keenly perceives “the particular features/aspects of a given situation in all their specificity” (Schwarze, 86; 87); it ends in action.

This keen perception, according to Aristotle stems from experience for “intelligence is concerned with particulars as well as universals, and particulars become known from experience” (1142a15). In this context, he underscores the role of experience especially when no principle is available to guide a decision in a particular moment. Aristotle clearly points out that intelligence [phronesis] “is evidently not scientific knowledge; for, as we said, it concerns the last thing [i.e., the particular], since this is what is done in action. . . but intelligence is about the last thing, an object of perception, not of scientific knowledge” (1142a25). This study views phronesis as a way of reaching a decision in a particular moment when no principle is readily available to guide the decision. It is a perception based on experience that leads to a tentative action in a particular moment. It is not a method or a scientific principle because it is not
demonstrable and is not abstract, but concrete in action. It leads to tentative action because its focus is on things that can be otherwise, and not on things that cannot be otherwise.

1.8.2 Philosophical Hermeneutics

In his Lectures on Philosophical Hermeneutics (1982), Gadamer states: “I hope to show that hermeneutics does not simply serve as a methodology for humanities— a theory of interpretation for the field of human knowledge based on language and interpretation. Rather, it is, in a deeper sense, a basic universal of our very existence and experience” (2). He stresses that “it is a universal of our world experience that is at stake when we speak of hermeneutics” (1982, 5). Therefore, to think of hermeneutics as a method is to undermine the universal of our existence and experience which science through its methods tends to do. Science ignores or discountenances our experience and our way of being in the world. Hence, Gadamer notes: “When we cease to pursue the ideal of method and objectivity, we admit of introspection, personal experiences (‘Erlebnis’) as the foundation of human insights” (1982, 5). These personal experiences are not factored-in by scientific methods or ideals. In this bid, Gadamer writes that “the ideal of method, which was the universal claim of the modern era and the natural sciences, and which attempted to eliminate prejudice, any preoccupation, any predetermination of experience from the standpoint of the observer, was totally inadequate in meeting the demand to ground human experience and humanity as such” (6). And “this is because the ideal of method presupposes full self-control and the elimination of all the conditions of the observer” (6). For science to eliminate or be
indifferent to all the conditions of the observer makes it less reflective of the true human condition.

In this direction, Gadamer points out that hermeneutic “simply serves to illustrate the dependence of interpretation and meaning on the life-situation, on the continuous relationship between us and our given challenge – texts or whatever it may be, even the answer of the lover” (1982, 8). For him, science does not serve this purpose. Gadamer concludes that “hermeneutics, in re-affirming the primacy of our life-experiences in the medium of reflection, is the applicant form of our dialogue with the totality of human life” (1982, 9). The way hermeneutics goes about unpacking or disclosing the meaning of life experiences in the medium of reflection, Gadamer calls “philosophical hermeneutics.” He insists that it is not a method but simply a way of making sense that is aimed towards understanding; hence, understanding is the task of philosophical hermeneutics. In this light, David Linge states that “the task of philosophical hermeneutics, therefore, is ontological rather methodological. It seeks to throw light on the fundamental conditions that underlie the phenomenon of understanding in all its modes” (xi). Given the emphasis on understanding as ontological rather than methodological in the task of philosophical hermeneutics, Linge points out that “understanding is not reconstruction but mediation. . . is not to be thought of so much as an action of subjectivity, but as the entering into an event of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must gain validity in hermeneutical theory, which is much too dominated by the ideal of a procedure, a method” (vi). In this way, he highlights that “the aim of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics is to illuminate the human context within which scientific understanding occurs and to account for the
necessity for repeated attempts at critical understanding” (xviii). For him, human condition and experience, unlike in science and its methods, cannot be discounted in the event of understanding or in philosophical hermeneutics.

In this connection, this study takes philosophical hermeneutics as a non-methodological way of gaining understanding of the human context — existence, experience, condition — without reliance on scientific principles. Philosophical hermeneutics gives rise to temporal meanings given its attentiveness to a particular historical moment and context. Arnett and Holba write that “meaning is temporal and fleeting. Meaning cannot be objectified, reified, or possessed. One must be ever attentive to glimpses of meaning that emerge in given historical circumstances within particular temporal acts, recognizing that meaning can never be taken for granted” (8). Philosophical hermeneutics leads us to meaning that is temporal and not permanent.

1.8.3 Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication

Although Patricia Bizzell, Bruce Herzberg and Robin Reames observe that “rhetoric has carried with it a number of overlapping meanings” (1), they however note that “rhetoric was first and foremost, the art of persuasive speaking. In civil disputes and in the deliberations of the democratic assembly, persuasion established claims where no truth was available. . . today rhetoric encompasses virtually all forms of discourse and symbolic communication” (2-3). As it is, rhetoric is differently understood in different historical periods and by different scholars. Aristotle defines rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (24). Apparently, rhetoric is always tailored or tied to the particular situation to which it addresses itself at any given moment. Thomas Farrell writes that “Aristotle nowhere explicitly says that the aim
of rhetoric is to be persuasive. . . the aim of rhetoric is to practice judgment (to enact krisis) where certain sorts of problematic materials are concerned. Perhaps that is what it means to be rhetorical” (1991, 186). In this light, Gadamer states that “we should bear in mind that rhetoric is not merely or even primarily a specialized profession of trained speakers, but rather a common human attitude. Everyone needs and indeed utilizes logic: teachers, physicists, mathematicians – all who would communicate with society require not only logic as such but persuasive argumentation as well” (2). This reiterates Aristotle’s claim that rhetoric is counterpart to dialectic on the ground that “all men make use, more or less of both; for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit” (19). Rhetoric is open to all, both professionals and nonprofessionals.

Further, Arnett and Holba highlight that “the task of rhetoric is to explicate a position that requires interpretation and simultaneously involves self and other. . . Rhetoric takes us to the engagement of information on the move, interpreted and understood in the communicative action of human engagement” (236). Similar to this role of rhetoric in taking us to the engagement of information, is their position that “philosophy of communication takes information and turns it into meaningful connections between persons. . . Philosophy of communication can only be understood in the doing— praxis” (8). This begins the interplay of the two areas, rhetoric and philosophy of communication.

In this context, Arnett and Holba state that “we understand philosophy of communication as an intellectual shaping of habits of the heart, tempering information by
moving existential meaning into embodied and contextual understanding” (3). They point out that “philosophy of communication takes us to the interplay of ideas, people, and historical situations that shape the dwelling of human meaning” (3). As it is, philosophy of communication embodies a meaning within a context or historical situation, which implies that its meaning is always temporal for it makes sense apparently only in the light of that particular situation of its emergence; just like rhetoric makes sense only in the situation which it addresses. Embodiment implies that it is a lived experience; hence, Annette Holba writes that “philosophy of communication is tied to the stories within which we live, anchored within the context of history, and responsive to the questions that govern those historical moments” (15). Similarly, for Arneson, “philosophy of communication investigates philosophical thought about how humans are communicatively situated in the lived world” (7). The lived world in human experience comprises several moments, hence, it is a place of transient or temporal meaning, and Holba affirms that “the meaning we find in any given moment is meaning for that particular moment. We cannot hold one meaning for eternity (though we know conflict often occurs when human beings resist change by attempting to hold meaning indefinitely); meaning emerges in moments— moments between a particular time and space within a particular context” (16). In this way, “the fulcrum for a given philosophy of communication is the historical moment” (Arnett and Holba12). Attentiveness to a particular situation or historical moment becomes a common feature for both rhetoric and philosophy of communication, and so, indicative of their intrinsic affinity. Consequently, this study will understand both rhetoric and philosophy of communication as entwined in their role or function – making sense of a particular moment; they are performative.
1.8.4 Praxis

For Calvin Schrag, “The Greek term ‘praxis’ . . . is usually rendered as ‘practice.’ It could also, however, be translated as ‘action,’ ‘performance,’ or ‘accomplishment.’ The verbal root praxis, (prasso), houses the related senses of doing, acting, performing, and accomplishing” (2003, 18-19). Simply stated, praxis is about action. In his Radical Reflection and the Origin of Human Sciences (1980), Schrag stresses that “the profound philosophical meaning of the notion of praxis is to place us in an order which is not that of knowledge but rather that of communication, exchange, and association” (37). Knowledge is understood as abstract and not concrete, while communication, exchange and association point to praxis as a lived concrete event, and not an abstract event. In this light, Schrag writes that “praxis is governed neither by objective ends nor by transempirical oughts. It deploys a preobjective field of concerns in which a functioning intentionality of aspirations and expectations responds to the concrete conditions of the times” (39). Schrag’s view of praxis reiterates the fact that praxis is concrete oriented and is responsive to particular times since it is not objective nor abstract. In praxis, “the specific ethical posture is thus one of a discernment of proper responses to existential particularities rather than the positing of objective ends or an appeal to an abstract realm of oughts” (Schrag 39). Praxis takes this posture especially in its attentiveness to human condition or experience.

Stated differently, “the praxis-oriented consciousness of human sensuous activity bursts its epistemological cocoon of theoretic-abstract consciousness and finds itself thrust into the world of practical and personal concerns” (45). In explaining human sensuous activity as the domain of praxis, Schrag states: “Human sensuous activity, we
submit, involves not only the praxis of concrete relations of exchange, association, and labor, but also the consciousness of my body as the concrete link between human existence and the world, the intentionality of perception, the revelatory power of the aesthetic imagination, the signification of the spoken word, the project of communication, the enjoyment of play, and the mythopoetic character of thought” (46). Praxis has to deal with human lived experience where things can always be otherwise. Sequel to this, “idealism, even in its attenuated varieties, tends to diminish the dimension of praxis because of its disposition towards a perspective of pure theory” (Schrag 117). Science is driven by idealism and is objective and about things that cannot be otherwise.

1.8.5 Pastoral

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the word pastoral as: “of, relating to, or composed of shepherds or herdsmen; devoted to or based on livestock raising; of or relating to spiritual care or guidance especially of a congregation” (merriam-webster.com). The Online Etymology Dictionary notes that the word pastoral “is from Old French pastoral (13c.) and directly from Latin pastoralis ‘of herdsmen, of shepherds,’ from pastor ‘shepherd.’ Meaning ‘of or pertaining to a Christian pastor or his office’ is from 1520s” (etymonline.com). However, the dimension relating to spiritual care or guidance by a Christian pastor is the main focus of this study. Archbishop John Joseph Myers in writing about the definition of the word pastoral states: “Considering the documents of the Second Vatican Council, it is clear that ‘pastoral’ has to do with timely topics which are considered with concern for their impact on people’s lives. The Council and subsequent documents when speaking of the pastoral office mention the munus docendi, the munus sanctificandi and the munus regendi. One might add caring for the
poor and for those with particular physical, emotional or spiritual needs” (catholicculture.org). To this, he adds that “surely, compassion, genuine listening and caring must always be a part of pastoral practice” (catholicculture.org). Pastoral, in the context of this study, instead of being devoted to livestock raising, is, rather, devoted to raising people for God through the Gospel.

It is significant that Pope St. John Paul II, as cited by Myers, admonished that “it is not the Gospel that will have to be adapted to the times and the current needs of humanity. On the contrary, we are dealing with placing the life of one and all in contact with the ancient but always new thing called the Gospel” (catholicculture.org). In other words, “evangelization means adapting people to the Gospel rather than modifying the Gospel to fit the needs of contemporary society. Spreading the Gospel around the world means changing people’s ways of thinking and living” (catholicculture.org). As it is, being pastoral is not a matter of making people feel good, rather, “it means preaching the truth—the whole truth—‘in season and out of season. . .’ calling people to a deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. . . providing people with the means by which they can obtain the fullness of human dignity. . . helping people live out their baptismal vocation as adopted children of God” (catholicculture.org). Invariably, the primary pastoral concern is the fulfillment of Christ’s injunction: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28: 19-20). Carrying out this duty is the fundamental task in pastoral life. This study understands pastoral life as a way of adapting people in every age to the Gospel, and so, will consider
how rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis viewed through the lens of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is significant in this task.

1.9 General Synopsis of the Study

The overarching idea that drives this study is Ronald Arnett’s *Walking the Humanities into the Marketplace: A Communicative Call*, in which, on the one hand, he writes that “the humanities seldom offer comment on the marketplace, unless in critique. . . Unlike the sciences and the social sciences, the humanities do not tender implementation strategies that immediately augment efficiency in the market” (177). On the other hand, however, he points out that “the humanities put forward historical, literary, and philosophical content that enriches and embeds market decisions within ideas that deepen decision-making beyond supply and demand of material exchange” (177). Thus, while Arnett argues that “the humanities encounter the marketplace, learning from a place of perceived ‘radical alterity’” (177), this study seeks to understand how this encounter between the humanities and the marketplace takes place, in terms of the relevant practices that enhance the encounter. It is in this sense that this study seeks to explore phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tools in the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis; that is, rhetoric and philosophy of communication as they engage the marketplace; and, to seek the pastoral implication.

In seeking the pastoral implication, the pastoral life of the Church is taken as the marketplace of interest in this study where rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis seen through the lens of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics is to be concretely tested. This is supported by the fact that “communicative *praxis* within the marketplace provides opportunity for textured insight, attentiveness to temporality, and
an opportunity for a humanities basis for communicative action to learn from radical alterity called the marketplace” (Arnett 2003, 183). The pastoral life of the Church provides a marketplace for communicative praxis to meet radical alterity in the hope of textured learning.

Given the unstable and dynamic nature of the pastoral life of the Church, which necessitated the Church in the Second Vatican Council, driven by “aggiornamento” — “the act of bringing something up to date to meet current needs” (www.dictionary.com) — to lay emphasis on the need to pay attention to the “signs of the times” in her pastoral life (Gaudium et Spes No. 4); this study thinks of how rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis would be significant in this dimension of the Church’s life. Arnett, in his conclusion to Philosophies of Communication: Implications for Everyday Experience, provides a lens for responding to the signs of the times in the assertion: “In places without the vantage point of assurance of absolute correctness, the task of philosophy of communication cannot be to predict behavior in an unchanging environment. Rather, the task is to understand how to make sense of environment before us” (2008, 155). He adds that “philosophies of communication do not render a picture of existential life that calls for duplication or imitation – rather, a given philosophy of communication guides ever so crookedly through the haze before us” (2008, 155). Commenting on the work of S. Alyssa Groom, he writes that “rhetorical consciousness centers on the knowing, the meeting, and the engaging of the story of the ongoing communicative life of an organization” (2008, 158). In this, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis seen through the lens of phronesis, and philosophical hermeneutics seem significant for the pastoral life of the Church.
In sum, the significance of the pastoral implication is that it creates and holds space for ongoing learning from alterity. For Arnett, “the ongoing learning invites communicative space for engaging learning in a constructive way, creating shared paths to new knowledge and providing a ‘why’ for the Other to ask and learn” (2003, 179). The activity of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis that is attentive to difference via the lens of phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics announces the place of “a constructivist hermeneutic that seeks to know the different, [and] not destroy or overrun it, [for] to engage the different is necessary” (Arnett 2003, 180). For Arnett, “difference invites additive learning through engaging an alien marketplace, inviting paradigmatic questioning” (178); in other words, “a constructive hermeneutic works with the assumption that additive change, not just substitutional change, can make a difference in human life together” (180). On the whole, the chapters of this study take us from phronesis through philosophical hermeneutics, communicative praxis, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, and to the pastoral implication as a platform to test this claim. This journey begins with a focus on the understanding of the reach of phronesis.
Chapter 2

Literature Review on Phronesis

2.1 Aristotle on Phronesis

*Phronesis* is “a Greek term which means ‘practical wisdom’ that has been derived from learning and evidence of practical things. Phronesis leads to breakthrough thinking and creativity and enables the individual to discern and make good judgements about what is the right thing to do in a situation” (oxford-review.com). Aristotle came to the concept of “*phronesis*” (practical thought/wisdom) while discussing the ‘Doctrine of the Mean’ in Book VI of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*), where he understands the ‘mean’ as the intermediate condition between two extremes of excess and deficiency; and it is the duty of ‘correct reason’ to determine this intermediate condition” (*NE* 1138b20). He underscores the salience of this “correct reason” stating that “intermediate condition [between excess and deficiency] is as correct reason says” (*NE* 1138b20). The fact of the variable or unstable nature of the mean, whereby what constitutes the mean in one context, may not be so in another context, also underscores the necessity of “correct reason”. Thus, it is “correct reason” that enables one to determine the mean in whatever context. Mindful of this salient role of “correct reason” in determining the mean in every context, Aristotle undertakes an extensive discussion of what this “correct reason” is.

Aristotle anchored his discussion of the definition of “correct reason” on his division of the virtues of the soul into “virtues of character” and “virtues of thought,” stating that “there are two parts of the soul, one that has reason, and one nonrational” (*NE* 1139a5). He also divided the part of the soul that has reason into two parts — “one with which we study beings whose origins do not admit of being otherwise than they are, and
one with which we study beings whose origins admit of being otherwise” \textit{(NE} 1139a10). He calls one “the scientific part, and the other, the rationally calculating part, since deliberating is the same as rationally calculating, and no one deliberates about what cannot be otherwise” \textit{(NE} 1139a15). Aristotle divided the part of the soul that has reason into scientific and nonscientific parts. While on the one hand, the scientific part of the soul deals with issues that cannot be otherwise, that is, issues that are necessary, fixed and can be reduced to an either/or; on the other hand, the nonscientific part of the soul deals with issues that can be otherwise; that is, issues that go beyond an either/or situation, issues that are variable. In describing this nonscientific part of the soul, Aristotle states that “the rationally calculating part is one part of the soul that has reason” \textit{(NE1139a15)}. It is within this part of the soul, that has reason, that he locates \textit{phronesis}.

Aristotle writes that “the virtuous person has correct decision and therefore must have the virtue of practical thought” \textit{(NE} 1139a20). Simply stated, the virtuous person is one who has \textit{phronesis} (practical thought/wisdom) and is able to determine the mean between excess and deficiency in any situation or action. Ronald Beiner clearly affirms that “to be virtuous is to know what is required in a particular moral situation, and to act consistently on that knowledge” (7). Aristotle emphasizes that “correct decision belongs to the rationally calculating part of the soul, the part concerned with what is not necessary” \textit{(NE} 1139b10). Here, “what is not necessary” implies what is not fixed, what is open to deliberation; and we only deliberate about what will be and not what is past, for the future is capable of being otherwise unlike the past. For Aristotle, “we do not decide to do what is already past. . . For neither do we deliberate about what is past, but only about what will be and admits [of being or not being]; and what is past does not
admit of not having happened” (*NE* 1139b10). Similarly, to distinguish the function of the rationally calculating part of the soul from other functions of the soul that involve reason, Aristotle discusses different states of the soul positing that “there are five states in which the soul grasps the truth in its affirmations or denials. These are craft, scientific knowledge, intelligence, wisdom and understanding” (*NE* 1139b15). He explained each of these states of the soul in terms of the function that reason, or knowledge plays in it.

### 2.2 Difference Between Phronesis and Other Forms of Knowledge

In distinguishing phronesis from other forms of knowledge, the character and qualities of phronesis become more apparent. Thus:

#### 2.2.1 Phronesis and Scientific Knowledge

In terms of scientific knowledge, Aristotle states that “it is concerned with what is necessary. . . For we all suppose that what we know scientifically does not even admit of being otherwise. . . what is known scientifically is by necessity. It is eternal; for the things that are by unconditional necessity are all eternal, and eternal things are ingenerable and indestructible” (*NE* 1139b20). Invariably, the domain of scientific knowledge is about things that are necessary or fixed, certain, and cannot be otherwise. Scientific knowledge can be known and taught; and can be learnt. In affirmation, Aristotle asserts that “every science seems to be teachable, and what is scientifically knowable is learnable. But all teaching is from what is already known, as we also say in *Analytics*; for some teaching is through induction, some by deductive inference, [both require previous knowledge]” (*NE* 1139b25). The fact that “all teaching is from what is already known” entails that scientific knowledge can be possessed unlike correct reason or phronesis that cannot be possessed a priori or be already known.
Unlike in phronesis, “induction and deduction” are operational methods of scientific knowledge, where “induction [reaches] the origin, i.e., the universal, while the deductive inference proceeds from the universals. Hence, deductive inference has origins from which it proceeds, but which are not themselves [reached] by deductive inference. Hence, they are [reached] by induction” (NE 1139b30). Scientific knowledge proceeds via the application of a universal to a particular and is fixed in all contexts or circumstances, and perhaps, for all time. Scientific knowledge also proceeds from the particular to the universal and is fixed. In contrast to scientific knowledge, the decision reached through phronesis is fitting for that particular context and is always temporal rather than permanent. Alasdair MacIntyre writes that “Aristotle was well aware that the kind of knowledge which he takes to be genuinely scientific, to constitute episteme – knowledge of essential natures grasped through universal necessary truths, logically derivable from certain first principles – cannot characteristically be had of human affairs at all” (159). Human affairs are often uncertain, unpredictable, probable, and can be otherwise, hence, the scene for the exercise of phronesis. In affirmation, Richard Bernstein writes that “in a living conversation there is always unpredictability and novelty” (2); and these are attended to by phronesis, and not scientific knowledge.

2.2.2 Phronesis and Craft Knowledge

Aristotle grounds his explication of craft knowledge by establishing a distinction between the concepts of “production” and “action” despite both belonging to the category of things that can be otherwise, and not to scientific knowledge. He states: “What admits of being otherwise includes what is produced and what is done in action. Production and action are different. . . the state involving reason and concerned with action is different
from the state involving reason and concerned with production. Nor is one included in the other; for action is not production, and production is not action” (*NE* 1140a5). In terms of action, he writes that “the origin of action – the source of the movement, not the action’s goal – is decision, and the origin of decision is desire together with reason that aims at some goal. Hence, decision requires understanding and thought, and also a state of character, since doing well or badly in action requires both thought and character” (*NE* 1139a30). Action is a product of decision which arises from understanding and thought that aims towards a goal (and the goal is action). He also notes that “thought by itself, however, moves nothing; what moves us is thought aiming at some goal and concerned with action” (*NE* 1139b5). Thus, desire, which undergirds thought aiming at some goal is essential for action.

In terms of production, Aristotle states that it “is the sort of thought that also originates productive thinking [i.e., thought aiming at some goal]; for every producer in his production aims at some [further] goal, and the unconditional goal is not the product, which is only the [conditional] goal of some [production], and aims at some [further] goal. [An unconditional goal is] what we achieve in action, since doing well in action is the goal” (*NE* 1139b5). This implies that while decision about an action ends with that action, which he designates as unconditional goal, thought about production is a conditional goal which entails that the product can always be improved upon; that is, every product is like a stepping-stone or raw material for another product. Thus, action is one, and serves its purpose in the context in which its decision was taken, and not beyond it, unlike in production.
Mindful of this distinction between production and action, Aristotle notes that “crafts are concerned with production, not with action; . . . [this is because] every craft is concerned with coming to be; and the exercise of the craft is the study of how something that admits of being and not being comes to be, something whose origin is in the producer and not in the product” (NE 1140a10;15). Craft deals with a conditional goal, unlike action which serves unconditional goal. Again, to distinguish craft knowledge from scientific knowledge, Aristotle writes that “a craft is not concerned with things that are or come to be by necessity; or with things that are by nature, since these have their origin in themselves” (NE 1140a15). While craft knowledge differs from scientific knowledge, because it deals with things that can be otherwise; it also differs from phronesis, because it deals with production rather than action. Thus, Lois Self writes that “phronesis is a virtue concerned with action, with doing. . . practical wisdom, then, must be reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human good. . . in a sense, the man of practical wisdom bridges the gap between ‘making’ and ‘doing’ since his deliberations directly instruct and even ‘command’ action” (133). In addition, Oded Balaban notes that Aristotle explicitly sets out this difference stating, “action and making are different kinds of thing, since making aims at an end distinct from the act of making, whereas in doing, the end cannot be other than the act itself” (1140 b1-5; Balaban 185). Although phronesis is related to craft, they also differ; craft tends to production (or making), phronesis tends to action.

2.2.3 Phronesis and Intelligence

Aristotle explains intelligence by presenting his notion of an intelligent person within the context of living well, which is somewhat off the usual conventional
understanding of an intelligent person. In terms of the conventional understanding of an intelligent person, Aristotle writes that “we call people intelligent about some [restricted area] whenever they calculate well to promote some excellent end, in an area where there is no craft” (NE 1140a30). Thus, one can be intelligent in one area and not in the other. However, beyond this conventional notion of intelligence, Aristotle writes that “it seems proper, then, to an intelligent person to be able to deliberate finely about what is good and beneficial for himself, not about some restricted area – e.g., about what promotes health or strength – but about what promotes living well in general” (NE1140a 25). Therefore, aside its conventional notion, intelligence also manifests in the context where a decision about living well in general is needed. For Aristotle, “where [living well] as a whole is concerned, the deliberative person will also be intelligent” (NE 1140a30). Apparently, living well is among issues that can be otherwise, and so calls for practical thought rather than scientific knowledge. Stated differently, in the context of living well, intelligence is not scientific knowledge but a practical thought.

Therefore, Aristotle asserts that “no one deliberates about what cannot be otherwise or about what cannot be achieved by his action . . . and if we cannot deliberate about what is by necessity; it follows that intelligence is not science nor yet craft-knowledge. It is not science, because what is done in action admits of being otherwise; and it is not craft-knowledge, because action and production belong to different kinds” (NE 1140a35). If intelligence is not science, and is not craft-knowledge, but is action-oriented, invariably, it is practical thought or correct reason (phronesis). Aristotle defines intelligence in the context of living well, that is phronesis, as “a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about what is good or bad for a human being”
Intelligence is geared towards action and not towards production; it is neither craft knowledge, nor is it scientific knowledge. Intensifying the difference between intelligence and craft-knowledge (action and production), Aristotle states that “there is virtue [or vice in the use] of craft, but not [in the use] of intelligence. In a craft, someone who makes errors voluntarily is more choice-worthy; but with intelligence, as with virtues, the reverse is true. Clearly, intelligence is a virtue, not craft-knowledge” (NE 1140b25). Intelligence, in the context of living well, is a virtue tied to action; it comes into play in decision-making or deliberation about action; it is practical wisdom, it is *phronesis*.

### 2.2.4 Phronesis and Understanding

Aristotle thinks about understanding within the context of the discussion about origins and how they can be grasped. He maintains that scientific knowledge is about things that cannot be otherwise, it is about universals or necessary things which have origins, but these origins are not known through scientific knowledge, craft-knowledge or even intelligence. For Aristotle, “there can be neither scientific knowledge nor craft-knowledge nor intelligence about origins of what is scientifically known. For what is scientifically known is demonstrable, [but the origins are not]; and craft and intelligence are about what admits of being otherwise” (NE 1140b35). Given the inability of scientific knowledge, craft, intelligence or even wisdom to grasp the origins, Aristotle designates the grasping of the origins as the role of understanding. He states: “[The states of the soul] by which we always grasp the truth and never make mistakes, about what can or cannot be otherwise, are scientific knowledge, intelligence, wisdom and understanding. But none of the first three— intelligence, scientific knowledge, wisdom— is possible
about origins. The remaining possibility, then, is that we have understanding about origins” (NE1141a5). Apparently, origins are not open to scientific demonstration, production or even action, but are only understood. However, David Hoy notes that Gadamer “explicitly maintains that much of what Aristotle says of phronesis is true of understanding in general” (58). Thus, while Aristotle separates them, Gadamer ties them together in his concept of application.

Aristotle clearly states that “intelligence is evidently not scientific knowledge; for as we have said, it concerns the last thing [i.e., the particular], since this is what is done in action. Hence, it is opposed to understanding. For understanding is about the [first] terms, [those] that have no account of them; but intelligence is about the last thing, an object of perception, not of scientific knowledge” (NE 1142a25). Understanding is about origins, the first terms which may not be totally accounted for; but intelligence (phronesis) is about action.

2.2.5 Phronesis and Wisdom

Aristotle views wisdom in the context of scientific knowledge and understanding, but not with action, thus, distinguishing it from intelligence (phronesis). He calls wisdom “the most exact [form] of scientific knowledge” [whereby] the wise person must not only know what is derived from the origins of a science, but also grasp the truth about the origins. Therefore, wisdom is understanding plus scientific knowledge; it is scientific knowledge of the most honorable things that has received [understanding as] its copingstone” (NE 1141a15). This association of wisdom with scientific knowledge entails that it has definite or fixed ideas which understanding helps to make sense of; or rather, that what is understood becomes fixed and necessary, hence, a form of scientific
knowledge. But intelligence (phronesis) does not give in to being fixed or necessary, but only comes into place in temporal action. Aristotle writes that “everyone would say that the content of wisdom is always the same, but the content of intelligence is not” (NE 1141a25). It might be said that wisdom is not necessarily geared towards the good of living well as does intelligence. In affirmation, Aristotle states: “That is why people say that Anaxagoras or Thales or that sort of person is wise, but not intelligent, when they see that he is ignorant of what benefits himself. And so, they say that what he knows is extraordinary, amazing, difficult and divine, but useless, because it is not human goods that he looks for” (NE 1141b5). The search for human good or well-being achievable in action is the ultimate concern of intelligence (phronesis).

Aristotle writes: “Nor is intelligence about universals only. It must also come to know particulars, since it is concerned with action and action is about particulars. . . [Again] and since intelligence is concerned with action, it must possess both [the universal and the particular knowledge] or the [particular] more [than the universal]” (NE 1141b15;20). This suggests that intelligence is not the application of the universal knowledge to a particular context, for in the context of action, intelligence possesses both the universal and the particular knowledge. In corroboration, Beiner writes that “phronesis moves back and forth, from universal to particular, and from particular to universal. It allows mastery of ethical predicaments without dependence upon rules or codified principles to tell us when the particular is an instantiation of the universal (our conception of what is good in general), when it is an exception to the ethical norms we already live by, and when it calls for our revision of our conception of the good” (73). Since intelligence rises as a decision about human good in the very context of action,
dealing with both universals and particular, it seems like somewhat a difficult endeavor. Aristotle affirms that “intelligence is difficult because it is deliberative, and deliberation may be in error about either the universal or the particular” (NE 1142a20). It is difficult because it is not merely the application of the universal to the particular, nor vice versa; that is, phronesis is difficult because it is neither deductive nor inductive. In this framework, Aristotle notes that “intelligent young people do not seem to be found. The reason is that intelligence is concerned with particulars as well as universals, and particulars become known from experience, but a young person lacks experience, since some length of time is needed to produce it” (NE 1142a15). For Matthew Crawford, “what is an experience, other than an episode in which one’s attention is engaged in some way?” (93). For Crawford, “experience is always contingent and particular, and for that reason ‘unfitted to serve as a ground of moral laws’” (76). This role of experience also points to the difficulty of intelligence or phronesis, for experience comes with age.

On the basis of experience, Aristotle in the Rhetoric, distinguishes between youth, the prime of life, and old age. He states that for the young, “their lives are mainly spent not in memory but in expectation; for expectation refers to the future, memory to the past, and youth has a long future before it and a short past behind it; on the first day of one’s life one has nothing at all to remember, and can only look forward” (1389a20). This underscores lack of experience in the youth, because their future is more than their past, hence they have only a little past (little experience) behind them. Aristotle highlights that the youth “would always rather do noble deeds than useful ones: their lives are regulated more by moral feeling than by reasoning; and whereas reasoning leads us to choose what is useful, moral goodness leads us to choose what is noble” (Rh 1389a35). Here, one
might understand what is useful as what is particular to a context, and what is noble as
what is universal and perhaps fixed. In contrast to the youth, “elderly men – men who are
past their prime. . . have lived many years: they have often been taken in, and often made
mistakes; and life on the whole is a bad business. The result is that they are sure about
nothing and under-do everything” (Rh1389b15). This means that they have acquired
experience enough to understand that there is perhaps, no certainty in anything. The
elderly sometimes “are small-minded, because they have been humbled by life; their
desires are set upon nothing more exalted or unusual than what will help them to keep
alive. . . they guide their lives too much by considerations of what is useful and too little
by what is noble – for the useful is what is good for oneself, and the noble what is good
absolutely” (Rh 1389b 25, 35). Unlike the youth, elderly men “live by memory rather
than by hope; for what is left to them of life is but little as compared with the long past;
and hope is of the future, memory of the past. . . They guide their lives by reasoning more
than by moral feeling; reasoning being directed to utility and moral feeling to moral
goodness” (Rh1390a5,15). The experience of elderly people helps them to make temporal
decisions on what is contextually useful rather than what is good for every context.

Aristotle takes intelligence (phronesis) to be a kind of good deliberation which is
“correctness that reflects what is beneficial, about the right thing, in the right way and at
the right time” (NE1142b 25). Intelligence helps in making a decision that is useful or
beneficial in a particular context for a particular time; and it is the province of the
intelligent person to make this kind of deliberation. For Aristotle, “if having deliberated
well is proper to an intelligent person, good deliberation will be the type of correctness
that expresses what is expedient for promoting the end about which intelligence is true
supposition” (*NE* 1142b30). This returns us to the initial idea of intelligence or *phronesis* as correct reasoning that leads to a decision about good action in a situation that can be otherwise.

2.2.6 **Phronesis and Comprehension**

Aristotle distinguishes comprehension from intelligence (*phronesis*) and from scientific knowledge, stating that comprehension “is not the same as scientific knowledge in general. Nor is it the same as belief, since, if it were, everyone would have comprehension. Nor is it any one of the specific sciences [with its own specific area] . . . For Comprehension is neither about what always is and is unchanging nor about just anything that comes to be. It is about what we might be puzzled about and might deliberate about” (*NE* 1143a 5). This clearly distinguishes comprehension from scientific knowledge on the grounds that it involves deliberation and is about things that can be otherwise; however, it does make it akin to intelligence. Nevertheless, Aristotle writes: “Still, comprehension is not the same as intelligence. For intelligence is prescriptive, since its end is what must be done or not in action, whereas comprehension only judges” (*NE* 1143a 10). Comprehension does not lead to action unlike intelligence that leads to action. Comprehension is more akin to learning, for learning is a sign of comprehending.

In concluding his discussion on intelligence (*phronesis*), Aristotle aligns it with being virtuous, and indeed, essential in the acquisition of virtue. He argues that “intelligence, this eye of the soul, cannot reach its fully developed state without virtue . . . [and full] virtue cannot be acquired without intelligence” (*NE* 1144a30; 1144b15). To intensify this affinity of virtue and intelligence, he states: “Whenever people now define virtue, they all say what state it is and what it is related to, and then add that it is the state
that expresses correct reason. Now correct reason is reason that expresses intelligence . . .

[Again], it is not merely the state expressing correct reason, but the state involving
correct reason, that is virtue. And it is intelligence that is correct reason in this area” (NE
1144b 25, 30). To be intelligent is to deliberate well about what is good for living well
and coming to a good or correct reason about it in action. Equally, to always make good
deliberations and carry out a good action arrived at through correct reasoning is to be
virtuous or intelligent. Thus, “we cannot be fully good without intelligence, or intelligent
without virtue of character” (NE 1144b30). In this sense, Thomas Aquinas writes that
“we call a man good regarding one complete virtue, namely, practical wisdom, on which
all the moral virtues depend. Therefore, one may be a good citizen but not have the virtue
by which one is a good man” (193). Thus, it is the exercise of phronesis that makes one a
good human being.

Aristotle asserts that “as soon as [one] has intelligence, he has all the virtues as
well. . . For virtue makes us reach the end in our action, while intelligence makes us
reach what promotes the end [i.e., action]” (NE 1145a 5). As such, intelligence, correct
reason, or practical reason/wisdom (phronesis) is essentially tied to virtue, which
Aristotle defines as: “(a) a state that decides, (b) [consisting] in a mean, (c) the mean
relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by
reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices,
one of excess and one of deficiency” (NE 1107a5). This brings our discussion full circle
to where we started, that Aristotle understood phronesis within the context of the mean,
for it is an intelligent person, with correct reason, who can always make a good
deliberation and decision about the mean, which is always tied to the context.
2.3 Scholarly Positions on Phronesis

Although Aristotle viewed phronesis as an intellectual virtue which is important for moral action (Zickmund 410) and is generally defined as practical wisdom or knowledge of the proper ends of life (Shinto 2); scholars differ on their views or interpretations of the Aristotelian understanding of phronesis. Their differing views tend to hinge significantly on the operational character of phronesis; and this is evident in the different key words with which scholars refer to it, like: “Jeffrey Stout (1990) designate the term with practical wisdom, Max Black (1917) with reasonableness, Alasdair McIntyre (1984, 1988) with practical rationality, Dewey (1938/1997) with freedom and self-control” (Ellet 15; Shinto 2). Mindful of these variations in the terms used to designate phronesis by scholars, Steve Schwarze notes that “phronesis has functioned as both an opportunity and an obstacle for contemporary rhetoricians and philosophers; for while it has helped scholars to articulate modes of deliberation and action that highlight responsiveness to the contingencies of particular, practical situations, it has posed a consistent problem for theory construction: How does one account for particularity in a general theoretical explanation? (78). Restated, “if phronesis demands attention to particularity, doesn’t a general ‘theory’ of phronesis become a contradiction in terms?” (78). Significantly, scholars’ view of phronesis continue to diverge and converge with that of Aristotle. In this work, the views of scholars like Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Ronald Beiner, Alasdair MacIntyre, Thomas Farrell, Charles Allen, Jean-Francois Lyotard, John Caputo, Robert Henle, Ronald Arnett and Janie Harden Fritz are highlighted.
For Martin Heidegger, the concept of phronesis is important, not only as a means of giving emphasis to our practical “being-in-the-world” over and against theoretical apprehension, but it can additionally be seen as constituting a mode of insight into our own concrete situation (both our practical situation and, more fundamentally, our existential situation, hence *phronesis* constitutes a mode of self-knowledge) (www.plato.stanford.edu). This implies that phronesis is attentive to our way of being in the world, that is, thrownness. Susan Zickmund writes that “in concentrating on phronesis, Heidegger emphasizes the praxis orientation which reveals ‘practical insight in individual situations as what is fitting in relation to us, that is, in relation to each individual in his or her own circumstances’” (van Buren 1992, 175; Zickmund 410).

Phronesis is always tied to action in a particular context of man’s life. In his *Plato’s Sophist*, Heidegger defines phronesis as “a disposition or habit which reveals the being of action” (1997, 99); and this is attained via deliberation as “the mode of bringing about the ‘disclosive appropriation’ of that action” (Zickmund 410). Thus, as Dasein is attentive to the self-disclosure of being, through deliberation it comes to action. For Heidegger, phronesis discloses “‘the right and proper way to be Dasein. . . is involved in a constant struggle against’ Dasein’s inclination toward avoiding its proper way of being, an inclination connected to habitual, everyday concerns” (1997: 34, 37; Smith 88). Through deliberation, Dasein avoids a habitual or routine way of being that militates against its proper way of being. Thus, while scientific methods encourage habitual or routine way of being, phronesis extricates Dasein from routine, and disposes it to attentiveness to the contingent, or things that can be otherwise in her thrownness.
Daniel Smith corroborates that phronesis is “a safeguard against a disposition (hexis) toward life that is unconcerned with everyday practical needs in its pursuit of theoretical seeing” (88). Smith states that “we might say that for Aristotle phronesis is a habit that ‘disrupts’ the tendency of technical and theoretical habits to promote preoccupations that militate against ‘right desire,’ that is, living in accord with our nature as desiring-thinking beings” (88). While science disposes us to habits, where habit is understood as “a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior; an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary” (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/habit); phronesis disrupts these habits and awakens us to be attentive to the concrete in a voluntary manner. For Smith, “this phronetic disruption discloses possibilities for prudent thought, action, and judgment that might otherwise remain undisclosed. . . it strives against Dasein’s tendency to ‘cover’ its wholeness through technical and theoretical excesses” (88). Phronesis unveils possibilities that are glossed over, perhaps, as unimportant, by scientific methods. In this purview, Smith writes that phronesis, for Heidegger, is “nothing other than conscience set in motion,” which fosters a “resoluteness towards” the world, an “acting resolutely” (Heidegger 39; Smith 88; 92). Smith points out that Heidegger in Being and Time tells us that “conscience calls the authentic self forth from its lostness in the they” (253), calling it forth into resoluteness; and “resoluteness constitutes the mode of authentic care” (92). In this, phronesis is conscience which is attentive to the context of the world. For Smith, “resoluteness is Heidegger’s translation of phronesis into Being and Time” (92; Zickmund 411). This suggests that “resoluteness is that which brings Dasein through the anticipation of its own possibilities to choose authenticity” (Zickmund 411). Restated,
resoluteness (phronesis) awakens Dasein to avoid routine or the habitual and embrace authenticity, which is attentiveness to contingency in Dasein’s everyday life.

For Heidegger, resoluteness discloses the possibilities for existence – the potentiality-for-being – that each Dasein possesses (1962, 345; Zickmund 412). It is a form of attentiveness or being awake to the self-disclosure of being. Hence, “the decision lies in choosing not to be irresolute, or in other words, choosing to avoid ‘Being-surrendered to the way in which things have been prevalently interpreted by ‘the they’” (Heidegger 345; Zickmund 412); for “the irresolute Dasein lives in a society where ‘nobody’ chooses a unique path for living” (Zickmund 412). Apparently, resoluteness, “signifies letting oneself be summoned out of one’s lostness in the they” (Heidegger 345; Zickmund 412); and with this summoning, Dasein becomes resolute when “taking action” in such a way that it leads to its authenticity (Heidegger 345; Zickmund 412). Resoluteness is a way of overcoming the habitual in order to be attentive to the contingent.

Stated differently, “resoluteness is the choice of wanting-to-have-a-conscience . . . [and] Dasein’s desire to have a conscience is an existential choosing” (Zickmund 412); for the “process of attaining authenticity arises from Dasein’s choosing to listen to the ‘call of conscience’” (412). Resoluteness lets Dasein live authentically as Dasein which entails attentiveness to its thrownness in the world. In affirmation, Crawford writes that “attention is the thing that is most one’s own: in the normal course of things, we choose what to pay attention to, and in a very real sense this determines what is real for us; what is actually present to our consciousness” (13). As such, phronesis as resoluteness or attention makes us authentic as we focus on the contingent.
In this purview, Smith considers phronesis to be ethical in Heideggerian framework just like in Aristotle, stating that “phronesis is ethical not only in the sense of being concerned about oneself and others, but also in that it attends to the particular circumstances in which Dasein act. [That is], it is a disposition that seeks to disclose the circumstances of a situation, the milieu in which Dasein lives its life qua being whose life is its actions” (89). Heidegger notes that the world of “acting Dasein . . . is to be disclosed by phronesis” (101), and this world is that of everyday life which is unstable and mutable rather than immutable or unchanging; and cannot be reduced to technique or immutable theory or method. Smith posits that “because of the particularity and mutability of ‘worlds,’ theoretical seeing – understood as seeing that attends to the ever-present and unchanging – is not appropriate to ethics” (Smith 89). Thus, for Heidegger, “in phronesis, states of affairs are grasped . . . as they show themselves” (110). This, invariably, connects phronesis to the idea of phenomena (things as they show themselves). In all, Smith writes that “for Heidegger, what Aristotle shows us is that phronesis aims to foster a genuine resoluteness toward the world (103), an acting resolutely in accord with right desire” (104; Smith 89). In Heidegger, phronesis implies attentiveness to the contingency/particularity of everyday life and experience as they show themselves.

Next, Gadamer, as influenced by Heidegger, considers phronesis as a central element in his thinking. In his philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer conceives of understanding, and interpretation as “a practically oriented mode of insight— a mode of insight that has its own rationality irreducible to any simple rule or set of rules, that cannot be directly taught, and that is always oriented to the particular case at hand” (www.plato.stanford.edu). For him, “practical knowledge, phronesis, is another kind of
knowledge. Primarily, it is directed towards the concrete situation” (Gadamer 1975, 21). Gadamer notes that “the grasp and moral control of the concrete situation require subsuming what is given under the universal – i.e., the goal that one is pursuing, so that the right thing may result. Hence, it presupposes a redirection of the will – i.e., moral being (hexis). [And] that is why Aristotle considers phronesis an intellectual virtue” (1975, 22). Nevertheless, Gadamer “sees it (phronesis) not only as a capacity (dunamis), but as a determination of moral being which cannot exist without the totality of the ethical virtues, which in turn cannot exist without it” (1975, 22). This resonates with the Aristotelian understanding of phronesis as the virtue of prudence, which is essential in the practice of other virtues.

For Gadamer, “although practicing this virtue means that one distinguishes what should be done from what should not, it is not simply practical shrewdness and general cleverness” (1975, 22). This is because “we do not possess moral knowledge in such a way that we already have it and then apply it to specific situations. That is, moral knowledge can never be knowable in advance, like knowledge that can be taught, it comes into play when it encounters a concrete situation, of which we are always already in the situation of having to act” (Gadamer 1975, 318). Phronesis is not an a priori knowledge; it only manifests in the context of action within the particularity of a given concrete situation, especially in uncertain or probable situations. Unlike techne that operates with a set of skills that can be taught and learnt in order to actualize its particular end, phronesis has no particular end but action, and so does not have specific skills; it attends to every concrete situation as it comes. Remarkably, for Gadamer, “to acquire an awareness of a situation is, however, always a task of particular difficulty. [This is
because the very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it, and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task that is never entirely completed” (1975, 269). This implies that one cannot give an entirely objective account of a situation since one is always in it and not outside it. Gadamer defines a situation stating that “it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision” (269). A situation does not allow one to see the entire or general perspective, it allows one to see from a particular perspective; and the virtue that helps one to navigate the particular is phronesis. Hence, Gadamer, like Aristotle, understands phronesis in the context of moral action for “like law, morality is constantly developed through the fecundity of the individual case” (37). Phronesis, for Gadamer, as in Aristotle, attends to the particular.

Further, Gadamer writes that “moral being, as Aristotle describes it, is clearly not objective knowledge, i.e., the knower is not standing over against a situation that he merely observes, but he is directly affected by what he sees. It is something that he has to do” (1975, 280). Morality is action-oriented and guided by phronesis; and this, for Gadamer, means that “the distinction that Aristotle makes between the knowledge of phronesis and the theoretical knowledge of episteme is a simple one, especially when we remember that science, for the Greeks, is represented by the model of mathematics, a knowledge of what is unchangeable, a knowledge that depends on proof and that can, therefore, be learned by anybody” (1975, 280). However, phronesis deals with things that are changeable or can be otherwise and comes into play in action. For Gadamer, “the task of a moral decision is that of doing the right thing in a particular situation, i.e., seeing what is right within the situation and laying hold of it” (1975, 283). In addition, Gadamer
notes that the man of phronesis “has to act, choosing the right means, and his action must be governed just as carefully as that of a craftsman” (283). Gadamer distinguishes between phronesis and craft or technical knowledge stating that from Aristotle’s analysis of phronesis emerge a whole variety of points that answer this question:

(1) We learn a techne and can also forget it; but we do not learn moral knowledge, nor can we forget it. We do not stand over against it, as if it were something that we can acquire or not, in the way that we can choose to acquire or not an objective skill, a techne. . . we do not possess moral knowledge in such a way that we already have it and then apply it to specific situations. What is right, for example, cannot be fully determined independently of the situation that requires a right action from me, whereas the eidos of what a craftsman desires to make is fully determined by the use for which it is intended (1975, 283).

(2) Here, we see a fundamental modification of the conceptual relation between means and end, which distinguishes moral from technical knowledge. It is not only that moral knowledge has no merely particular end, but is concerned with right living in general, whereas all technical knowledge is particular and serves particular ends. Moral knowledge can never be knowable in advance in the manner of knowledge that can be taught (286). There can be no anterior certainty concerning what the good life is directed towards as a whole. In moral consideration the seeing of what is immediately to be done is not a mere seeing, but nous. Moral knowledge is really a knowledge of a special kind. It embraces in a curious way both means and end and hence differs from technical knowledge. . .
That is why it is pointless to distinguish here between knowledge and experience, as can be done in the case of a techne (1975, 287-288).

(3) The person who is experienced in the world, the man who knows all the tricks and dodges and is experienced in everything there is, does not as such have the right understanding which a person who is acting needs; he has it only if he satisfies one requirement, namely, that he too is seeking what is right, i.e., that he is united with the other person in this mutual interest (1975, 288).

In these ways, Gadamer points to the difference between phronesis and technical knowledge, and links phronesis to the context of application and understanding, and, indeed, hermeneutics in which one is already in the immediate situation to act, and not outside of it. Hence, phronesis is essential in hermeneutics especially as philosophical hermeneutics.

Similar to Gadamer, Ronald Beiner envisions that “the necessary conditions for phronesis are sufficient for moral reasoning as well” (as cited in Farrell 148). In his treatment of Aristotle’s concept of prudence, Beiner writes that “phronesis is not one virtue among others, but is the master virtue that encompasses and orders the various individual virtues” (72). He explains virtue as “the exercise of ethical knowledge as elicited by particular situations of action, and to act on the basis of this knowledge. . . is to possess phronesis” (72). In this, phronesis as master virtue implies that it is phronesis that determines the particular virtue that is adequate or proper for a particular situation and the proper action. For Beiner, “phronesis is a comprehensive moral capacity because it involves seeing particular situations in their true light in interaction with a general grasp of what it is to be a complete human being, and to live a proper human life” (72-
Phronesis is essential to living a proper human life as it helps one make sense of particular situations and to find fitting action(s) in such situations. Remarkably, for Beiner, “phronesis moves back and forth, from universal to particular, and from particular to universal” (73). It has no particular format or method; it is neither deductive nor inductive. Hence, “it [phronesis] allows mastery of ethical predicaments without dependence upon a set of rules or codified principles to tell us when the particular is an instantiation of the universal (our conception of what is good in general), when it is an exception to the ethical norms we already live by, and when it calls for revision of our conception of the good” (Beiner 73). By implication, phronesis is functionally unique, neither rule driven nor arbitrary, but attentive to the particular.

This uniqueness of phronesis was given prominence by Aristotle’s distinction of phronesis from other intellectual virtues through a process of compare and contrast so that its sterling features may be very evident. Accordingly, Beiner writes that “each of the intellectual virtues to which phronesis is paired is something from which phronesis has to be distinguished, and yet to which it bears a definite relationship” (73); and the pairings are: *phronesis* and political knowledge; *phronesis* and excellence in deliberation; *phronesis* and understanding; *phronesis* and insight or judgment; and phronesis and ethical virtue (73-74). For Beiner, what these pairings share is “a common concern with ‘ultimate particular facts.’ Each of these qualities or virtues grasps ultimate particulars, and in this way, each contributes to phronesis” (74). This implies, for Beiner, that “practical wisdom, or prudence, is necessarily mediated by experience, maturity, and understanding” (105). This means that although phronesis has the features of other virtues, it cannot be limited to them.
However, given the sterling affinity of phronesis and judgment, Beiner writes that “phronesis is no doubt grounded in good judgment, but that is not to say that they are identical; [because] for Aristotle, lack of phronesis is not just a failure of judgment, but really a failure of action or, one might say, a failure of embodied judgment” (74). This means that “phronesis is judgment that is embodied in action; it is judgment consummated in the efficacy of good praxis. [Thus] if I see what the situation requires, but am unable to bring myself to act in a manner befitting my understanding, I possess judgment but not phronesis” (74). This intensifies that phronesis is tied to action and is evident in action; it is not limited to deliberation or judgment, it acts. Hence, Beiner writes that “phronesis is the union of good judgment and the action which is the fitting embodiment of that judgment” (75). This emphasis on action or praxis as intrinsic to phronesis is significant for the understanding of phronesis by Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Beiner. For MacIntyre, judgement is key in his view of Aristotle’s phronesis.

While discussing the link between virtues and the law, Alasdair MacIntyre writes that “because laws are general, particular cases will always arise in which it is unclear how the law is to be applied and unclear what justice demands. Thus, there are bound to be occasions on which no formular is available in advance; it is on such occasions that we have to act kata ton orthon logon (according to right reason)” (152). For MacIntyre, “to judge kata ton orthon logon is indeed to judge more or less, and Aristotle tries to use the notion of a mean between the more or the less to give a general characterization of the virtues” (154). Invariably, acting kata ton orthon logon (according to right reason), is the activity of phronesis which is essential in determining the mean in Aristotle’s
understanding. MacIntyre notes, “a central virtue therefore is phronesis. [And] phronesis like sophrosune is originally an aristocratic term of praise. It characterizes someone who knows what is due to him, who takes pride in claiming his due” (154). Again, “it [phronesis] comes to mean more generally someone who knows how to exercise judgment in particular cases” (154). Thus, phronesis is essential in cases where the general law does not apply and there is no formular in advance to guide judgment, and one has to act kata ton orthon logon (according to right reason). Also, for MacIntyre, “phronesis is an intellectual virtue; but it is that intellectual virtue without which none of the virtues of character can be exercised” (154). This implies that other intellectual virtues depend on phronesis for their activity. As it is, MacIntyre maintains an Aristotelian understanding of phronesis as essential for judging in particular cases where no criteria exist in advance.

Thomas Farrell points to MacIntyre and Beiner as reminding us that “it is the master quality of practical, or prudential judgment, which makes possible the proper exercise of other virtues” (98). Farrell writes that “prudence or practical wisdom, is the preeminent political virtue in the Aristotelian lexicon. [And] although he was unable to isolate a reliable set of conditions for implementing this virtue, he did suggest that proper education, civic training, and deliberative practice would sophisticate natural prowess and so perfect the quality of phronesis” (146). In this, Farrell recognizes phronesis as a central virtue for Aristotle, and that other qualities help to sharpen the acquisition/practice of phronesis. Affirmatively, Daniel Smith writes that “phronesis, for Farrell as for Aristotle, is an ethico-political practice aimed toward proper judgment and action” (93). Farrell notes that like phronesis, “Aristotle’s rhetoric values practical deliberation in an open
forum about uncertain matters” (144); and so, he links phronesis with rhetoric. He states that “if phronesis is not to be reduced to wise guessing on the one hand or technical reason on the other, we must find some grounds of affiliating logos with the normative tendencies of modern critical reflection. Rhetoric may then be conceived as a kind of creative reasoning” (145). In articulating how phronesis is cultivated, Farrell notes that “it is rhetoric, properly practiced, which allows the rhetorician to become a more accountable moral agent – in other words, literally to cultivate phronesis” (98). For Farrell, phronesis is virtually the same as rhetoric.

In this framework, Farrell points to the rhetorical dimensions of ethos, pathos and logos as essential in the cultivation of phronesis or proper judgment and indeed of virtues as a whole. He interprets Aristotle’s view that “deliberation about choice and action is the way to cultivate this superordinate virtue’” in terms of ethos, pathos and logos as the constituting ground that disposes ordinary people to choice, action and proper judgment” (98). Mindful of this affinity of phronesis and rhetoric, Farrell argues that the cultivation of phronesis is a function of rhetoric, stating: “I have extended his (Aristotle’s) argument [about the cultivation of phronesis] to say that the deliberative practice of rhetoric might go so far as to cultivate practical wisdom as a relational good for those membership groups and collectivities that are called to decide and act on civic matters” (146). Corroborating Farrell’s unification of rhetoric and phronesis, Lois Self states that “Aristotle’s ‘productive art’ of rhetoric and ‘intellectual virtue’ of practical wisdom have much in common. Both function in the domain of the ‘variable,’ in the realm where human deliberation or calculation results in probable truth about contingent matters” (131-132). It is clear that rhetoric and phronesis enjoy an intimate relationship.
To justify his reason for extending Aristotle’s view on phronesis, Farrell, writing on *Phronesis and Logos*, states: “I hope to have shown that the Aristotelian arts of phronesis are notoriously difficult to defend without recourse to a larger vocabulary of reason. In fact, the continued possibility of phronesis is best defended by pursuing this unlikely encounter between the legacy of traditional Aristotelian rhetoric and the discourse of emancipatory reason” (149). For Farrell, phronesis can be understood from the perspective of rhetoric as it exercises its deliberative function, which is an activity of reason (logos); and it is this activity of reason that makes phronesis possible. He states: “My own position, abbreviated here, is that classical rhetoric offers us a practical ideal of the appropriate; phronesis or practical wisdom. . . within the context of classical theory, rhetoric is an art of practice to be developed in real-life settings, where matters are in dispute and there are no fixed or final criteria for judgment” (1991, 187). For Farrell, “the whole point of the *Rhetoric* is not its monism, but its circumstantiality and eclecticism. That is what the practical ideal of phronesis really is all about” (1991, 188). As such, “rhetorical phronesis cannot be enacted without at least a partial intuition of what the ‘appropriate’ is in each historically specific setting” (1991, 194). This fact of giving to rhetoric virtually all the Aristotelian attributes of phronesis underscores Farrell’s insistence that rhetoric and phronesis belong together, and that, perhaps, it takes rhetoric to keep phronesis functional. By stating that “the practical ideal of phronesis or practical wisdom has always involved an uneasy tension among form, content, and context” (196), which are also prevalent in rhetoric, Farrell shows that phronesis and rhetoric suffer the same fate because they are virtually same, and that phronesis cannot do without rhetoric.
Unlike Farrell who virtually reduced phronesis to rhetoric, Charles W. Allen argues for the primacy of phronesis in all reasoning and rationality stating that “ultimately, all forms of thoughtful activity are at their best not simply when phronesis plays some part in them but only when it plays the primary and most decisive role” (359). Allen views phronesis as “the historically implicated, communally nurtured ability to make good sense of relatively singular contexts in ways appropriate to their relative singularity” (363). He identifies the central components in his understanding of phronesis, thus: “Phronesis is employed in making good sense; phronesis is communally nurtured; phronesis is historically implicated; phronesis makes good sense of relatively singular contexts; the ways in which phronesis makes sense are appropriate to its subject matter” (363). In this case, that *phronesis is employed in making good sense* implies that “phronesis is employed in understanding and making judgments. It yields genuine knowledge. It reminds us that phronetic sense-making is neither theoretically detached nor value neutral. It is always practically engaged, recognizing that our own participation (making sense) and value judgments (making good sense) play an essential role in the kind of knowledge phronesis yield” (363). Phronesis is not devoid of the self-implication of the one who enacts its practice; it is always tainted by self-implicature.

That *phronesis is also communally nurtured* is a “focus on an important aspect of its practical engagement; [whereby] the value judgments essential to phronetic sense-making inescapably arise from the trust and loyalty we already have for the communities that have formed us” (Allen 364). This reiterates Gadamer’s idea in *Truth and Method* that we are always already in a tradition and cannot escape the bias or prejudice of our tradition. Also, for Allen, that *phronesis is historically implicated*, bifurcates: “On the
one hand (especially where its sense-making cannot afford postponement), it is bounded by unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences; on the other hand, it can also be distorted by various forms of self-deception” (364 - 365). Invariably, phronesis is always attentive or responsive or suited to the particular moment or context of its action or decision.

Furthermore, Allen notes that “phronesis is practically engaged not least because its sense-making is always provoked by relatively singular contexts” (365); rather, “these are contexts whose intelligibility depends on noting not only how they are to be related to other contexts (how they are to be treated as relatively singular) but also how they are to be distinguished from every other context (how they are to be treated as relatively singular) and, finally, how these two aspects are to be interrelated” (366). To understand a singular context, one has to understand how it relates and differs from other contexts, as well as how they are integrated; this interrelationship is often spoken of in terms of universals and particulars, where “what is universal and what is particular are codetermined” (366). This codetermination of universals and particular in phronesis suggests that “phronesis is not concerned with universals and particulars as they are usually understood in formal logic, where universals are completely invariant and particulars function only as instances of universals” (366). Instead, “phronetic sense-making presupposes that particulars in their full particularity are capable of making sense in a way that universals cannot fully anticipate and that furthermore affects the way in which universals are to be actualized in that instance” (Allen 365). Thus, phronesis is neither deductive nor inductive; for in phronesis “the way in which universals are actualized, in a relatively singular context, does not require the formulation of more
comprehensive universals” (365). In phronesis, universals and particulars mutually interplay in action.

The ways in which phronesis makes sense are appropriate to its subject matter implies that “because of its practical engagement with relatively singular contexts, phronetic sense-making has to be elastic rather than rigidly fixed” (Allen 366). Elastic sense-making implies flexibility and not rigidity, for “any sort of elastic sense-making resists attempts to classify everything into one rigidly fixed, hierarchically ordered system. At the same time, however, no matter how far its resulting variations may extend, it preserves some manner of continuity that resists splitting variations off into their own isolated realms of meaning” (Allen 367-368). In other words, “phronetic sense-making does not share the ‘either/or’ assumption lurking behind objectivism and tribalism. Its practical engagement with relatively singular contexts precludes any pretense of following standards that are (or would even aim to be) completely unaffected by our contingent standpoints” (368). It always has a self-implicature. Invariably, this unique interplay between universal and particular that is extraneous from the rule driven relationship of universal and particular marks the uniqueness of phronesis.

Consequently, Allen claims that “phronesis is not simply one legitimate way of making sense, but that it is the most fundamental and inclusive way, from which all other ways of making sense derive whatever merits they may legitimately claim. If we are to give phronesis its due, we must acknowledge not only its legitimacy but also its primacy” (369). Essentially, Allen argues that phronesis is indispensable in any meaning-making or reasoning context, stating: “I find it necessary to claim such primacy for phronesis mainly because it seems that accounts of reasoning that would make phronesis either subordinate
to or completely separate from some nonphronetic way of thinking tend to presuppose the
either/or assumption behind objectivism and tribalism” (369). Thus, Allen distances
phronesis from the “either/or” approach of science while embracing a “both/and”
approach, a “unity of contraries” in Buber; identifying it as the point where his
understanding of phronesis has to part company with Aristotle’s. And this shift in the
understanding of phronesis beyond that of Aristotle by Allen entails that rather than being
solely concerned about things that can be otherwise, or that can change, phronesis is now
also relevant in the dimension of things which Aristotle claimed cannot be otherwise, that
is, the domain of science. Stated differently, Allen argues that phronesis is basic and
takes a prime position in any reasoning activity whether about things that can be
otherwise or not; hence, both those who operate from the perspective of objectivism or
tribalism utilize phronesis.

Allen claims that “there are basically two contrasting tendencies in our prevailing
conceptions of rationality that we need to avoid — “objectivism” and “tribalism” (359-
360). He writes that the “‘objectivists,’ since Plato, have held that in reasoning we should
aim for one set of standards that are so rigidly fixed as to be completely unaffected by
people’s contingent standpoints. It requires ‘a massive central core of human thinking
which has no history’” (360). This aligns with what Aristotle describes as scientific or
theoretical knowledge about things that cannot be otherwise. On the other hand, the
“‘tribalists,’ since Protagoras, have held that in reasoning we should content ourselves
with innumerable sets of standards that are so localized as to be completely subservient to
people’s contingent standpoints. The tribalist acknowledges that his justifications will
stop at some principle or alleged matter of fact that only has local credibility” (360). This
aligns to knowledge of the particular in Aristotelian context about things that can be otherwise, which is the domain of phronesis. Unlike Aristotle, Allen argues that phronesis takes primacy in both conceptions of rationality.

Other scholars have their own take on phronesis. Hence, Shaun Gallagher, observes that Jean-Francois Lyotard in his *Just Gaming*, turned to a theory of phronesis to develop his discussion of justice in the paralogical situation, stating that “under the condition of paralogy — (conflict of paradigms which cannot be resolved by a common theory) — we require a ‘sensitivity to differences’ and an ‘ability to tolerate incommensurable’” (Gallagher 299). For Lyotard, “a judge worthy of the name has no true model to guide his judgments, and that the true nature of the judge is to pronounce judgments, and therefore prescriptions, just so, without criteria. This is, after all, what Aristotle calls prudence. It consists in dispensing justice without models” (26). For Gallagher, “phronesis is a purely prescriptive judging without appeal to theoretical criteria” (299). To Jean-Loup Thebaud’s statement in the *Just Gaming* that “we do make judgments; there must be a sensus communis,” Lyotard responds: “No, we judge without criteria. We are in the position of Aristotle’s prudent individual, who makes judgments about the just and the unjust without the least criterion” (14). In phronesis “we are in dialectics. . . dialectics allows the judge to judge ‘case by case. . . precisely because each situation is singular, something that Aristotle is sensitive to’ and there are no external criteria to guide judgement” (Lyotard 27; Gallagher 299). This implies that from case to case, the mean is determined by practical wisdom.

In this sense, “when one says: in every instance, choose the mean, it means, for Aristotle, that this mean cannot be determined in itself, that is, outside of the situation in
which we find it” (Lyotard 27; Gallagher 299). Phronesis enables us to choose the mean in any circumstance/case; it is attentive to the situation. Thus, “the prescriptions one gets through phronesis are what Lyotard might call ‘dangling prescriptives’ – i.e., they are not grounded on theoretical descriptions, but are developed ‘case by case’” (Gallagher 299). Apparently, Lyotard’s notion of phronesis ties to that of Aristotle where phronesis is not a knowledge that is a priori, or a knowledge that we can possess or teach, but only comes up in the particular situation of action where no theory can guide; that is, a situation that is uncertain, probable, or can be otherwise. Such situations are prevalent in postmodernity — a moment of “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard, Postmodern Condition, xxiv). Thus, phronesis becomes essential in navigating the postmodern condition.

However, Gallagher argues that “in contrast to a clear Aristotelian distinction, Lyotard’s concept of phronesis seems to be nothing more than cleverness, given the fact that Lyotard described the prescriptives of phronesis as absolutely dangling, i.e., without any anchor” (299). Again, that Lyotard also denies “an essential Aristotelian dimension of phronesis, namely, that phronesis depends upon education or on hexis, a habit of virtue, an ethos” (299). On this basis, Gallagher argues that “although both Lyotard and Aristotle would agree that there is no theory or method which explicitly defines phronesis, and that phronesis is not a trained ability, they would disagree about the proper educational background for phronesis” (299). On the one hand, for Aristotle, “phronesis requires an education, a knowledge of particulars which comes from experience (NE 1141b7; 1142a14) — and this includes understanding (which involves learning) and good sense. . . phronesis also requires virtue; the person who wants phronesis must develop the
right habits, an ethos developed over time” (299-300). This formation of the right ethos in experience is what Gallagher calls the educational backdrop of phronesis; and it is precisely this that Lyotard denies (300). On the other hand, Gallagher notes that for Lyotard, “the person with phronesis plays a good game — a just game — quickly without preparation, and only in the immediacy of the paralogical situation” (300). In Gallagher’s view, “without the ethos, without a background of educational experience, what Lyotard calls phronesis is nothing more than what Aristotle would call cleverness” (300). Gallagher argues that Lyotard ignores Aristotle’s clear contrast between phronesis and cleverness (cf. NE 1144q25ff), as well as Aristotle’s denial that “quickness of mind” is sufficient for the excellence in deliberation which is phronesis (1142b15-16), by equating phronesis with speedy imagination, ‘the capacity to actualize the relevant data for ‘solving problem ‘here and now,’ and to organize that data into an efficient strategy’” (300). For Gallagher, in Lyotard, phronesis is simply the ability to play the game with inventiveness, to play “master strokes” (61; Gallagher 300). Similar to his analysis of Lyotard’s view of phronesis with attentiveness to paralogy, Gallagher also analyzes John Caputo’s position on phronesis with a focus on paralogy.

John Caputo writes that Gadamer developed phronesis in terms of “knowing how to apply,” hence, “phronesis is knowledge which is impoverished in the abstract . . . and acquires texture only in application, which knows the difference between the two in the concrete” (216). That is, phronesis is attentive to the concrete in application. However, for Caputo, “phronesis functions only within an existing framework, an established paradigm. It is a fundamentally conservative notion in the best sense of that word, that is, it knows how to keep something alive, to renew it in changing circumstances but always
within the compass of an established order. It requires a stable paradigm, a more or less fixed order” (217). To justify his claim that phronesis requires an established order, Caputo argues that “Aristotle conceived of the functioning of phronesis within a fundamentally stable polis, not within a period of revolutionary conflict” (217). As such, “the hermeneutic conception of phronesis presupposes an existing schema, a world already in place. It is the virtue of applying or appropriating a preexisting paradigm” (210-211). Sequel to this, when there is an anomaly or crisis in the operation of a paradigm, phronesis, for Caputo, becomes redundant or absent. Hence, to the question: “But what happens at that point where the schema is in crisis, where worlds founder, where the epochal fluctuations of which Heidegger speaks come about?” Caputo responds: “Then phronesis itself is put in crisis. For then it is not a question of having the skill to apply but of knowing what to apply” (211). Again, to underscore this point, Caputo notes that “it is just at that point [moment of crisis] that we no longer have phronesis to fall back upon and that we need a notion of rationality beyond phronesis” (211). In this, he contrasts Aristotle’s conception of phronesis as a virtue to fall back on when things are otherwise rather than when things cannot be otherwise, like a paradigm. Apparently, Caputo conceives phronesis as a skill that can be acquired by training, noting that “craft and skill and a sense of what the situation demands all founder at that point when the situation as a totality is not organized, when the horizons are skewed, when the whole trembles, when things are ruptured, decentered, disseminated. Then one enters uncharted waters, unmarked ways” (211). While for Aristotle, such are the moments when the virtue of phronesis becomes salient; in Caputo, such are the moments when phronesis fail, because he sees it as skill.
In this purview, Caputo notes that “phronesis is the virtue which enables us to apply courage, e.g., to a new situation. It is acquired slowly by practice, by imitating the moves of the prudent man” (217). Here, he concurs with Aristotle that phronesis takes time to develop. Again, mindful of his position that phronesis does not apply in a conflict situation, Caputo writes that “phronesis cannot function if there is a conflict about who the prudent man is. The young men (sic!) of the polis will not make progress in phronesis if they do not know which prudent man to follow, if there are too many prudent men” (217). In this, although Caputo seem to reduce phronesis to a skill that can be possessed in advance in order to be applied, despite arguing that phronesis is impoverished in the abstract, he, apparently, agrees with Aristotle that phronesis is not a virtue of the young because it takes time to acquire. Precisely, he writes that “phronesis is the virtue of the older men, and young men have only the beginnings of it. Phronesis is a process of deliberation and not the product of a midnight visitation, of a breakthrough to a new way of seeing things which is most likely to occur in the young and inexperienced. Phronesis does not come in a flash but is slowly nurtured through years of training” (220). As it is, Caputo’s view of phronesis weaves in and out of that of Aristotle and Gadamer.

In all, for Caputo, “if the Aristotelian polis demanded phronesis, that is, the skill to apply the agreed-upon paradigm, the modern mega-polis requires civility, which is a kind of meta-phronesis, which means the skill to cope with competing paradigms” (262). This implies that, for Caputo, when crisis that challenges an established paradigm arises, phronesis loses its place to civility, a meta-phronesis for dealing with a crisis situation. For him, civility, or meta-phronesis, prevents a process from reifying into a paradigm; and “offers no overall strategies, no total schemes or master plans, but only local
strategies for local action” (263-264). Stated differently, civility or meta-phronesis “does not speak in the name of a master plan; it speaks only of a series of contingent, ad hoc, local plans devised here and now to offset the exclusionary character of the prevailing system” (264). Remarkably, these attributes of Caputo’s civility or meta-phronesis appear akin to the attributes of Aristotle’s phronesis; hence, Gallagher has reservations on how different Caputo’s notion of civility as meta-phronesis is from Aristotle’s phronesis.

Gallagher argues that “there are three difficulties with Caputo’s rejection of phronesis as the meta-virtue required for coping with paralogical flux: first, his characterization of the paralogical situation; second, his account of phronesis; and third, his description of meta-phronesis” (302). Firstly, for Gallagher, both Lyotard and Caputo offer an overly radical description of the paralogical situation, hence their rejection of phronesis as a way out in such conditions, and the glorification of incommensurability as absolute (302). For him, this radical characterization is overplayed and tantamount to denying that no matter how paralogical a situation is, it is always a hermeneutical situation. Precisely, he states: “Beyond the first weeks of life, we are never thrown into an absolutely unfamiliar situation. There is always some basis on which to interpret that which falls outside of any paradigm, simply because we are always situated, always located at some already (and to some degree) familiar location” (302). This means that “our past, our traditions, our practical interests always condition our situation, so that whatever temporary contract or consensus we agree to, whatever new paradigm we invent, it will never be absolutely without precedent” (302). While this does not mean “that we have recourse to external standards, pre-established rules, or already fixed frameworks as ready-made solutions; it means that we do have access to experience and
existing information, that our situation has already been structured by certain internal, but now unworkable standards, now preempted rules, and frameworks which have become unfixed” (302-303). This implies that “our creation of new games is never ex nihilo, but always a creative transformation. Paralogy is a situation of uncertainty, but while we do not operate out of a position of certainty (in any Cartesian or Husserlian sense), still, we do not operate outside of a hermeneutical situation within which we find some degree of familiarity” (303). This relates to his earlier position that phronesis comes through education in experience but cannot be taught. Hence, the second difficulty arising from Caputo’s account of phronesis as a skill.

Gallagher states that “phronesis, as either Aristotle or Gadamer explains it, is not the mechanical application of preestablished rules to a ‘a world already in place.’ Phronesis is precisely the virtue that one can fall back on within a hermeneutical situation which is uncertain” (303). This implies that Caputo “mistakenly equates phronesis with a skill or craft which founders when the situation is paralogical” (211, 216; Gallagher 303). In this, Gallagher argues that although Caputo cites Gadamer’s description of phronesis as “a mode of knowledge [eidos gnoseos] that could no longer be based in any way on a final objectifiability in the sense of science. . . A knowledge within the concrete situation of experience,” (Gadamer 1976, 201-202; Caputo 109); such knowledge, which phronesis is, cannot be summarized by words like “skill” or “craft” (Gallagher 303). If phronesis is reduced to a skill, it becomes mere cleverness which both Aristotle and Gadamer argued strongly against; for it is, in fact, in those situations where no skill or craft is available in advance to lead us in action that phronesis comes to light or is relied upon. For Gallagher, despite Caputo’s recognition that education in phronesis “does not come in a flash but is
slowly nurtured through years of training” (Caputo 220), Caputo still criticized this lack of speed in phronesis by describing phronesis as conservative due to its slowness, and that it cannot keep pace with postmodern flux (Gallagher 303). To this assertion, Gallagher responds that “to speed phronesis up would be to reduce it to speedy cleverness. . . [and] if meta-phronesis needs to be fast phronesis (which Lyotard tries to get by jettisoning the educational backdrop), then Caputo would have to jettison the limitations of the hermeneutical situation; otherwise, there won’t be difference between phronesis and meta-phronesis” (303). In this, Gallagher denies Caputo’s differentiation of meta-phronesis from phronesis as untenable.

To intensify his doubt on whether civility (meta-phronesis) is actually anything more than phronesis, Gallagher cites Caputo’s claim in Prudential Insight and Moral Reasoning that phronesis is a “concrete moral insight,’ a ‘judgment as to what is to be done here and now’ in the concrete and ambiguous moral situation” (Caputo 1984, 53; Gallagher 303-304). For Caputo, “prudence is the virtue of the practical intellect, by means of which practical intelligence, having come to grips with the concrete, tries to cut into its complexity. It is by prudence that we make our way, that we seek light in the complexity and ambiguity of our existence” (55). On this basis, Gallagher argues that despite Caputo’s critique of phronesis, Caputo’s conception of meta-phronesis can only be phronesis again (304). This is because the realms that both Aristotle and Gadamer consider the domain of phronesis align with what Caputo considers a paralogical situation that requires meta-phronesis. For Gallagher, phronesis has a place within the radical hermeneutics required in the postmodern paralogical situation, for insofar as phronesis cannot be specified outside of the situation which always remains hermeneutical, and
insofar as it is “impoverished in the abstract. . . and acquires texture only in the application [and] takes meaning only in the concrete situation, phronesis does not lend itself to metanarratives” (Caputo 216, 110; Gallagher 304). Caputo’s effort to differentiate meta-phronesis from phronesis, for Gallagher, is untenable.

Gallagher stresses, like Aristotle and Gadamer, that phronesis “is not the mechanical application of pre-established rules to a world already in place. Phronesis is precisely the virtue that one can fall back on within a hermeneutical situation which is uncertain. . . [It] is neither a method nor a piece of techne” (303). In this, he points to the situation of uncertainty/probability, as the domain of phronesis. Like Aristotle, Gallagher states that “phronesis requires time both to be developed and to be applied” (Politics 1269a15-18; 303). Also, for Gallagher, “phronesis is not a super-discourse or a set of universal rules, but a sub-discourse which operates differently according to local situations. [And] if phronesis differs from one context to another, it is not something that can be speeded up by neglecting its educational backdrop or by denying the limitations imposed by the hermeneutical situation” (304). This implies that phronesis cannot be reduced to “information, rules of the game, learnable techniques, skill, proficiency, quickness of mind, or shrewd guessing” (304). While Lyotard differed from Aristotle on phronesis, and Caputo differed from Aristotle and Gadamer, Gallagher wedded Aristotle and Gadamer in his own understanding of phronesis. Some other scholars also conformed to the Aristotle and Gadamer line of phronesis.

In this connection, Robert Henle writes that “neglecting prudence and insight results in a tendency to demand fully principled justification for decisions both in ethics and in judicial decisions” (26). He makes a case for the invaluable place of insight and
prudence in human life noting that traditionally, human intellect comprises both insight (*intellectus*) and reason (*ratio*); and that “intellect without ratio is still intellect, but intellect without insight would be nothing at all” (26). Therefore, “insight is the direct apprehension of an intelligible object qua intelligible. [Where] the term ‘direct’ excludes any reasoning process or any process that determines a knowledge conclusion. [And] since there cannot be a more basic activity of intellect as such, insight is the primary activity of the intellect” (26). Having positioned insight as the basic activity of the intellect, Henle emphasizes, on the one hand, that “insight is the intellectual component of prudence whether legal or ethical” (27). On the other hand, that “prudence is an acquired skill of making correct insightful decisions in individual concrete cases” (28). To intensify that prudence is attentive to individual concrete cases, he writes that “we all have some prudence; we have varying aptitudes for developing prudential skills. Mature prudence requires not only skill but experience and learning” (28-29). Here, although he tends to equate prudence with skill, he states that “prudence cannot be taught as can Geometry or Metaphysics. It can be developed by reflection on other prudential decisions and on human experience” (29). Henle maintains an Aristotelian understanding of prudence (*phronesis*) in terms of relevance in uncertain situations, in ethical and judicial decisions, its attentiveness to individual concrete cases, that it can be learned or acquired via experience, and that it cannot be taught. He makes a salient point about prudence (*phronesis*) that “in complex individual cases, insight is limited and generally cannot claim absolute certitude” (29). Thus, unlike scientific knowledge, prudence (*phronesis*) does not claim certitude since it deals with things that can be otherwise.
Ronald Arnett states that “Aristotle’s notion of phronesis, when tied to practical intelligence, has four major components. First, phronesis involves deliberation about the problem at hand and the ‘good’ toward which one should strive in a unique situation. Second, phronesis requires a knowledge of universal (general theories) that provide a stance or position from which a situation can be viewed. Third, phronesis assumes a willingness to modify a universal or theory to meet the demands of the particular situation. And finally, phronesis necessitates putting a decision that involves the above three steps into action” (Arnett, *Practical Philosophy*, 210). Undergirding this interpretation is his view that “the Aristotelian perspective is situational and contextual, attentive to the polis of Athens. Aristotle stressed a golden mean that requires discernment of an answer that resides between two extremes, deficiency and excess. . . only in the actual situation within the polis is it possible to discern the correct action at a particular time” (Arnett and Holba 162). In this purview, Arnett and Holba cite MacIntyre that “the practical wisdom of phronesis works within a ‘normative’ set of options set within the polis” (164). While it has been quite contentious whether phronesis is guided or unguided in its operation in the different interpretations of Aristotle’s concept of phronesis, Arnett and Holba note that unlike in Plato, for Aristotle, the Greek engagement with ethics existed in the interplay of the polis and contextual decision making, attentive to options that reside in neither excess nor deficiency (164). For them, phronesis operates within the norm of the particular polis. They also note that “practical wisdom [phronesis] is an alternative to moral formalism played out in the notion of the universal and in institutions. . . Practical wisdom requires us to meet existence with our actions offering a testimony that provides one side of justice, while the rules and norms
of institutions hold up the other side” (Arnett and Holba 96). In concert with Aristotle, they view phronesis as action oriented.

Janie M. Harden Fritz states that “phronesis, or practical wisdom, is a virtue that connects or coordinates the application of virtue with respect to the good, directing particular virtues towards given goods. Phronesis is a general regulative ideal, identifying guidelines for enactment of virtue in particular setting, and is developed through continued practice and feedback from the task itself and from others” (27). Fritz’s view of phronesis, apparently, aligns her with that of Aristotle. She sees phronesis as a general regulative ideal for other virtues; that is, “phronesis is the intellectual virtue needed to exercise virtues of character in a particular circumstance, which permits practical intelligence to be applied in that instance” (Fritz 35). Highlighting the interplay between intellectual virtue and virtues of character, Fritz writes that “intellectual virtues are learned through instruction; virtues of character are learned through their habitual exercise. To exercise practical intelligence requires the presence of virtues of character. Virtues of character keep practical wisdom from degenerating into simply a means to any end rather than to ends that are genuinely good” (35). This implies that it takes a person who possesses virtues of character to practice phronesis or practical wisdom; for “character provides a framework to understand the good for human beings and guides practical intelligence, which then turns a natural disposition into a virtue” (Fritz 35).

Phronesis, as such, needs other virtues to be evident, or rather shines out through other virtues. For Lenore Langsdorf, “phronesis as a mode of reasoning focuses on process rather than product; on human doing and deeds that intrinsically develop in our doing”
Like these scholars, there are other scholars who have made valuable contributions in the interpretation of phronesis, its mode of operation as well as its application.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter visualizes the concept of phronesis as a pragmatic tool in the enactment of the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication. It privileges the Aristotelian view of phronesis on the grounds that every other understanding of phronesis seems to weave in and out of that of Aristotle who in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “divides the intellectual virtues into the practical and theoretical on the basis of whether they are concerned with what can, or what cannot, be otherwise” (Arnaud and LeBon 6). These authors note that “theoretical wisdom aims at truth, and is concerned with knowledge of first principles. . . of what is necessary and eternal. These are things that cannot be otherwise than they are; practical wisdom, or phronesis, is also aimed at truth, but truth in the service of action. It is concerned with what can be otherwise, with things that change” (6). Remarkably, Arnaud and LeBon emphasize that “what Aristotle seems to be concerned with, in his analysis of practical wisdom, is things that change and are related to how humans live their lives among other humans” (6). Thus, the good of human flourishing or human existence is the domain of concern of phronesis, a domain laden with uncertainties and probabilities.

Since the idea of good or bad, right or wrong in human life belongs to the realm of ethics and morality, “Aristotle claims that only the person who is morally virtuous will be able to be practically wise, because only the morally virtuous person will perceive what really matters in the situation and be motivated to carry out the appropriate action” (Arnaud and LeBon 6). For Ronald Beiner, “to be virtuous is to know what is required in
a particular moral situation, and to act consistently on that knowledge” (72). Virtue, for Aristotle is “(a) a state that decides, (b) [consisting] in a mean, (c) the mean relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency” (NE 1107a). Fritz defines virtues as “those characteristics that help one accomplish a role. Virtues in this sense are action-based” (33). This orientation of virtues in action undergirds Aristotle’s conception of phronesis.

Arnaud and LeBon state: “Because practical wisdom is in the service of action, about things that change, and because human beings have to choose some actions rather than others, they need to be able to deliberate well about what actions are needed to bring about what is rightly desired” (6). Thus, “someone who is both morally virtuous and has practical wisdom will perceive and deliberate well, and hence, choose well” (6). In the same vein, Fritz reminds us that “the application and exercise of the virtues moves beyond technique, or mere application of a rule, into a capacity for judgment. Exercising judgment is different from following rules” (34). This highlights the nature of deliberation that phronesis engages in; it is not guided by a rule as theoretical virtue often is. Since human life is often prone to conditions or situations that defy theoretical ideal, scholars, like Allen, argue for the primacy of phronesis in human life, a kind of master virtue or “regulative ideal” (Fritz 27) among other intellectual virtues of scientific knowledge, craft knowledge, intelligence, understanding, wisdom, and comprehension, to which Aristotle paired and distinguished phronesis.

Beiner states that though “each of these qualities or virtues grasps ultimate particulars and, in this way, each contributes to phronesis” (74); however, each also
differs from phronesis on the basis that phronesis is criterionless, neither inductive nor
deductive. Thus, Allen states that “phronesis is not concerned with universals and
particulars as they are usually understood in formal logic, where universals are
completely invariant and particulars function only as instances of universals” (366).
Instead, “phronetic sense-making presupposes that particulars in their full particularity
are capable of making sense in a way that universals cannot fully anticipate and that
furthermore affects the way in which universals are to be actualized in that instance”
(Allen 366). Again, in phronesis, “the way in which universals are actualized, in a
relatively singular context, does not require the formulation of more comprehensive
universals” (Allen 366). Phronesis is not the application of a general principle to a
particular situation, in line with Gadamer’s view that “for the application of rules there
exists in turn no rule” (Reason in the Age of Science 49; Allen 366). This implies, for
Allen, that in phronesis:

> We are dealing, then, with malleable universals and informative particulars,
> which are capable of mutual influence. These are what jointly constitute a
> context’s relative singularity, and their somewhat unpredictable interaction
> guarantees that phronetic sense-making will always prove a bit unsettling,
> especially to those who expect reasoning to fix everything in its proper place. And
> it will prove doubly unsettling to the extent that relatively singular contexts are
> thereby often relatively transient, requiring that good sense be made of them
> before the opportunities to do so pass us by (366).

This reiterates the point that phronesis is neither deductive nor inductive, it is without
criterion; little wonder it is a virtue to fall back on in complex contexts or situations
where no theory or criteria exists; and its meaning or action is tentative and tied to a moment, rather than permanent. In corroboration, Caputo asserts that “the complexity of the contexts in which human actions occur is not reducible to rule, not formalizable, and that is why moral principles are general schemes, not logical universals” (52). Human life in its everydayness is replete with these complex situations which Lyotard refers to as paralogy.

To stress the prevalence of paralogy in human life, Caputo writes that “human experience is profoundly complex. . . [for] indeed, we all too often, encounter cases which are not covered by a fixed norm. The practical intellect finds itself in a new situation, where it cannot fall back upon an explicit rule which covers the current case” (54). Also, “our experience keeps getting modified, and we keep getting thrown into new situations which the canonized formulae of the ethics books do not anticipate. That is because of the historicality of our nature, which keeps changing the scenery on us and requiring renewed moral insight of us” (54). Despite this, Caputo offers hope that “this is not an irrational state of affairs in which we are forced to act capriciously. On the contrary, it is an example of our moral rationality at its best, in its finest hour. For in this case, practical reason is thrown back on its own resources and must summon up all its powers of insight to make sense of the situation at hand” (54). In other words, a time of uncertainty, incommensurability, or criterionless moment is the moment for phronesis.

And, to concretely engage the complexity of human existence in the everyday life through phronesis, is the right way to be Dasein, to live authentic life, according to Heidegger, who sees phronesis as “resoluteness” which entails choosing to avoid “Being-surrendered to the way in which things have been prevalently interpreted by ‘the they’”
(Heidegger 345; Zickmund 412). In this light, MacIntyre states that “there are bound to be occasions on which no formular is available in advance; it is on such occasions that we have to act *kata ton orthon logon* (according to right reason)” (152); and this right reason is phronesis (practical wisdom).

Given the worth of phronesis, Aristotle, in his *Politics*, designates it as an invaluable virtue of a leader stating that “practical wisdom is the only virtue proper to a ruler, since no other virtues seem necessarily to be common to subjects and rulers” (Aquinas 192). This is so, apparently, since a ruler has to make judgments in situations where no law is available in advance; and such situations fill the human condition in everyday life. Such situations announce the role of phronesis in the praxis of leadership in man’s everyday life, for, according to David Hoy, “phronesis (practical wisdom) combines the generality of reflection on principles with the particularity of perception into a given situation” (58). In this way, Hoy makes the connection between Gadamer’s concept of application and phronesis stating that they are similar since “it [application] too does not mean applying something to something, as a craftsman applies his mental conception to the physical material, but is rather a question of perceiving what is at stake in a given situation” (58). Hoy also likens Gadamer’s concept of understanding to phronesis because “it is a matter not only of reflection but also of perception and experience” (59). In this, Bernstein affirms that “understanding according to Gadamer, is a form of phronesis” (xv). That is, for Gadamer, understanding is not a matter of certainty or objectivity but ever attentive to the historical moment; always particular and not universal, temporal and not permanent.
Significantly, Gadamer grounded his philosophical hermeneutics on Aristotle’s practical philosophy, especially on the concept of phronesis. Caputo articulates the connection between Aristotle, Heidegger and Gadamer in terms of phronesis by stating that “Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle goes to the heart of the Gadamerian hermeneutics, providing it with its pivotal conception of ‘application.’ Phronesis is the paradigm after which the hermeneutic act is patterned” (Radical Hermeneutics 110). For Caputo, “the ‘truth’ of moral and hermeneutic knowledge eludes ‘method.’ Hermeneutic knowledge, like moral knowledge, becomes more perfect in application. . . in application, understanding becomes what it is, just as in Being and Time, understanding (verstehen) becomes more perfect in interpretation” (110). In this way, Caputo connects Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics to Aristotle’s phronesis. To make this connection more obvious, we turn to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Literature Review of Philosophical Hermeneutics

3.1 From Hermeneutics to Philosophical Hermeneutics

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication*, hermeneutics is “the art or technique of interpretation. Most broadly, the interpretation of human behavior and the social world” (184-185). It defines interpretation as “the process of explaining or clarifying the subjective or intersubjective meaning, significance, and/or relevance of something (i.e., signs or texts); interpretation is the primary focus of hermeneutics and deconstruction” (222). From this perspective, hermeneutics is viewed as a technique or method of interpretation. However, Richard Palmer writes that “hermeneutics achieves its most authentic dimensions when it moves away from being a conglomeration of devices and techniques for text explication and attempts to see the hermeneutical problem within the horizon of a general account of interpretation itself” (8). This marks a transition from hermeneutics as merely a tool or technique of interpretation to hermeneutics as a way of unveiling or making meaning known or coming to an understanding of meaning. Palmer refers to the deciphering process, or understanding the meaning of a work, as the focus of hermeneutics (7-8); with work seen as meaningful only in relation to man. Given that meaning is always in relation to man, Palmer notes that “interpretation is, perhaps, the most basic act of human thinking; indeed, existing itself may be said to be a constant process of interpretation” (8-9). In this sense, interpretation is a form of understanding, since meaning is in relation to man. Palmer defines hermeneutics as “the study of understanding” (8); where understanding becomes the key in hermeneutics.
Garry P. Radford corroborates that in hermeneutics, “we must think of a science where explanation is based, not on prediction and control, but on interpretation; not on accounting for the variance of phenomena with respect to other phenomena, but on what those phenomena mean to the people who observe them” (no. 4). This reiterates the fact that hermeneutics is concerned about human understanding, or meaning in relation to man, instead of interpretation for the sake of interpretation. For Shotter, as cited by Radford, hermeneutics is “the theory of human understanding in its interpretative aspect. In particular, a hermeneutic is a set of practices or recommendations for revealing an intelligible meaning in an otherwise unclear text or text-analogue” (Shotter 268; Radford no. 3). Hermeneutics as a way of making the unintelligible intelligible coincides with Palmer’s tracing of the etymological origin of the word hermeneutics to “the Greek verb hermeneuein, — ‘to interpret,’ and the noun hermeneia, ‘interpretation’ . . . [and to] the Greek god ‘Hermes’ identified with ‘the function of transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp’” (12-13). For Palmer, “the various forms of the word suggest the process of bringing a thing or situation from unintelligibility to understanding” (13). Restated, Palmer notes that “traced back to their earliest known root words in Greek, the origins of the modern words ‘hermeneutics’ and ‘hermeneutical’ suggest the process of ‘bringing to understanding’ (13). Thus, bringing to human understanding is the central goal of hermeneutics, not interpretation for the sake of interpretation.

For Palmer, the etymological import of hermeneutics as “bringing to understanding” could suggest three different activities which converge in interpretation, and they are “(1) to say, (2) to explain, and (3) to translate” (13). Palmer notes, the
“Hermes process’ is at work in these three activities — expression, explanation, and translation — for in all three cases, something foreign, strange, separated in time, space, or experience is made familiar, present, comprehensible; something requiring representation, explanation, or translation is somehow ‘brought to understanding’ — is interpreted” (14). However, given the nuances in the activities that constitute interpretation, this act of bringing to understanding has been differently conceived by scholars, especially in terms of how it is accomplished. It is in grappling with the nuances in the scholarly positions on this act of bringing to understanding that we locate the movement from hermeneutics to philosophical hermeneutics. In this movement, Palmer identifies six different hermeneutic approaches as “biblical, philological, scientific, geisteswissenschaftliche, existential, and cultural emphases” (33). For Palmer, “each of these definitions is more than an historical stage; each points to an important ‘moment’ or approach to the problems of interpretation. . . . Each represents essentially a standpoint from which hermeneutics is viewed; each brings to light different but legitimate sides of the act of interpretation, especially text interpretation” (33-34). These approaches constitute important moments in moving from hermeneutics to philosophical hermeneutics which started with biblical interpretation.

**Biblical Interpretation**

The transition from hermeneutics to philosophical hermeneutics, as visualized by this project, started from biblical interpretation. Palmer writes that “the oldest and probably still the most widespread understanding of the word hermeneutics refers to the principles of biblical interpretation. . . . the rules for proper exegesis of Scripture” (34). In affirmation, Radford notes that for Deetz (1977), “hermeneutics received its first
systematic formulation in proper biblical interpretation: the interpretation of the word of God as it was expressed through the bible. The hermeneutic interpretation of the bible was to take precedence over alternative or arbitrary readings” (no. 8). Mindful of “social and historical differences and change, and that different people would interpret the bible in different ways depending on their background, the hermeneutic rendered the true meaning of the text, written in another time and place, intelligible to the people of a different time and place” (Radford no. 8). Biblical interpretation brings to understanding the meaning of the Word of God in the Bible to people in every historical time.

Radford considers this as the foundation of the hermeneutic problem, for according to Ricoeur (1974), “the very work of interpretation reveals a profound intention, that of overcoming distance and cultural differences and of matching the reader to a text which has become foreign, thereby incorporating its meaning into the present comprehension a man is able to have of himself” (4; Radford no. 9). The hermeneutic problem is the fact that since “texts need to be interpreted with respect to a historical and social time and place, how can the ‘true’ meaning of the text be expressed in these new conditions?” (Radford no. 10). This can be problematic since there are many ways of unveiling the meaning of a text; hence, “we have to consider what are the criteria by which one interpretation is considered more valid, fair, or reasonable than another?” (no. 11). Scholars differ on the criteria for valuing one interpretation over another, hence, the movement from hermeneutics to philosophical hermeneutics.

Palmer notes that the development of rationalism and the advent of classical philology in the eighteenth century gave rise to “the historical-critical method in theology” as the criteria of biblical interpretation (38). The historical-critical method is
geared towards making the Bible meaningful to an enlightened mind; however, this method rendered Biblical interpretation synonymous with those of other books. This implies that in Biblical interpretation, as well as in the interpretation of other books, “what was needed, was a developed historical understanding which could grasp the spirit (Geist) behind the work and translate it into terms acceptable to enlightened reason” (Palmer 39). The need to appeal to enlightened reason connects Biblical hermeneutics to classical philology — the secular theory of interpretation. Like Biblical interpretation, other scholars, including Schleiermacher, relied on the work of philologists — like Friedrich Ast and Friedrich August Wolf — to conceive different hermeneutical methods. Among the scholars who developed different ways of bringing works or texts to understanding, this project will focus on Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer, as the representative scholars in the movement from hermeneutics to philosophical hermeneutics. Palmer articulates this movement, evident in the work of these scholars of interest:

There is the tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, whose adherents look to hermeneutics as a general body of methodological principles which underlie interpretation. And there are the followers of Heidegger, who see hermeneutics as a philosophical exploration of the character and requisite conditions for all understanding… Gadamer, following Heidegger, orients his thinking to the more philosophical question of what understanding itself is (46).

We now turn to a more elaborate explication of this movement via the work of these scholars.
Friedrich Schleiermacher

According to Palmer, “Schleiermacher has the distinction of having reconceived hermeneutics as a ‘science’ or ‘art’ of understanding. . . whose principles can serve as the foundation for all kinds of text interpretation” (40). Gadamer notes that Schleiermacher defines hermeneutics as “the art of avoiding misunderstanding. . . misunderstanding suggested to us by distance in time, change in linguistic usages, or in the meanings of words and modes of thinking” (1976, 7). For Gadamer “Schleiermacher is wholly concerned to reproduce in the understanding the original purpose of a work” (Gadamer 1975, 148). For Schleiermacher, the original purpose of a work that eliminates misunderstanding is attained through a historical reconstruction of the circumstance in which the text was written; for “historical knowledge opens the way towards replacing back the circumstances of the situation and restores it ‘as it was’” (Gadamer 1975, 148). For Schleiermacher, this process yields an exact/original or objective meaning of a text.

Gadamer views Schleiermacher’s idea of hermeneutics to be “as foolish as all restitution and restoration of past life. . . [for] the reconstruction of the original circumstances, like all restoration, is a pointless undertaking in view of the historicity of our being. What is reconstructed, a life brought back from the lost past, is not the original” (1975, 149). For Gadamer, as historical beings, we cannot escape our historical situatedness to get to an original meaning of a work. Therefore, a “hermeneutics that regarded understanding as the reconstruction of the original would be no more than the recovery of a dead meaning” (149). In other words, “the search for those circumstances which would add to the significance of works of art cannot succeed in reproducing them. . . To place them in their historical context does not give one a living relationship with
them but rather one of mere imaginative representation” (1975, 149). For Gadamer, the original meaning of a text may not be meaningful to the interpreter living in a different historical moment from the text since meaning is wedded to the historical moment.

Given Schleiermacher’s emphasis on hermeneutics as recovering the intention of the author, Gadamer designates Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics as a “psychological (technical) interpretation. . . a divinatory process, a placing of oneself within the mind of the author, an apprehension of the inner origin of the composition of a work, a recreation of the creative act” (1975, 164). Palmer defines psychologizing as “the effort to go behind the utterance to its author’s intentions and mental processes” (95). This implies that Schleiermacher sought to make hermeneutics scientific by attempting to formulate a method of interpretation that is attuned to the author’s intention. For Georgia Warnke, “Schleiermacher significantly expanded the scope of hermeneutic questions. The problem, as he saw it, was. . . how meaning could be comprehended, what the methods were that would permit an objective understanding of texts and utterances of any kind” (2). She reiterates that Schleiermacher was attentive to the original meaning of a text. Dilthey follows Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics “to bring out what he took to be both the distinctive subject matter and the method of Geisteswissenschaften, especially ‘historical reason’” (Bernstein 30). Let us now turn to Dilthey’s view.

Wilhelm Dilthey

Warnke notes that in following Schleiermacher, Dilthey asked broader questions: “What were the methods that would permit an objective reading of symbolic structures of any kind, including actions, social practices, norms and values? How could the understanding of meaning be raised to the same level of methodological clarity that
characterized the natural sciences? How could it find as solid a basis for methodological progress?” (2). Dilthey sought to find a method for the human sciences that will make them yield an objective or certain knowledge like the natural sciences do. Palmer notes that Dilthey “saw in hermeneutics the core discipline which could serve as the foundation for all the Geisteswissenschaften (i.e., all disciplines focused on understanding man’s art, actions, and writings)” (41). For Dilthey, as cited by Palmer, “to interpret a great expression of human life, whether it be a law, literary work, or sacred scripture, calls for an act of historical understanding, an operation fundamentally distinct from the quantifying, scientific grasp of the natural world; for in this act of historical understanding, what is called into play is a personal knowledge of what being human means” (41). For Palmer, Dilthey aims “to develop methods of gaining ‘objectively valid’ interpretations of ‘expressions of inner life’” (98). Dilthey was against using the method of natural sciences in human sciences.

Gadamer notes, for Dilthey, “we only understand historically because we are ourselves historical beings” (Gadamer, 1975, 203). Similarly, Radford notes that “Dilthey argued that the historian cannot be apart from the history he purports to be describing. One cannot treat history as an autonomous object because the historian himself is part of that history. Indeed, the historian creates it. . . there can be no true account of what really happened” (no. 15). Every hermeneutic account is tainted by the situatedness of the historian. Thus, “Dilthey conceives the investigation of the historical past as a deciphering and not as an historical experience” (Gadamer, 1975, 213). We always understand the past within our own history and not as a lived experience for we cannot experience the past. Dilthey’s hermeneutics valorizes experience and discredits realism as
unrealizable in practice for “all knowledge is historically bound. It cannot exist independent of its historical conditions. Even the assumption of an ahistorical world with ahistorical knowledge is an historical construction. Thus, science, like history and biblical exegesis before it, is a hermeneutic operation” (Radford no. 21). In sum, Dilthey continued Schleiermacher’s quest to discover ‘objectively valid knowledge’ and assumed that the task of hermeneutics is discovering the laws and principles of understanding (Palmer 94; Langbiir and Mancino 88). Kuan- Hsing Chen writes that “Dilthey wants to preserve the prestige of historical knowledge by retaining the criterion of scientific discourse objectivity. In order to derive the objective meaning of the text, the interpreter, in Dilthey’s terms has to ‘relive’ the author’s lived experience through psychological reconstruction” (189). Dilthey’s emphasis on historicality, temporality and self-understanding became central to Heidegger’s hermeneutics.

**Martin Heidegger**

Heidegger took a phenomenological approach to the study of man’s everyday being-in-the-world (ontology). Palmer notes that Heidegger, in grappling with his ontological problem, turned to the phenomenological method of his mentor, Edmund Husserl. For Radford, “Husserl’s phenomenology is a philosophy and method that arose as a critique to the assumptions and practices of realism” (no. 23). Realism is “the belief that things (including social phenomena) have a reality that is independent of their being perceived by someone” (Corman 25). Realists believe that things exist outside there before being discovered or not by science; that is, ‘to be’ is more than ‘to be perceived’” (Outhwaite 19). Radford writes that the task of phenomenology “was to go beyond the preconceptions that science brings to the objects they study in order to get to the objects
themselves. For Husserl, the ‘object’ is not located in space and time in an objective and autonomous world outside of a detached observer who can then come to know it, but rather as an object as it is experienced in consciousness” (no. 23). For Radford, Husserl virtually turned Outhwaite’s view of realism — “to be” is more than “to be perceived” into “to be perceived is more than to be” or “to be perceived is to be.”

In this context, Radford writes that “there is a difference between ‘introspection,’ i.e., the conscious reflection on what we are experiencing, and ‘inner perception,’ which is the direct awareness of our own conscious experience prior to that conscious reflection” (no. 23). In Husserl, according to Radford, “this pre-reflective experience is connected with the discovery of a universality, or an essence. The pre-reflective is that moment of immediate experience wherein the universal is grasped, and the object made meaningful” (no. 23). Therefore, “the objective of phenomenology is to bracket all the preconceptions we hold about a given object and to analyze it as it appears in experience at the pre-reflective level” (no. 23). For Radford, “this pre-reflective knowledge, our experience of the object in its pure form before the categorization of language and the taken for granted knowledge we hold about the world, is the object of study for phenomenology” (no. 24). It is this phenomenological method that Heidegger utilized in his ontology or study of being.

In Heidegger, “hermeneutics refers neither to the science or rules of text interpretation nor to a methodology for the Geisteswissenschaften, but to his phenomenological explication of human existing itself” (Palmer 41-42). Heidegger’s antiscientific bias separates his phenomenology from that of Husserl. Palmer calls Heidegger’s phenomenology a “hermeneutic phenomenology” (Palmer 125). For
Heidegger, according to Palmer, “hermeneutics is that fundamental announcing function through which Dasein makes known to himself the nature of being. . . an ontology of understanding and interpretation” (Palmer 130); and “phenomenology means letting things become manifest as what they are, without forcing our own categories on them. It means a reversal of direction from that one is accustomed to: it is not we who point to things; rather, things show themselves to us” (Palmer 128). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a way of grasping being as it discloses or shows itself to be understood or seen.

For Heidegger, hermeneutics as “a theory of understanding is . . . a theory of ontological disclosure. . . a fundamental theory of how understanding emerges in human existence” (Palmer 137). Here, hermeneutics is not about rules or science or method of interpretation, it is about how we come to understand or how we perceive the self-disclosure or revelation of being. Heidegger notes that “‘understanding’ and ‘interpretation’ are foundational modes of man’s being” (Palmer 42); for “we are ‘thrown’ into the world as beings who understand and interpret – so if we are to understand what it is to be human beings, we must seek to understand understanding itself, in its rich, full, and complex dimensions” (113). In Heidegger’s view, understanding and interpretation are natural capacities of man, they are ontological to man. Hermeneutics, for Heidegger, seeks to understand understanding itself; it is a way of knowing how understanding happens. Heidegger, unlike Husserl, considers history as significant in hermeneutics. Radford writes that “whereas Husserl attempted to locate pre-reflective experience in transcendental structures of conscious experience, Heidegger returned to Dilthey’s conception of historicality” (no. 27). For Heidegger, “the structures which underly and make possible understanding are historically bound, and the
phenomenologist who is trying to unravel so-called universal essences is also bound by those same historical conditions. Thus, the phenomenologist is in the same paradox as the ‘historical being trying to understand history historically’’ (no. 27). This implies that it is impossible to suspend all presuppositions in the description of essences because we cannot escape the prejudice of our situatedness as historical beings. Man cannot escape his historicality.

Conscious of man’s historicality, Heidegger makes the move from a transcendental to an existential phenomenology, i.e., “a phenomenology in which the structures of pre-reflective experience are historically situated rather than universal” (Radford no. 28). For Deetz, “in an existential phenomenology, one’s historical and linguistic prejudices, rather than being suspended, become resources for understanding since they are part of the very existence to be understood” (59). It is this reconceptualized view of phenomenology in Heidegger’s hermeneutic that Gadamer expanded in his philosophical hermeneutics, developing hermeneutics into a “distinctly philosophical discussion of the nature of understanding itself as opposed to the explication of procedures for eliciting understanding” (Radford no. 35). In consonance, for Langsdorf, “beginning with Aristotle in the Rhetoric and On Interpretation, and continuing until Heidegger’s ontological turn and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s antimethodical conception of understanding, hermeneutic focused on method – and in particular, on how to uncover a multiplicity of meanings within a written text and how to narrow down the multiplicity when we cannot interrogate the text’s author(s)” (2003, 178). This implies that “Gadamer wishes to go beyond both Realism and hermeneutics as methods for understanding to try and get at the nature of understanding itself” (Radford no. 35). Having delineated the
movement from hermeneutic to philosophical hermeneutics, we now turn directly to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics.

3.2 Gadamer on Philosophical Hermeneutics

In his *Lectures on Philosophical Hermeneutics*, while arguing for the universality of the hermeneutical problem, Gadamer states: “I hope to show that hermeneutics does not simply serve as a methodology for humanities — a theory of interpretation for the field of human knowledge based on language and interpretation. Rather, it is, in a deeper sense, a basic universal of our very existence and experience” (1982, 2). Like Heidegger, Gadamer views hermeneutics as a basic human attitude or mode of being available to every human person; but when we see it as a method, it denies its universal character and makes it a special attitude for professionals or experts. For Gadamer, it is the developments in the field of natural sciences and technology in the 19th century that repressed the claim to the universal validity of the hermeneutical approach; so, he sought to restore hermeneutics to its universal appeal knowing that the problem is the apparent positioning of the scientific ideal of method and objectivity as central in every human endeavor. Gadamer states, “when we cease to pursue the ideal of method and objectivity, we admit of introspection, personal experiences (‘Erlebnis’) as the foundation of human insights” (1982, 5). The ideal of method ignores human experience or self-implicature. For Gadamer, if we let go of method and pay attention to personal experiences, we realize that “it is a universal of our world experience that is at stake when we speak of hermeneutics” (1982, 5). Against the danger of understanding his emphasis on introspection and human experience in terms of relativism; he writes, “when we take seriously the fact that we are finite beings, embedded in the ongoing course of events –
then tradition is in a certain sense always preceding our own self-awareness and self-
interpretation. . . language too, the whole articulation of our openness to the world, is
more or less determined by the preceding generations and their experiences” (1982, 6).
This implies that we are always already immersed in tradition and language, we do not
create them; that is, we are always already in communion or community of those who
live the tradition that we live and speak the language we speak. In Heidegger’s terms, we
are thrown into tradition and language. Thus, there is no private tradition or language.

Gadamer notes, “the ideal of method, which was the universal claim of the
modern era and the natural sciences, and which attempted to eliminate prejudice, any
preoccupation, any predetermination of experience from the standpoint of the observer,
was totally inadequate in meeting the demand to ground human experience and humanity
as such” (1982, 6). Restated, “the ideal of method presupposes full self-control and the
elimination of all the conditions of the observer” (1982, 6). The ideal of method ignores
human lived experience of the observer or self-implicature. Matthew Crawford notes that
“suppressing the environment is dangerous because features of the environment that
normally should be controlling action are ignored” (20). Human experience and condition
cannot be entirely objectifiable or reified, for man interpretively makes meaning of his
world, and man’s world is not just about routine, for disjunctions and disruptions abound
in man’s everyday life. Gadamer locates the ground of interpretation and meaning on the
life-situation, on the interplay between us and the text. He regards hermeneutics as “a
universal approach to reality [in which] every scientific form of method and
objectivization is subordinated to the demands rooted in (lived) reality or tradition, in
cultural tradition, the forms of life, etc.” (1982, 8). Human lived experience, life-situation
or condition is not entirely a fact for scientific method or procedure. Gadamer posits, “the task of philosophical hermeneutics is ontological rather than methodological. It seeks to throw light on the fundamental conditions that underlie the phenomenon of understanding in all its modes, scientific and nonscientific alike, and that constitute understanding as an event over which the interpreting subject does not ultimately preside” (1976, xi).

Philosophical hermeneutics views understanding as ontology not method.

This resonates with Gadamer’s view in *Truth and Method* that “the understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science but is obviously part of the total human experience of the world. The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all” (1975 xi). Thus, “the phenomenon of understanding not only pervades all human relations to the world. It also has an independent validity within science and resists any attempt to change it into a method of science” (1975, xi-xii). This stance against method pervaded Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*, in which he states: “The following investigation starts with the resistance within modern science against the universal claim of scientific method. It is concerned to seek that experience of truth that transcends the sphere of the control of scientific method wherever it is to be found, and to inquire into its legitimacy” (1975, xii). For Gadamer, human lived reality is beyond merely a scientific interpretation. Gadamer clearly states: “My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing” (1975, xvi). Gadamer asks a philosophic question: “How is understanding possible? This is a question which precedes any action of understanding on the part of subjectivity, including the methodical activity of the understanding sciences and their norms and rules” (1975, xviii). To understand how understanding
happens is for Gadamer the focus of hermeneutics. Warnke notes, “for Gadamer, hermeneutics no longer seeks to formulate a set of interpretive rules; rather, in referring to his analysis as ‘philosophical hermeneutics’ Gadamer turns to an account of understanding in general, conditions that in his view undermine faith in the ideas of both method and objectivity” (3). To understand the event of understanding, Gadamer discusses his philosophical hermeneutics with concepts like interpretation, application, language, hermeneutic circle, fusion of horizons, tradition, prejudice, historicality, art. We now turn to these concepts.

### 3.2.1 Understanding as Interpretation and as Application

According to Gadamer, hermeneutics comprised “*subtilitas intelligendi* (understanding), *subtilitas explicandi* (interpretation) and *subtilitas applicandi* (application)” (1975, 274). The act of understanding involves these three elements—understanding, interpretation, and application; and “all three are called *subtilitas*, i.e., they are not considered so much methods that we have at our disposal as a talent that requires particular finesse of mind” (1975, 274). Gadamer writes that “interpretation is not an occasional additional act subsequent to understanding, but rather, understanding is always an interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding” (1975, 274). David Hoy explains that Gadamer’s insistent repetition that “all understanding includes interpretation follows from the necessary situatedness of understanding” (51). Understanding always occurs as a contextual interpretation. Hoy notes that “because understanding is rooted in a situation, it represents a point of view, a perspective, on what it represents. There is no absolute, aperspectival standpoint from which to see all possible perspectives” (52). There is no one right or absolute
interpretation or understanding. For David Weberman, “the object of understanding is indeterminate (or under-determined); it is constituted in part by the horizon of the specific historically situated knower and changes according to what that horizon is. . . this means there is no single, enduring correct or objective understanding of it” (52-54).

Understanding or interpretation is always in flux due to the historicality of the knower. Matthew McWhorter states, “(a) interpretation seeks the goal of understanding any phenomenon to be interpreted, (b) interpretation involves an ongoing dialogue that requires openness and receptivity, (c) an interpreter must grow in self-awareness of presuppositions that affect the process of interpretation, and (d) the act of understanding can be described as the mutual integration of the interpreter and the phenomenon being interpreted” (187). Interpretation varies as interpreters or contexts vary; there cannot be an absolute, objective or universal interpretation.

To stress understanding as interpretation and application, Gadamer posits, “understanding always involves something like the application of the text to be understood to the present situation of the interpreter” (1975, 274). For Gadamer, “we consider application to be as integral a part of the hermeneutical act as are understanding and interpretation” (1975, 274-275). Vasile Cătălin Bobb writes that “application allows us to understand that in the case of understanding there is no distinction between ‘subtilias intelligendi, subtilias explicandi and subtilitas applicandi’, that ‘understanding always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter’s present situation’” (195). For Bobb, “in understanding as in moral action, application is co-original and not something added afterword, i.e., the application occurs instantly, without being called or required. . . Therefore, application is not ‘applying something
from the outside and after the fact that originally exists in itself” (196-197). Application is simultaneous with understanding. For Bobb, “application is something that always happens in the act of any understanding or interpretation. . . each time we understand (or we are trying to understand) something we apply. . . application is co-original with explication and understanding (197). Every understanding or interpretation is always already an application of meaning to a particular human situation.

Gadamer highlights the role of history in hermeneutics as significant for the conception of application as understanding; for “understanding, as it occurs in the human sciences, [is] essentially historical, i.e., that in them a text is understood only if it is understood in a different way every time” (1975, 275-276). Conscious that situations or contexts change, every text has to be understood in the light of the concrete situation of the interpreter which involves a kind of adaptation of the meaning to the current situation, and this is application. Warnke affirms that “hermeneutic understanding is situated and contextual” (95); thus, it is always an application. For Bobb, “application justifies the historicity of understanding” (198). Hoy notes, “the importance Gadamer attaches to the applicatio is thus a function of his central principle that understanding is grounded in and constituted by a concrete, temporal-historical situation” (54). He also warns that “it would be a mistake, to misconstrue Gadamer’s point as implying that the interpreter merely reads his own meanings into the text or that he only understands the text’s meaning to him (not in itself)” (54). Against this danger, Arnett and Holba highlight the significance of “respect” in Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics (89).

For Arnett and Holba, “Gadamer insisted that one must meet the object under study with serious respect in order to ‘avoid opportunism’ of subjective imposition of
meaning upon a text. His work represents a pragmatic honoring of the traditions from which both the interpreter and text under study reside” (89). They assert that “philosophical hermeneutics offers a philosophical picture of knowledge advanced through respect” (85). To stress the role of respect in Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, Arnett and Holba state: “First, the interpreter must respect the ideas and positions that shape his or her interpretive identity; positions and standpoints give rise to a particular perspective on what is discovered or understood. Second, respect must guide engagement with the text under consideration, which has a life of its own; we cannot make something say what we demand” (85). In Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, respect shields one from the danger of imposing one’s meaning on a text or colonizing a text. For Gadamer, the text speaks to the interpreter without the interpreter imposing his own meaning on the text.

Escalating the role of history in the conception of application as understanding, Gadamer notes, “our thesis is that historical hermeneutics also has a task of application to perform, because it too serves the validity of meaning, in that it explicitly and consciously bridges the gap in time that separates the interpreter from the text and overcomes the alienation of meaning that the text has undergone” (1975, 278). Application makes a text meaningful in the interpreter’s historical situation. Gadamer links application to Aristotle’s concept of phronesis. For Gadamer, in relating “Aristotle’s description of the ethical phenomenon and especially the virtue of moral knowledge to our own investigation. . . We, too, determined that application is neither subsequent nor a merely occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding, but co-determines it as a whole from the beginning” (1975, 289). As phronesis is not the
application of a universal to a particular, “here too, application was not the relating of some pre-given universal to the particular situation. . . Rather, the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal thing, the text; i.e., to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text” (1975, 289). Bobb notes, “application is derived from phronesis because application is a central part of the process of understanding” (194). In terms of the relation of Gadamer’s application to Aristotle’s *phronesis*, Warnke states that “both ethical knowledge and hermeneutic understanding, then, involve application and this means that they are themselves affected by varying situations and concerns” (96). As historical situations/contexts change, understanding, interpretation or application changes since understanding is contextual.

Hoy clarifies that “the *applicatio* that Gadamer insists is involved in understanding is not the same kind of application involved in traditional epistemology. The question is not one of applying concepts or theories to a practical situation or a series of observations” (54). Gadamer’s view of “application” is neither deductive nor inductive as in science but phronetic. In *phronesis*, “we do not simply adopt the views of our object or the tradition; rather, the way we understand their truth already involves application to our situation and hence modification in line with our circumstances” (Warnke 96). For Gadamer, application as understanding is something that is always already taking place due to our historicality; it is not strictly a conscious act, or a scientific activity. In the unity of understanding, interpretation and application, context is central, as Gadamer states that “in order to understand [a text], he must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation, if he wants to understand at all” (1975, 289). Therefore, “understanding always involves the application
of the meaning understood” (1975 297). To summarize, in Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, understanding, interpretation and application comprise the event of understanding. The event of understanding takes place in language, it is historical and is dialogical (Brook 412). We now turn to this linguisticality and dialogic nature of understanding.

3.2.2 Linguisticality and Dialogic Nature of Understanding

According to Paul Regan, “in suggesting understanding was interpretation and vice versa, Gadamer identifies language acting as the medium for understanding and a means of sharing the complexities of human experience” (286). Joanna Brooks affirms that “language is central to Gadamer’s theory of philosophical hermeneutics, where he conceives of it as a medium of living and being. To him, there is no understanding (or being) outside of language or outside of one’s linguistically understood historical experience” (421). Stated simply, understanding is linguistic. For Brooks, “human existence, to Gadamer (1989), is performed in the linguistic collaboration of engaging in purposeful activities together with others. Language, then, is not a system of symbols to reflect the world; it takes its meaning and form in the human acts of utterances” (421). Given that “Gadamer acknowledges that what comes into language is compelled by what has been said before in tradition” (421), Brooks writes that “an utterance is a combination of history and individual interpretation and action” (422). An utterance (language) is always dialogical and not personal. Gadamer asserts that “language is more than the consciousness of the speaker; so, it, too, is more than a subjective attitude” (1975, xxiv). Language is not a private activity, it always involves more than one person; for there to be a speaker, there is a listener.
In this light, Gadamer considers “I-lessness” among the essential features of language; whereby “whoever speaks a language that no one else understands does not speak. To speak means to speak to someone. To that extent, speaking does not belong in the sphere of the ‘I’ but in the sphere of the ‘We’. . . It has long been observed that the actuality of speaking consists in the dialogue. (1976, 65). As a dialogue, “language is the middle ground in which understanding and agreement concerning the object takes place between two people” (1975, 345-346). That understanding is linguistic, and language is dialogical, implies that “understanding is always a form of dialogue” (Hoy 63). In dialogue, “the participants cannot try simply to out-argue or outwit each other; neither can they try to reduce the views of others to the conditions of their genesis” (Warnke 100); hence, “the successful conclusion of a dialogue thus reflects a shared understanding and one that, moreover, reflects a transformation of the initial positions of all the discussion partners” (Warnke 110). Something new emerges from the between of the parties in dialogue. Warnke notes that “Gadamer argues that the same kind of shared understanding and transformation also marks the successful conclusion of the hermeneutic dialogue with aspects of one’s own or another tradition” (101). In a dialogue, meaning or understanding emerges from the between of the traditions in conversation. For Gadamer, hermeneutic understanding as a dialogical engagement takes place in language; for “being that can be understood is language. . . [and] that which can be understood is language. This means that it is of such a nature that of itself it offers itself to be understood” (975, 432). The linguisticality of understanding means that understanding is a linguistic event.
Gadamer clarifies, “Being that can be understood is language” implies that “the mirror of language is reflecting everything that is” (1976, 32); and whatever is not linguistic, cannot be understood. This points to “universality” as another essential feature of language. For Gadamer, “language is not a delimited realm of the speakable, over against which other realms that are unspeakable might stand. Rather, language is all encompassing” (67). Thus, “there is nothing that is fundamentally excluded from being said, to the extent that our act of meaning intends it. Our capacity for saying keeps pace untiringly with the universality of reason” (1976, 67). Language, in its universality comprises the verbal and nonverbal. The universality of language tallies with the universality of understanding, whereby nothing is beyond being understood. Bernstein notes that “understanding is universal in several senses. It is not just one activity which is to be distinguished from other human activities, but underlies all human activities” (144-145). For Bernstein, understanding “is universal in the sense that nothing is in principle beyond understanding, even though we never exhaust the ‘things themselves’ through understanding. The universality of understanding can also be approached through the ‘linguistic turn’ of Gadamer’s philosophic hermeneutics” (145). This reiterates that the universality of understanding is tied to the universality of language.

Given the linguisticality of understanding, Gadamer writes that “the linguistic process by means of which a conversation in two different languages is made possible through translation is especially informative. Here, the translator must translate the meaning to be understood into the context in which the other speaker lives. This does not, of course, mean that he is at liberty to falsify the meaning of what the other person says” (1975, 346). In translating from one language to another, while the translator has to say
what the other person can understand in his own context rather than the original context of the work, the translator must also respect what the text says and not impose his own meaning on the text. In translation, for Gadamer, “the meaning must be preserved, but since it must be understood within a new linguistic world, it must be expressed within it in a new way. Thus, every translation is at the same time an interpretation” (1975, 346); and every interpretation is understanding. For Palmer, “when a text is in the reader’s own language, the clash between the world of the text and that of its reader may escape notice. [But] when the text is in a foreign language, however, the contrast in perspectives and horizons can no longer be ignored” (26-27). In such moments, “like the god Hermes, the translator mediates between one world and another” (Palmer 27). Mediating between two worlds — that of the text and that of the interpreter— is at the heart of hermeneutics; and it is a form of dialogue. For Warnke, “in equating successful hermeneutic understanding with dialogic consensus, then, Gadamer means merely to depict the kind of mediation between past and present or between the alien and familiar that is part of any sincere attempt to understand” (103). Translation is an essential hermeneutic event of understanding, and it is linguistic and involves mediation.

Gadamer highlights that “where a translation is necessary, the gap between the spirit of the original word and that of their reproduction must be accepted. It is a gap that can never be completely closed” (1975, 346). The inability to entirely close this gap is due to the historicality of understanding or meaning. Gadamer notes that “the hermeneutical problem is not one of the correct mastery of language, but of the proper understanding of that which takes place through the medium of language” (1975, 347). This implies, for Hoy, that “in hermeneutic experience, what is being analyzed is the act

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of communication, and the participants exist in a world of previously shared meanings; that is to say, they share a language” (62). Translation is a way of putting the idea of a text in the language that both participants share or can understand; it is an interpretation. Weberman corroborates that “understanding requires translatability, and translatability requires a shared background of meaningfulness (or in Gadamer’s language: pre-judgments and tradition)” (50). This shared background of translatability is essentially linguistic. While “language is the universal medium in which understanding itself is realized; the mode of realization of understanding is interpretation” (Gadamer 1975, 350). Restated, “all understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of language which would allow the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter’s own language” (1975, 350). Every translation reflects the translator’s/interpreter’s historical world for one cannot escape his situatedness in history.

Gadamer posits that “it is a genuine historical life situation that takes place in the medium of language and that, also in the case of the interpretation of texts, we can call a conversation. The linguistic quality of understanding is the concretion of effective-historical consciousness (1975, 351). Effective history is “the operative force of the tradition over those that belong to it, so that even in rejecting or reacting to it they remain conditioned by it” (Warnke 79). Bernstein notes that “the task of effective historical consciousness is to bring to explicit awareness this historical affinity or belongingness” (42). No one can escape or transcend his effective history (tradition). While affirming that “language is the medium of all understanding and all tradition,” Bernstein explains that “language is not to be understood as an instrument or tool that we use; rather, it is the medium in which we live. Like play itself, which reaches presentation (Darstellung)
through the players, so language itself reaches presentation through those who speak and write” (145). This means, for Hoy, that “to have a language is to be in a world. . . [for] a language or a linguistic outlook is already a world outlook” (64). Every language is a particular view of the world or way of understanding the world.

In corroboration, Stewart and Zediker (2000), according to Brooks, hold that “language constitutes cultures. . . that how people use language results in their being particular types of humans, and that how societies use language together produces and maintains particular types of social worlds” (420). This means that “language does not simply represent what is ‘out there’ in the world, but language itself is constituted in the moment of meaningful practice as ‘articulate praxis’” (420). Language comes into play in its praxis as a way of life; it is related to tradition — “the ongoing conversation that we enter into when we are born and it includes the linguistic frameworks, conventions, and presuppositions through which we come to understand the world” (Brooks 422). Language as culture relates to tradition, and since no one chooses his/her tradition because we are born into it, no one as well chooses his language either. Accordingly, Gadamer states, “the relation between language and understanding is seen primarily in the fact that it is the nature of tradition to exist in the medium of language, so that the preferred object of interpretation is a linguistic one” (1975, 351). Tradition is linguistic as understanding or interpretation is linguistic, for whatever can be understood is linguistic. As language, tradition can be either oral or written.

Gadamer writes that “linguistic [oral] tradition is tradition in the literal sense of the word, i.e., something handed down. It is not just something that has been left over, to be investigated and interpreted as a remnant of the past. . . but given to us, told us” (1975,
However, “the full hermeneutical significance of the fact that tradition is linguistic in nature is clearly revealed when the tradition is a written one. In writing, language is detached from its full realization. In the form of writing all tradition is simultaneous with any present time” (1975, 351). It is the written, more than the oral tradition, that requires a hermeneutical engagement. Thus, Bernstein notes that “Gadamer has warned us against reifying tradition and taking it as something simply given. . . tradition is not a seamless whole. There are conflicting traditions making conflicting claims of truth upon us – for example, a tradition of Enlightenment thinking, as well as the older tradition of practical philosophy” (153). Written tradition as text always speaks to the present.

A text always makes meaning in the present rather than merely conveying a meaning of the past. Gadamer notes that “a written tradition is not a fragment of a past world, but has always raised itself beyond this into the sphere of the meaning of that which it expresses” (352). Hence, “it is not this document, as coming from the past, that is the bearer of tradition, but the continuity of memory. Through memory tradition becomes part of our own world, and so what it communicates can be directly expressed” (1975, 352). For Regan, “the text is re-awakened by the interpreter making sense of what has been written” (292). It is not just something handed down to be taken as it is. For Gadamer, “written texts present the real hermeneutical task. Writing involves self-alienation. Its overcoming, the reading of the text is, thus, the highest task of understanding” (1975, 352). A text speaks for itself and, for Gadamer, does not depend on its author for its meaning; a text speaks to its reader in the reader’s context. The self-alienation in writing is akin to self-forgetfulness, which Gadamer considers among the three essential features of language; that is, “the more language is a living operation, the
less we are aware of it. Thus, it follows from the self-forgetfulness of language that its real being consists in what is said in it” (1976, 65). It is what is said in language that carries on the memory, and not the language itself. Stated differently, meaning is in what is said in language and not in language itself. Therefore, “to understand it does not mean primarily to reason one’s way back into the past, but to have a present involvement in what is said. It is not really about relationship between persons, between the reader and the author (who is perhaps quite unknown), but about sharing in the communication that the text gives us” (1975, 353). This implies that “what is fixed in writing has raised itself publicly into a sphere of meaning in which everyone who can read has an equal share” (1975, 353). Writing boosts the universality of language, as it is open to all who can read.

Hoy elaborates on this view stating, “the meaning of the text is in one sense the meaning given by the interpreter, since the text poses a question to him in his particular historical situation, and he approaches the text with given expectations. But in a larger sense, it can be said that the projection is a function of the text itself, for the interpreter can test his expectations against the text” (67). Text as a written tradition speaks to every one of its readers in the context of the reader’s historical situation; for we always understand within our own circumstance and linguistic tradition. Gadamer continues that “in order to be able to express the meaning of a text in its objective content, we must translate it into our own language. . . [and this] involves relating it to the whole complex of possible meanings in which we linguistically move” (1975, 357). Warnke notes that “hermeneutics involves mediation, or in other words, a capacity to see the significance of a truth-claim for our own situation” (104). Thus, “in a sense the text does speak; that is, it shows a meaning that claims our attention by addressing us in a manner relevant to our
concern with our particular situation” (Hoy 67); hence, “the interpretive word is the word of the interpreter and is not the language and lexicon of the interpreted text” (Hoy 64). Given man’s historicality, the meaning of a text is always attentive to the historical context of its reader. Thus, Gadamer states, “to try to eliminate one’s own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible, but manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to use one’s own preconceptions so that the meaning of the text can really be made to speak for us” (1975, 358). Meaning is tentative; that is, “meaning is temporal and fleeting. . . [it] cannot be objectified, reified, or possessed” (Arnett and Holba 8); it changes as the context or the hermeneutical situation of the interpreter changes. There is no absolute meaning or interpretation; and meaning is not private since it is linguistic.

Mindful of relativism in terms of subjectivism in interpretation, Gadamer notes, “being bound by a situation does not mean that the claim to correctness that every interpretation must make is dissolved into the subjective or the occasional. . . thanks to the linguistic nature of all interpretation, every interpretation includes the possibility of a relationship with others” (1975, 359). Restated, that “the claim to truth of every interpretation is not in the least relativized is seen from the fact that all interpretation is essentially linguistic” (1975, 359). Given that language is dialogic, an interpretation cannot be relativized to the interpreter, but to the community that owns the language used in the interpretation. As man is born into language, “the linguistic formulation is so much part of the interpreter’s mind that he never becomes aware of it as an object” (1975, 364); since “we are always already at home in language, just as much as we are in the world” (1976, 63). The interpreter is always already in the language of his/her tradition.
Gadamer notes that although understanding and interpretation are linguistic, they are also abstract activities that take place in reason; and although reason too is linguistic, for “we can only think in a language” (1976, 62), it transcends every language. For Gadamer, “understanding and interpretation are related to the linguistic tradition in a specific way. . . they transcend this relationship not only because all the creations of human culture, including the nonlinguistic ones, seek to be understood in this way, but more fundamentally inasmuch as everything that is intelligible must be accessible to understanding and interpretation” (1975, 365). For anything to be intelligible — that is, to be understood or interpreted — it has to be linguistic or expressed in language. Like understanding, Gadamer also notes that language is abstract, and neither of them (language or understanding) can be “grasped simply as a fact that can be empirically investigated. Neither is ever simply an object but comprises everything that can ever be an object” (1975, 365). Taking solely a scientific approach to language, as if it cannot be otherwise, is to undermine the power of language. Gadamer argues against reducing a word to a denotative meaning stating that “the terminological use of a word is an act of violence against language” (1975, 375). The insistence that words cannot be reduced to a denotative meaning as if they are mere objects for empirical investigation, signals his interest in the role of experience in language.

Gadamer states that “it is a general truth that the imperfection of man does not permit adequate knowledge a priori, and that experience is indispensable” (1975, 376). Experience is relevant to the meaning of a word for “a word is not a sign for which one reaches, nor is it a sign that one makes or gives to another, it is not an existent thing which one makes up and to which one accords the ideality of meaning in order to make
something else visible through it” (377). For Gadamer, “this is a mistake on both counts. Rather, the ideality of the meaning lies in the word itself. It is meaningful already” (1975, 377). A word suggests idea(s) in terms of its meaning, but experience helps to realize its meaning in a given context or situation. Experience panders to connotative rather than to denotative meaning of a word. The meaning of a word is not *a priori*, or a pre-given, it emerges from the context of its use; so, it cannot be merely denotative. Thus, “every word ‘comes into play’ within the definite context in which it is spoken and understood” (Gadamer 1976, 56). In Gadamer’s view, language is never fully formed to be merely scientific or static, it is dynamic, always developing and growing; and experience is key in the process of concept formation by means of which the life of language develops (1975, 388). Experience makes language and word dynamic rather than static.

Gadamer describes language as “the record of finitude, not because the structure of human language is multifarious, but because every language is constantly being formed and developed, the more it expresses its experience of the world. It is finite not because it is not at once all other languages, but simply because it is language” (1975, 415). Language is finite because it keeps developing as it encounters new experiences. Thus, in hermeneutics, “the actual event is made possible only because the word that has come down to us as tradition and to which we are to listen really encounters us and does so in such a way that it addresses us and is concerned with us” (1975, 419). Hermeneutics is always attentive to our own experience of the event, and not to the event as handed down in the form of tradition. In hermeneutics, “in as much as the tradition is newly expressed in language, something comes into being that had not existed before and that exists from now on” (1975, 419). In Gadamer, the significance of the hermeneutical
experience is that it leads to a new understanding or meaning. For Gadamer “to understand a text is to come to understand oneself in a kind of dialogue” (1976, 57) between oneself (interpreter) and the text or tradition. Warnke notes that “Gadamer’s point in equating hermeneutic understanding with dialogue is that the former is a learning experience. In attempting to understand a text or other aspect of the tradition, we both bring that object into our world, illuminate the meaning it has for us, and transform our own previous perspective” (104). One has to dialogue with the text or tradition in order for understanding, as a new meaning, to emerge.

In corroboration, Bernstein writes that “there may be different emphases and stresses by participants in a conversation, and in a living conversation there is always unpredictability and novelty” (2). This novelty is the new meaning or understanding that emerges from dialogue as conversation. Warnke highlights that “in describing understanding as form of dialogue, Gadamer is not suggesting that the successful outcome of a process of understanding favors either the initial claims of the interpreter or those of the object. . . Instead, just as in conversation, the result is a unity or agreement that goes beyond the original positions of the various participants” (104). For Warnke, “the consensus that emerges in understanding represents a new view and hence a new stage of the tradition” (104). We now turn to the role of tradition, prejudice and the hermeneutic circle in understanding.

3.2.3 The Role of Tradition, Prejudice and Hermeneutic Circle in Understanding

Gadamer considers tradition and prejudice as essential to his philosophical hermeneutics where understanding takes place in a hermeneutic circle. To emphasize the role of tradition in hermeneutics/or understanding, he relies on the linguisticality of
understanding, stating that “language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive the world” (1976, 29). In addition, he notes that “it is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to the language that speaks to us in tradition” (1975, 239). For Gadamer, “this recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust” (1975, 239). Weberman affirms that “what defines the act or event of understanding for both Heidegger and Gadamer is that it has a fore-structure, i.e., that when we understand something, we do so in a way that is shaped by a set of prior commitments to a way of life, a linguistic/conceptual scheme and specific expectations about the object of understanding” (46). The fore-structure or prejudices arise from the tradition in which one is always already situated. Tradition disposes one to see things in a particular way, and this becomes the prejudice or bias of one’s tradition. The fore-structure, for Heidegger, comprises the fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception which are the presuppositions one brings to understanding. Gadamer refers to these presuppositions as prejudices of tradition.

Regan writes that “Gadamer suggests recognizing the interpreting readers prejudice gives hermeneutics its ‘…real thrust…’ The (interpreter) working out their own presuppositions (fore-having, fore-sight, fore-conception) should be the ‘…first, last and constant task. . .’ when attempting to understand the relevant issues” (295). This stresses the relevance of prejudice and tradition in understanding. For Arnett and Holba, “Gadamer rehabilitates ‘prejudice and tradition’ against the Enlightenment’s call for neutrality and objectivity in understanding. . . [by emphasizing] historicity, situatedness, and embeddedness of perception that naturally result in prejudice or bias in the act of
interpretation” (88). For these writers, Gadamer emphasizes prejudice because “reason emanates from the perspective of prejudice of a tradition that shapes how a person thinks, what a person values, and how that person reasons” (89). Tradition shapes our worldview, and we are always already in a tradition and cannot escape its bias or prejudice.

In this direction, Gadamer states that “it is tradition that opens and delimits our historical horizon, not an opaque event of history that happens ‘in itself’” (1976, 81); and “tradition is always porous, for what is handed on [tradiert] in it” (1976, 211). Tradition keeps growing and developing as experience and historical moment change; it is ever dynamic and not static. Hence, “tradition is not simply a precondition into which we come, but we produce it ourselves, in as much as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition and hence further determine it ourselves” (1975, 261). For Regan, this implies that “to Gadamer, tradition and history are never settled or correctly interpreted but understood by the interpreter’s ever changing horizon” (298). Tradition keeps evolving or changing as historical moments or horizons change. MacIntyre notes that tradition is “the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity” (After Virtue 220). For MacIntyre, tradition includes what “I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of depts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations” (220). MacIntyre views tradition as the source of a person’s identity stating that “what I am, therefore, is in key part what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present. I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition” (221). For MacIntyre, “the story of
my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationship” (221). This amplifies Gadamer’s position that we cannot escape the prejudice or bias of our tradition; we cannot stand above it, because we are always already in it; and “to think that such a possibility is a real possibility is to fail to do justice to the realization that prejudices ‘constitute our being;’ that it literally makes no sense to think that a human being can ever be devoid of prejudices” (Bernstein 129). Prejudices as fore-structure give us access to understanding; hence, prejudices are not actually negative.

Attending to the negative view of prejudices, Gadamer writes that “historical analysis shows that it is not until the enlightenment that the concept of prejudice acquires the negative aspect we are familiar with. Actually, prejudice means a judgment that is given before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined” (1975, 239). This implies that prejudice is not a negative but a positive thing arising from our tradition as a worldview through which we see the world. Thus, “prejudice certainly does not mean a false judgment, but . . . the Enlightenment reduced prejudice to an unfounded judgment, because in enlightenment thinking, ‘it is only its having a basis, a methodological justification (and not the fact that it may be actually correct) that gives a judgment its dignity’” (Gadamer, 1975, 240). Therefore, the spirit of rationalism is responsible for “the discrediting of prejudices and the claim by scientific knowledge completely to exclude them” (1975, 240). This spirit of rationalism undergirds “the general tendency of the enlightenment not to accept any authority and to decide everything before the judgment seat of reason. It is not tradition, but reason that
constitutes the ultimate source of all authority” (1975, 241). The spirit of rationalism propels the enlightenment thinking in the mode of logical reasoning of deduction or induction, and discredits prejudice which does not necessarily operate by logical reasoning.

Bernstein points to authority and tradition as the other concepts, alongside prejudice, that Gadamer seeks to restore against their enlightenment deformation, for the Enlightenment thinkers “thought of authority as a matter of blind obedience to persons in positions of power” (129). Gadamer does not see authority as involving blind obedience for “if we ask what the sources of our prejudices are? and especially those prejudices which open us to experience, then we must turn to the past, to tradition, and to the proper authority (based on knowledge) which ‘implants’ these prejudices” (Bernstein 130). For Gadamer, “the overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the enlightenment, will prove to be itself a prejudice, the removal of which opens the way to an appropriate understanding of our finitude, which dominates not only our humanity, but also our historical consciousness” (1975, 244). It is an exercise in futility to think that we can overcome our prejudice and be free from it. This impossibility arises from the fact that tradition does not belong to us, but we belong to it; and that “history does not belong to us, but we belong to it” (1975, 245). Prejudice is an essential dimension of our understanding.

Gadamer explains that “long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. . . That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical
reality of his being” (1975, 245). This reiterates the fact that we cannot escape the prejudice of the tradition that forms us; the prejudice of our tradition is part of our identity. Thus, “it is not so much our judgment as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. . . Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us” (Gadamer 1976, 9). Prejudices arise from the traditions that formed us. For Gadamer, “we stand always within tradition, and this is no objectifying process, i.e., we do not conceive of what tradition says as something other, something alien” (1975, 250); because, what tradition says “is always part of us, a model or exemplar, a recognition of ourselves which our later historical judgment would hardly see as a kind of knowledge, but as the simplest preservation of tradition” (1975, 250). Since we are always already in tradition, we always consciously or unconsciously bear the prejudices of our tradition. Prejudices or prejudgments give us access to understanding, for “we can understand only that with which we can, in some measure, empathize and we can only empathize with that with which we share, to some extent, a common background of meaningfulness (consisting of practices, linguistic structures, concepts, beliefs, values, etc.)” (Weberman 49). Prejudices as prejudgment enable us to understand.

Weberman posits that “our historically specific precommitments are a necessary condition for having access to any understanding of an object insofar as they share with the object a background of meaningfulness that makes the object intelligible in the first place” (50). Our prejudices, consciously and unconsciously, influence how we reason/understand. Gadamer argues that “reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms, i.e., it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given
circumstances in which it operates” (1975, 245). Reason is influenced by the prejudice of the interpreter. Arnnet and Holba affirm that “reason emanates from the perspective of prejudice of a tradition that shapes how a person thinks, what a person values, and how that person reasons” (89). For Gadamer, understanding transcends both deductive or inductive reasoning and is a kind of circular movement where reason moves back and forth from the whole to the part and from the part to the whole without losing its historicity. For Gadamer, understanding happens in a hermeneutic circle which involves the hermeneutic rule that “we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole” (1975, 258). Understanding is not merely a movement from the whole to the parts or from the parts to the whole; such a movement is scientific and not hermeneutic. To be hermeneutic, the movement must be back and forth, and reflective of the interpreter’s prejudice.

Against the danger of reducing the hermeneutic movement to a scientific method or technique, Gadamer relies on Heidegger’s existential account of the hermeneutic circle in which “the understanding of the text remains permanently determined by the anticipatory movement of fore-understanding. The circle of the whole and part is not dissolved in perfect understanding but, on the contrary, is most fully realized” (1975, 261). This implies that “the circle is not formal in nature, it is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding in the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to the tradition” (1975, 261). For Heidegger, as cited by Gadamer, “the circle of understanding is not a ‘methodological’ circle, but describes an ontological
structural element in understanding” (1975, 261). Bernstein clarifies that “the reference to the ontological character of the circle indicates something basic about our very being-in-the-world— that we are essentially beings constituted by and engaged in interpretive understanding. . . On the contrary the meaning of the ‘things themselves’ can only be grasped through the circle of understanding, a circle that presupposes the fore-structures that enable us to understand” (137). Our prejudices as fore-understanding encounter the tradition of the text in a fusion of horizons within the hermeneutic circle of understanding. Gadamer notes that “the circular movement is necessary because ‘nothing that needs interpretation can be understood at once’” (1975, 169), for “hermeneutics operates wherever what is said is not immediately intelligible” (1976, 98); that is, “hermeneutics is primarily of use where making clear to others and making clear to oneself has become blocked” (1976, 92). This reiterates that hermeneutics is a way of bringing the strange, the alien, the different, the unfamiliar, the unintelligible to intelligibility or understanding. When one faces a strange, alien or unfamiliar situation, one finds one’s way via hermeneutics.

In hermeneutics, for Regan, “the interpreter needs to be aware of the hermeneutic circle, not merely to understand what the author (or research participant) meant; life experience (history) and use of language, but also asking how the words resonate with the interpreter (292). In other words, “the issue therefore is not about finding the truth the author wrote about but realizing the truth it has for the reader, how it becomes alive for the interpreter” (292). The text speaks to the reader or interpreter, and the reader’s/interpreter’s prejudices influence the meaning the text has for the interpreter via a circular movement. Through a hermeneutic circle, “the text is re-awakened by the
interpreter making sense of what has been written” (Regan 292). Stated differently, Regan writes that “the main issue therefore identifies that in order to read a text the interpreter has to have an understanding of their own expectations about what a word or phrase means in relation to the parts and the whole of meaning” (296). This attentiveness to the parts and the whole in understanding underscores the place of hermeneutic circle in understanding with the prejudices of the interpreter as pivotal.

Given the role of prejudice in understanding, Bernstein writes that “we can see why for Gadamer the process of understanding can never (ontologically) achieve finality, why it is always open and anticipatory. We are always understanding and interpreting in light of our anticipatory prejudgments and prejudices, which are themselves changing in the course of history” (139). Bernstein notes that “this is why Gadamer tells us that to understand is always to understand differently” (139). There is no one absolute understanding, and this does not imply that our interpretations are arbitrary or distortive. For Bernstein, “we should always aim (if informed by an ‘authentic hermeneutical attitude’) at a correct understanding of what the ‘things themselves’ say. But what the ‘things themselves’ say will be different in light of our changing horizons and the different questions that we learn to ask” (139). Every understanding is a prejudice and cannot claim absolute validity due to its historicality.

3.2.4 The Historicality of Understanding

According to Julia T. Wood, historicality is best understood as “a willingness to meet the demands of a particular moment” (Arnett and Arneson 1999, xiii) as a source of meaning, for meaning is tied to the historical moment or context. Arnett and Arneson highlight that “because communication is an ever-changing process, we cannot divorce
Communication as a process implies that it cannot be reified in the abstract for it keeps changing as the interplay of persons, text, and the historical moment change. For Arnett and Arneson, “persons, topic, environment, culture (social and psychological), communication medium, and a narrative background influence the communicative result” (31). Understanding is akin to this communication process that is attentive or responsive to the historical moment. For Palmer, “historicality does not mean being focused on the past, or some kind of tradition-mindedness that enslaves one to dead ideas; historicality is essentially the affirmation of the temporality of human experience. . . It means we understand the present really only in the horizon of past and future; this is not a matter of conscious effort but is built into the structure of experience itself” (111). This suggests that “experience is intrinsically temporal (and this means historical in the deepest sense of the word), and therefore understanding of experience must also be in commensurately temporal (historical) categories of thought” (Palmer 111). For Palmer, “a further consequence of historicality is that man does not escape from history, for he is what he is in and through history. The totality of man’s nature is only history” (117). The historicality of understanding is tied to the temporality of experience which conditions understanding.

Gadamer states that “the general structure of understanding acquires its concrete form in historical understanding, in that the commitments of custom and tradition and the corresponding potentialities of one’s own future become effective in understanding itself” (1975, 234). The historicality of understanding stresses that history is essential in understanding, or that understanding is historical. The historicality of understanding in
hermeneutics emanated from the thoughts of Dilthey, and was carried on by Heidegger, and eventually by Gadamer who believes that “to think historically now means to acknowledge that each period has its own right to exist, and its own perfection” (1975, 176). Understanding or meaning varies in different historical moments, and every historical moment determines how things are understood or what things mean due to its prejudices. Palmer affirms that “meaning is historical. . . not fixed and firm. . . interpretation always stands in the situation in which the interpreter himself stands” (119-120). Understanding or meaning is not fixed, permanent or objective, but always attentive to the historical moment. The historicality of understanding is Gadamer’s point of convergence and divergence from Dilthey. On one hand, Radford writes that “like Dilthey, Gadamer is concerned with the historicality of knowledge; the assertion that understanding can only be achieved with reference to the historical context in which that understanding is taking place (no. 39). On the other hand, unlike Dilthey, “for Gadamer, there can be no return to an ‘original meaning’ or a fundamental ‘being’. . . meaning is always new, because it is always a new experience that is contextualized in a constantly evolving history of experiences. There is never a true, definitive, or final interpretation of a text since new meanings can always be determined in future experiences of it” (no. 40). Historicality of understanding, for Gadamer, does not imply that there is one original meaning of a text which an interpreter must seek to unveil as Dilthey visualized it.

Radford notes that Gadamer’s historicality of understanding is one level further than that of Dilthey and Heidegger since for Gadamer, “even the means we have available for achieving understanding, the sciences, are themselves historical manifestations” (no. 41). Thus, “not only is our knowledge of any text historically bound,
so are our hermeneutic methods for interpreting it” (no. 41). Understanding and ways of reaching understanding change as historical moments change. Understanding is historical because “we find ourselves situated in a world that is not our making, and this ‘situatedness’ is fundamental to what a human being is. . . Three elements of this situatedness: our embodiment, our deeply social nature, and the fact that we live in a particular historical moment” (Crawford 26). Given our situatedness or historicality, “multiple variables influence how, why, where, and with whom we communicate” or understand a text (Arnett and Arneson 31). For Gadamer, “every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text is part of the whole of the tradition in which the age takes an objective interest and in which it seeks to understand itself” (1975, 263). Therefore, in understanding a text, “the real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and whom he originally wrote for. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always partly determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history” (1975, 263). Meaning depends on the historical moment or context of the interpreter rather than of the text or on authorial intention.

Gadamer highlights that “the hermeneutically trained mind will also include historical consciousness. It will make conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding, so that the text, as another’s meaning, can be isolated and valued on its own” (1975, 266). The prejudice governing our minds stems from our tradition, language and historical moment or situation in which we live. Hence, for Gadamer, “a person who imagines that he is free of prejudice, basing his knowledge on the objectivity of his procedures and denying that he is himself influenced by historical circumstances,
experiences the power of the prejudices that unconsciously dominate him, as a vis a tergo” (1975, 324). Regan notes that “to justify the historicity of understanding means, in the eyes of Gadamer, to build hermeneutics onto a fluid principle: history; a history which does not belong to us but we belong to it, a history which we did not found but which founds us” (198). We cannot escape the influence of our history. Historicality awakens us to our prejudices and how they influence our understanding; and guards us against merely appropriating another’s meaning or imposing one’s meaning on a text. Understanding is a fusion of horizons of the text and the interpreter, a dialogue.

3.2.5 Understanding as Fusion of Horizons

Central to the historicality of understanding is the concept of “situation,” for “Gadamer’s work returns us to an understanding of ‘embedded history,’ in that we cannot escape the prejudice of our own situatedness” (Arnett and Holba 87). Gadamer jettisons a therapeutic approach to the idea of a situation, noting that “to acquire an awareness of a situation is always a task of particular difficulty; [for] the very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task that is never entirely completed” (1975, 269). Gadamer notes that “this is true also of the hermeneutic situation, i.e., the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand” (1975, 269). As historical beings, we are always in a situation; for “the human condition is not something we can stand above; we are embedded within a given place, a given historical moment” (Arnett and Holba 87). Gadamer’s view of the concept, “situation” is significant for his account of understanding as fusion of horizons.
For Gadamer, the concept, “situation” “represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence, an essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of ‘horizon’” (1975, 269; Vessey 533). Sandra Harding, as cited in Arnett, Arneson and Bell, posits that a standpoint is “a socio-cultural action construct that shapes a context from which decisions emerge. . . a standpoint is not a perspective; it takes a science and a politics to achieve standpoint. Standpoints are socially mediated, perspectives are unmediated” (162). A standpoint is not a personal or private view or perspective, it is publicly owned by a group. Gadamer describes a horizon as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (1975, 269; Rees 2). A horizon is a standpoint. Thus, “a person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. [But], to have a horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to see beyond it. A person who has a horizon, knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, as near or far, great or small” (1975, 269). A horizon gives us a context or fore-structure for understanding. For Hoy, “the term ‘horizon’ is an attempt at describing the situatedness or context-bound character of interpretation” (96). Thus, to be situated is to have a horizon; and we are always situated and cannot escape our situatedness.

Gadamer observes that “the working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition” (1975, 269). As a way to achieve the right horizon of understanding, Gadamer writes that “it seems a legitimate hermeneutical requirement to place ourselves in the other situation in order to understand it” (1975, 270). This entails endeavoring to see as the other sees. Gadamer likens this to what happens in a conversation stating, “just
as in a conversation, when we have discovered the standpoint and horizon of the other person, his ideas become intelligible, without our necessarily having to agree with him, the person who thinks historically comes to understand the meaning of what has been handed down, without necessarily agreeing with it, or seeing himself in it” (1975, 270). To understand another does not necessarily imply agreement with the Other, although it can at times imply such an agreement. For Gadamer, “if we place ourselves in the situation of someone else, for example, then, we shall understand him, i.e., become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person, by placing ourselves in his position” (1975, 271-272). Hoy posits that “to recognize the other’s irreducible individuality, one has to respect him as one would respect oneself” (97). This implies in Levinas’s term that one has to see the Other not as an “alter ego” (another self), but as an infinite that can never be totalized. Gadamer notes that “this placing of ourselves is not the empathy of one individual for another, nor is it the application to another person of our own criteria, but it always involves the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other” (1975, 272). Stated simply, placing ourselves in the horizon of another demands an enlarged horizon.

In this framework, Gadamer highlights that “the concept of the ‘horizon’ suggests itself because it expresses the wide, superior vision that the person who is seeking to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand — not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportion” (1975, 272). This means that “the horizon of the interpreter can be expanded to include the horizon of the past. . . Within the enlarged horizon, there can be an awareness of the differences among previous horizons. There
can also be a realization that the understanding of the past is conditioned by the present” (Hoy 96-97). However, no horizon can overcome its prejudices/bias since “a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see” (Gadamer 1975, 272). Enlarged horizon does not imply a fixed, stable or closed horizon for “the historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never utterly bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon” (1975, 271). Since human life is in motion, horizon is also in motion; and “horizons change for a person who is moving” (1975, 271). Gadamer writes that “the horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence, the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past” (1975, 273). It should be noted that “the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion” (1975, 271). Thus, although, tradition of the past is the testing ground of our prejudices, it is not something fixed or static, it develops.

Since both past and present horizons are in motion, Gadamer states that “there is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves” (1975, 273); and “in a tradition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there old and new continually grow together to make something of living value, without either being explicitly distinguished from the other” (1975, 273). Fusion of horizons implies the interplay of the horizons of the text and the interpreter, so that a new
meaning may emerge. In this, McWhorter cites Ricoeur’s (2016) description of Gadamer’s fusion of horizons as involving an “intersection” and “convergence” between the interpreter and the phenomenon being interpreted (193). McWhorter notes that Odenstedt (2008) maintained that this experience of fusion is not merely the combination of viewpoints, but also involves the integration of the two perspectives into a new compound meaning (193). Hoy warns, “this fusion of horizons should not be confused with appropriating the past completely into one’s own stance nor with knowing the past as it was for itself. The fusion results in a new horizon” (96). On one hand, “fusion involves a broadening of the present horizon – as historical study is often said to dispel certain prejudices and induce tolerance” (Hoy 96). On the other hand, “it also involves a focusing of the past horizon in such a way that things which may have been mere adumbrations become definite factors in that horizon – perhaps because of subsequent occurrences – while other factors disappear – perhaps because certain events failed to take place” (Hoy 97). In fusion of horizons, understanding emerges as something new from the between of the fused horizons. Understanding as fusion of horizons is tied to the dialogical nature of language, for fusion entails a kind of dialogue. Warnke writes that “in elucidating the dialogic structure of understanding, Gadamer shows that it involves neither adopting the prejudices of one’s text or text-analogue nor imposing one’s own upon it” (107; Waddell 113). For Warnke, “understanding rather involves a transformation of the initial positions of both ‘text’ and interpreter in a ‘fusion of horizons’ or consensus over meaning that reveals new dimensions of die sache [subject-matter] and issues in a new stage of the tradition of interpretation” (107). Fusion of
horizons yields a new meaning that is neither the initial meaning of the text nor of the interpreter.

Since fusion of horizons leads to new meaning or understanding, Gadamer writes that “every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of the tension between the text and the present” (1975, 273). Thus, “the hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation but consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project an historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present” (1975, 273). Building on this, Hoy explains that “the distance between the interpreter and the text is not the distance between a subject and an object, since the text has already entered into the meaning horizon of the interpreter” (68; Garrett 395) who re-awakens the meaning of the text in making sense of what has been written. For Hoy, “insofar as the text can address the interpreter, it comes to him as something to be understood and to be brought into dialogue on a subject matter at hand” (68). In this dialogue, the meaning attained transcends that of the text or the interpreter; from this dialogue understanding emerges. Gadamer writes that “in the process of understanding there takes place a real fusing of horizons, which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously removed” (1975, 273). It does not merely appear as the horizon of the past but rather appears in a new shade attentive to the historical context of the interpreter, who is always already in it.

Bernstein notes that “if we were confronting something so alien and strange that it had nothing in common with our language and experience, no affinity whatsoever, then it would no longer be intelligible to speak of understanding” (142). If we cannot find
ourselves already on the horizon of the text or past, it cannot speak to us, it will become mute and there will be no fusion, and no understanding. This reinforces the fact that for Gadamer, “we belong to a tradition before it belongs to us: tradition, through its sedimentations, has a power which is constantly determining what we are in the process of becoming” (142). This means that “we are always already ‘thrown’ into a tradition. . . a tradition is not something ‘naturelike,’ something ‘given’ that stands over against us. It is always ‘part of us’ and works through its effective-history” (Bernstein 142). Gadamer notes that “understanding of the past, undoubtedly requires an historical horizon. But it is not the case that we acquire this horizon by placing ourselves within a historical situation. Rather, we must always already have a horizon in order to be able to place ourselves within a situation” (1975, 271). It is because we have a horizon that the horizon of the past can appear to us and be fused with our own present horizon.

Against the danger of merely taking the fusion as a way of building a new (enlarged) horizon, Hoy notes that “Gadamer himself raises the question that naturally comes to mind: why talk about a fusion of horizons and not just a building of one horizon” (97). Hoy explains that “the term ‘fusion’ is indeed misunderstood if it is believed. . . that the fusion is a reconciliation of the horizons, a flattening out of the historical and perspectival differences” (97). Hence, “although Gadamer does claim that a single horizon results, it must be remembered that a horizon is in flux and that the hermeneutic consciousness maintains a tension between the historical consciousness (of the past) and the strictly present horizon” (Hoy 97-98). For Hoy, this implies that “without such tension, understanding of the past as different from the present would indeed be impossible; it is precisely the tension that allows us to become aware of our
preunderstandings as our own” (98). This tension results from the difference or otherness or strangeness or alienness of the other’s horizon which awakens us to the consciousness of our prejudice, because it, perhaps, blocks immediate understanding; and signals the need for a hermeneutic understanding. For Bernstein, “the characteristic of anything that is ‘handed down to us’ that elicits the need for understanding is the tension between strangeness or alienness and familiarity” (141). He emphasizes that “the hermeneutical task is to find the resources in our language and experience to enable us to understand these initially alien phenomena without imposing blind or distortive prejudices on them” (141-142). This “historical gap between present and past is bridged by the relation of interpreter and text, and this relation is a phenomenon of language, of linguisticality” (Hoy 98). Fusion of horizons is a linguistic activity just as understanding is a linguistic event.

Reinforcing this notion, Hoy notes that “language is a major factor in the very continuity of the tradition connecting past and present. Yet the language does not overcome the differences; it does not completely bridge the gap, for as it brings certain features of each world or horizon to light, it conceals other features” (99). Language does not completely bridge the gap because “language is essentially entrenched in history... it is limited to particulars and can never reveal the whole as such” (Hoy 99). The tension that occurs due to the gap between the past and present is productive; it leads to new meaning as the context or historical moment changes, hence interpretation can never be final, for meaning is always temporal. Thus, “we can never exhaust the meaning of that which we seek to understand or bring understanding to a final closure” (Bernstein 144); this is evident in the interpretation of works of art, as we shall see.
3.2.6 The Place of Art in Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics

Gadamer seems to use the experience and interpretation of a work of art as the exemplar of the functionality of his philosophical hermeneutics; for he writes that “the whole universality of the hermeneutic phenomenon appears behind the experience of art” (1976, 208). He notes that “the reality of the work of art and its expressive power cannot be restricted to its original historical horizon, in which the beholder was actually the contemporary of the creator. It seems instead to belong to the experience of art that the work of art always has its own present” (1976, 95). Gadamer’s emphasis is not on the original meaning of the work of art, but on the meaning of the work in the historical situation of the beholder; for “the work of art is the expression of a truth that cannot be reduced to what its creator actually thought in it” (96). Gadamer regards the author’s mind or intention as inconsequential to the meaning of the work of art stating that “our experience and interpretation is obviously in no sense limited by the mens auctoris [author’s mind]” (1976, 209). Gadamer states that “the language of art presents indisputable evidence for the fact that self-understanding does not yield an adequate horizon of interpretation” (1976, 208). Since neither the author’s intention nor the self-understanding of the beholder/interpreter is key in the experience and understanding of the work of art, Gadamer writes that “one way of understanding a work of art is then no less legitimate than another. There is no criterion of an appropriate reaction. Not only that the artist himself does not possess one. . . Rather every encounter with the work has the rank and the justification of a new production” (1976, 85). The experience or understanding of the work of art relates to the fusion of horizons where meaning emerges from the between of the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter. While the
work of art does not dominate the interpreter to search for its original meaning in terms of reproduction, the interpreter cannot impose his meaning on the text in terms of colonization.

Gadamer notes that “while the work of art does not intend to be understood historically and offers itself instead in an absolute presence, it nevertheless does not permit just any forms of comprehension. . . it permits – indeed even requires – the application of a standard of appropriateness” (1976, 96). The standard of appropriateness is, perhaps, for Gadamer, the fusion of horizons; for “it is through the fusion of horizons that we risk and test our prejudices” (Bernstein 144). Gadamer notes that “the experience of art acknowledges that it cannot present the perfect truth of what it experiences in terms of final knowledge. Here there is no absolute progress and no final exhaustion of what lies in a work of art. The experience of art knows this of itself” (1976, 89). There is no one final or absolute interpretation of a work of art, for meaning is attentive to the historical situatedness of the interpreter. For Gadamer, although “the creator of a work of art may intend the public of his own time, but the real being of his work is what it is able to say, and this being reaches fundamentally beyond any historical confinement. In this sense, the work of art occupies a timeless present” (1976, 96). The fact of a work of art occupying a timeless present is not suggestive that it involves no task of historical understanding, or that we do not find its historical heritage within it; rather, it means that the work of art does not intend to be understood in terms of its original purpose or authorial intention, for meaning is tied to the historical moment or context of the interpreter. A work of art is understood via a fusion of horizons because “the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience changing the person
experiencing it. . . the subject of the experience of art, that which remains and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it, but the work itself” (1975, 92). Thus, the experience of a work of art always leads to a new production; for fusion of horizons leads to an enlarged horizon – a new meaning.

Aware of the timeless presence of a work of art, Gadamer notes that “artistic presentation by its nature exists for someone, even if there is no one there who listens or watches only” (1975, 99). Therefore, “the work of art is conceived as an ontological event” (1975, 134) whereby it unveils or discloses itself to anyone who cares to watch or listen. Since the work of art exists for someone, “it says something to each person as if it were said especially to him, as something present and contemporaneous” (1976, 100). Our task is “to understand the meaning of what it says and to make it clear to ourselves and others” (1976, 100); and we do this by attentiveness to what it says because “it expresses something in such a way that what is said is like a discovery, a disclosure of something previously concealed” (1976, 101). Gadamer warns that “it would be an inadmissible abstraction to contend that we must first have achieved a contemporaneousness with the author or the original reader by means of a reconstruction of his historical horizon before we could begin to grasp the meaning of what is said. A kind of anticipation of meaning guides the effort to understand from the very beginning” (1976, 101). A work of art always speaks to us in our own hermeneutical situation because we cannot escape or overcome our situatedness or stand above our situation or history, since we are always already in it; and our understanding bears the prejudice of our situation. Understanding is not tied to the author’s mind. Gadamer notes that “to be read is an essential part of the literary work, like a public reading or performance” (1975,
Since a text or literature exists to be read, it is only by reading it that literature as a function of intellectual preservation and tradition can bring its hidden history into every age, or reflect its timeless presence. Gadamer writes that “as we were able to show that the being of the work of art is play which needs to be perceived by the spectator in order to be completed, so it is universally true of texts that only in the process of understanding is the dead trace of meaning transformed back into living meaning” (1975, 146). To reveal its meaning, the horizons of the text and the interpreter or reader have to be fused. Although fusion of horizons often creates tension, Gadamer notes that “the place between strangeness and familiarity that a transmitted text [or work of art] has for us is that intermediate place between being an historically intended separate object and being part of a tradition. The true home of hermeneutics is in this intermediate area” (1975, 262-263). The “between” is the home of hermeneutics or meaning or understanding; that is, meaning is in the “between”.

Mindful of this, Gadamer emphasizes that “it follows from this intermediate position in which hermeneutics operates that its work is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place” (1976, 263). He notes, “but these conditions are not of the nature of a ‘procedure’ or a method, which the interpreter must of himself bring to bear on the text, but rather they must be given” (1976, 263). Since understanding is not a matter of procedure or method, Gadamer, in using the interpretation of a work of art as an exemplar of his philosophical hermeneutics, notes that “in comparison with all other linguistic and nonlinguistic tradition, the work of art is the absolute present for each particular present, and at the same time holds its word in readiness for every future” (1976, 104). The work of art
contains in itself a claim to truth that is normative for us and is representational. It would appear “works of art are representational in as much as they bring ‘truth’ to light and reveal the ‘essence’ of their subject-matter to an audience. If this essence is an essence for an audience, however, it is not eternally the same but is rather relative to the audience that perceives it” (Warnke 66). This resonates with Gadamer’s notion of works of art as a timeless presence, meaningful in every historical moment. Given that “the truth of works of art is a contingent one: what they reveal is dependent on the lives, circumstances and views of the audience to whom they reveal it; for Gadamer, the point of hermeneutics is precisely to destroy ‘the phantom of a truth severed from the standpoint of the knower’” (Warnke 66). Thus, the key factor of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics is that unlike the scientific method, it is reflective of the situation or experience of the interpreter.

3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter articulates Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics in terms of a movement from hermeneutics as a scientific theory or method of interpretation that yields objective or fixed knowledge or meaning, to an unscientific activity that is not driven by a method but is geared towards understanding the event of understanding itself. The scholars considered in this movement were Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer starting from the biblical interpretation or hermeneutics. While Biblical interpretation, in the 18th century due to Enlightenment and rationalism, emphasized the historical-critical method; Schleiermacher emphasized psychological interpretation attentive to the authorial intention; Dilthey emphasized historical interpretation where the human sciences can yield objective knowledge like natural sciences; Heidegger emphasized an ontological interpretation where understanding is part of the mode of our
being; and Gadamer emphasized philosophical hermeneutics where understanding is an event that happens dialogically in a fusion of horizons within a hermeneutic circle.

Gadamer argues that hermeneutics as a scientific method undermines the notion of understanding as an event; hence, he denies that hermeneutics is a method that can lead to an objective knowledge valid for all times. In this sense, Bernstein writes that “Gadamer, who barely discusses natural science, argues that the modern obsession with method has distorted and concealed the ontological character of understanding” (xi). As such, “hermeneutics, for Gadamer, is no longer restricted to the problem of method in the Geisteswissenschaften; it moves to the very center of philosophy and is given an ontological turn; understanding, for Gadamer, is a primordial mode of our being in the world” (Beinstein 34). Hermeneutics takes into account the existential situation or context of the interpreter; for “the genuine reality of the hermeneutical process seems to me to encompass the self-understanding of the interpreter as well as what is interpreted. . Through every dialogue something different comes to be” (Gadamer 1976, 58).

Hermeneutics does not yield the same meaning to every interpreter, for meaning is always attentive to the situation or context of the interpreter; little wonder new meaning always emerges from a hermeneutic encounter. Since man (interpreter) is a historical being affected by history, understanding as such is historical; hence, the historicality of understanding, which accounts for the temporality and situatedness/embeddedness of meaning or understanding.

It is significant that, for Gadamer, not every understanding is hermeneutic. Understanding is considered hermeneutic when it has to do with bringing something strange, alien, unfamiliar, or unintelligible, to intelligibility or familiarity. This implies
that what is familiar does not elicit a hermeneutic understanding because it does not awaken us to the consciousness of our prejudice, it merely elicits appropriation or agreement or acquiescence. Gadamer, perhaps, came to this idea from his etymological analysis of the word “hermeneutics” as “the art of conveying what is said in a foreign language to the understanding of another person, hermeneutics is not without reason named after Hermes, the interpreter of the divine message to mankind” (1976, 98). A foreign language that we do not know strikes us as strange; so, it requires a hermeneutic to make sense of it, just like the divine message is usually strange needing interpretation. This signals that language is significant in hermeneutics, for “if we recall the origin of the name hermeneutics, it becomes clear that we are dealing here with a language event, with a translation from one language to another, and therefore with the relation of two languages” (1976, 98-99). Hermeneutics is a language event, it takes place through the medium of language; hence, the linguisticality of understanding. Since language is not private but always involves more than one person, understanding as a linguistic activity is also dialogical. It is this dialogical nature of understanding that undergirds Gadamer’s concept of fusion of horizons, which is a mediation between the horizons of the text and the interpreter leading to an enlarged horizon or new meaning different from the original meaning of neither the text nor the interpreter.

Hoy states that “fusion of horizons is Gadamer’s alternative to a psychologistic account of historical understanding” (96). Similarly, for Warnke, by fusion of horizons, Gadamer means “the integration of one’s understanding of a text or historical event with its relevance to one’s own circumstances in such a way that an ‘original’ or ‘intended’ meaning cannot be differentiated from the meaning of the text or event for oneself” (69).
For Warnke, “this fusion is part of all hermeneutic understanding, on Gadamer’s view, it separates hermeneutic forms of knowledge from what he considers non-hermeneutic forms such as the natural sciences” (69). Thus, “hermeneutic sciences have no object that is independent of themselves. The meaning an object has it has as a fusion of the interpreter’s perspective and the object” (69). This means that “understanding does not involve re-experiencing an original understanding but rather the capacity to listen to a work of art and allow it to speak to one in one’s present circumstances” (Warnke 69). It is always a new meaning that emerges in hermeneutic understanding. This is significant for Gadamer’s response to his critic, E. D. Hirsch, who argued that Gadamer violates the principle of determinacy of meaning by overlooking “a crucial distinction between understanding the meaning of a text [that which the author meant by his particular linguistic symbols and is therefore always the same] and understanding its significance” (Warnke 67). Hermeneutics, for Gadamer, is not attentive to the author’s intention. For Warnke, “it is important to note that Gadamer’s position does not merely overlook a distinction between understanding meaning and understanding significance; it denies one. On his view, we understand the meaning of a text, work of art or historical event only in relation to our own situation and therefore in the light of our own concerns” (68). In other words, “we understand it only in light of its significance” (68). Concisely, “understanding of a work of art involves participation in its meaning” (69); that is, a fusion of horizons. In terms of horizon, Gadamer considers it a kind of standpoint, noting that every standpoint has its own bias or prejudice; thus, announcing the significance of prejudice in understanding.
Gadamer argues that every understanding involves prejudice since every understanding is situated or embedded in the situation of the interpreter. He rehabilitates the relevance of prejudice in understanding against its negative treatment by the Enlightenment. Thus, taking prejudice as a ‘pre-judgment or a judgment made before all the evidence has been adequately assessed,’ Gadamer notes that “to assume that all prejudices are illegitimate and misleading, as the Enlightenment does, is simply a ‘prejudice against prejudice’” (Warnke 76). This is because “interpretive projections of meaning are rooted in the situation of the interpreter. . . there is no neutral vantage point from which to survey the ‘real’ meaning of a text or object; even a scientific approach to an object places it within a certain context and takes a certain attitude towards it” (Warnke 77). This implies that no understanding is objective as the Enlightenment would have us believe, because every understanding is tainted by the prejudice of the situation of the interpreter, or the prejudice of his historicality; and “there is no knowledge without preconceptions and prejudices. The task is not to remove all such preconceptions, but to test them critically in the course of inquiry” (Bernstein 128). For Gadamer, prejudgments and prejudices have a threefold temporal character: “they are handed down to us through tradition; they are constitutive of what we are now (and are in the process of becoming); and they are anticipatory – are always open to future testing and transformation” (Bernstein 140-141). We cannot escape from prejudices, they are part of our identity.

Given the presence of prejudices in understanding, “it makes no sense to speak of the single or the correct interpretation. We recognize that there can be a variety of interpretations, and we can even discriminate distinctive interpretations” (Bernstein 124-125). For Bernstein, “it is in and through the encounter with works of art, texts, and more
generally what is handed down to us through tradition that we discover which of our
prejudices are blind and which are enabling” (128). Emphatically, Gadamer notes that
“this recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudices gives the
hermeneutical problem its real thrust” (Bernstein 127). Hermeneutics, then, is geared
towards discriminating among the prejudices or interpretations by testing, that is, pitting
against tradition or the strange in a kind of fusion of horizons which involves a dialogue.
For Gadamer, “it is only through the dialogical encounter with what is at once alien to us,
makes a claim upon us, and has an affinity with what we are that we can open ourselves
to risking and testing our prejudices” (Bernstein 128-129). Again, due to the relevance of
prejudice in understanding or interpretation, Gadamer explains the hermeneutic circle of
understanding as not just the mere movement from the whole to the part or from the part
to the whole, which obviously is a scientific method of deduction and induction; rather,
he emphasizes the role of the interpreter in this process or movement. In hermeneutics,
the interpreter knows about the whole and the part in the search for meaning in a
hermeneutic circle. For John Arthos, “the form of relation to the world that emerges out
of this circularity is what Gadamer calls hermeneutic experience” (63). In hermeneutic
experience, understanding emerges as we participate in the meaning of the text or object
before us in a fusion of horizons.

That our prejudices enable us make projections or prejudgments in understanding
is because the meaning of the text or object has to be attentive to our situatedness which
becomes a form of application of the meaning to our context or situation. Gadamer
explains application as understanding and invariably as interpretation, for he argues that
understanding, interpretation and application are not three different moments or “three
independent activities to be relegated to three different subdisciplines but rather are internally related. They are all moments of the single process of understanding” (Bernstein 45). Bernstein notes that “this integration of the moment of application into understanding brings us to the truly distinctive feature of philosophic hermeneutics” (145), which is practical rather than theoretical. To amplify the practical import of application in philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer turns to Aristotle’s practical philosophy, especially to *phronesis*, virtue of practical action. Gerald Bruns stresses that “phronesis involves responsiveness to what particular situations call for in the way of action, where knowing how to act cannot be determined in advance by an appeal to rules, principles, or general theories” (34). Catalin Bobb corroborates that “what phronesis does is that it enables one to hit the adequate thing to do in a certain situation” (33). Phronesis yields a fitting response to a situation given that “Aristotle’s disciplinary concern governs not what is ‘fixed and invariable’ but rather what is suited to the circumstances of each occasion” (Arthos 49). For Arthos, “Gadamer’s signature claim that historical texts are always to be understood in a new and different way rests on a shift of emphasis from the fixity of the text qua text (that which is inscribed) to the meaning of the text” (50). Arthos adds that “meaning is dependent on the particular situations to which it must be applied, which are precisely those concrete situations in which the interpreter, the judge, and the thinker find themselves” (51). Application is always attentive to the particular situation or context rather than to the universal; its focus is praxis.

In sum, Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics seeks to return us to the realm of the practical, where our being and our experience, our concrete situation as human persons, our prejudices, our tradition, are relevant in understanding; rather than being
dominated by reliance on technology or science, which often ignores our concrete existential situation. James Risser states that “we should understand Gadamer’s hermeneutics not so much as a theory of a technique, but as a practice that requires moral wisdom [phronesis]” (110; Bobb 192). For Gadamer, the fact that it is not all problems that science can attend to, especially those that deal with concrete human lived experience, returns us to the realm of praxis — the realm of probable or uncertainty, where issues can be otherwise — which has been deformed by science. This praxis, the core of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics, is the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 4

Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication Praxis

This chapter centers on praxis and will comprise an exploration of the different or related concepts that culminate or come into play in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. It will involve an analysis and exposition of the connections between rhetoric and hermeneutics, praxis, communicative praxis, phronesis, philosophical hermeneutics, rhetoric and philosophy, philosophy and philosophy of communication. The goal is to put in a clear perspective what goes on in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

4.1 Rhetoric and Hermeneutics

The relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics has been a significant one in communication studies, especially when we think of communication as a lived experience. In this framework, in thinking of the ways of living or enacting the experience of communication, we might think of rhetoric and hermeneutics as the practical tools for transacting the event of communication. While communication is both verbal and nonverbal, we may also think of communication as a speech act and an interpretive act. Here, we think of rhetoric as a speech act, and of hermeneutics as an interpretive act; and both of them converge in the act of communication. In this sense, Gadamer, in *Reason in the Age of Science*, states that in hermeneutics, “the relationship of hermeneutics with rhetoric stands in the foreground” (1981, 118). In other words, hermeneutics and rhetoric share an intrinsic relationship; where “the ability to speak has the same breadth and universality as the ability to understand and interpret. One can talk about everything, and everything one says has to be able to be understood” (1981, 119).
To stress this relationship, Gadamer states that “hermeneutics may be precisely defined as the art of bringing what is said or written to speech again. What kind of an art this is, then, we can learn from rhetoric” (119). Invariably, hermeneutics implies rhetoric and vice versa.

Similarly, one might glean a basic connection between rhetoric and hermeneutics in Palmer’s analysis of the etymological meaning of hermeneutics from the perspective of its verb form “hermeneuein” in three basic directions of meaning: “(1) to express aloud in words, that is, “to say”; (2) to explain as in explaining a situation; and (3) to translate, as in the translation of a foreign tongue” (13). For Palmer, “all three meanings may be expressed by the English verb ‘to interpret,’ yet each constitutes an independent and significant meaning of interpretation” (13). Thus, “interpretation, then, can refer to three rather different matters: an oral recitation, a reasonable explanation, and a translation from another language” (13-14). One can read the basic meaning of rhetoric as speech act from the etymological meaning of hermeneutics— “to express, or say”, “to explain” and “to translate” — as to interpret. From this perspective, both rhetoric and hermeneutics converge as interpretative actions where rhetoric is always already in hermeneutics and vice versa.

Robert Scott notes that “if Gadamer is correct in saying that ‘the experience of meaning which takes place in understanding always includes application,’ then rhetoric as a means of understanding social reality as well as a means of acting effectively within a community is assured” (266). It is practical. Hence, “rhetoric must also be seen more broadly as a human potentiality to understand the human condition” (Scott 266). This is reflective of the fact that rhetoric is always already in hermeneutics as an event of
understanding. While Carl Holmberg notes that “hermeneutic is the rhetorical discipline since it is an articulating in order to manifest the morphic appearances of amorphic Being” (245); for John Arthos, “hermeneutics as a traditional discipline grew out of rhetoric and continues to feed from it as an inexhaustible source of learning, as child to parent” (xi). This resonates Heidegger’s description of Aristotle’s Rhetoric “as the first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of being-with-one-another” (1996, 130).

Rhetoric and hermeneutics interplay as man’s mode of making sense of the human condition. Michael Hyde and Craig Smith describe this relationship as “seen but unobserved” (347) in the event of understanding.

Following Heidegger’s lead that “the basic mode of understanding is an ontological (primordial) structure constituting the nature of human being,” Hyde and Smith argue that “the overlooked relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric, ontological in nature, evolves from the basic mode of human understanding” (347). Stated simply, “to observe and disclose the relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric, one must describe it ontologically” (347). If ontology, then phenomenology, since, for Heidegger, “only as phenomenology, is ontology possible” (182; Hyde and Smith 347). In considering understanding as ontological, rather than abstract, we think of its linguisticity, for understanding is a linguistic event or activity. Understanding ontologically involves expression (language), and Heidegger, according to Hyde and Smith, calls this the “hermeneutical situation;” and “from the hermeneutical situation originates the primordial function of rhetoric” (347) — making meaning known. Attentive to “the description of the ontological relationship between the hermeneutical situation and rhetoric’s primordial function” as their central point (347), Hyde and Smith
state that “the primordial function of rhetoric is to ‘make-known’ meaning both to oneself and to others. Meaning is derived by a human being in and through the interpretive understanding of reality. Rhetoric is the process of making-known that meaning” (348). Therefore, while hermeneutics (an event of understanding) captures the meaning ontologically disclosed, rhetoric makes-known this meaning in expression or linguistically. Hermeneutics and rhetoric are ontological events that make understanding or meaning evident linguistically. Since meaning has to be linguistic to be grasped, both rhetoric and hermeneutics are language activities.

Utilizing the framework of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics that emphasizes the linguisticality of understanding, Hyde and Smith note that this “interpretation of linguistic possibilities wherein Being is given an experiential and meaningful form as the historical hermeneutic tradition of understanding is, for Gadamer, where the ‘fundamental function of rhetoric shows’” (350-351). Disclosing the meaning hermeneutically reached is the basic duty of rhetoric. Gadamer notes that “rhetoric’s fundamental function must be observed if one is to realize that rhetoric is not primarily a theory of forms, speeches, and persuasion; rather, it is the ‘practical mastery’ that people have for making-known to others that which is understood” (351). This reiterates the relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric as ontological rather than abstract; it is based on understanding as experiential and linguistic, an event of meaning making and making-known meaning. As an ontological event, understanding arises, for Heidegger, from “fore-having,” a “fore-sight” and a “fore-conception” — the fore-structure of understanding which constitute the hermeneutical situation (351-352). Gadamer refers to this fore-structure of understanding as prejudices, biases or prejudgments arising from
our situatedness or embeddedness; hence, he views understanding as a fusion of horizons, which implies a dialogical engagement between the prejudices of the text/tradition of the past and that of the interpreter.

Hyde and Smith suggest that “rhetoric’s ontological relationship with hermeneutics occurs when understanding becomes meaningful, when interpretation shows it as ‘something’ . . . ontologically speaking, rhetoric shows itself in and through the various ways understanding is interpreted and made known” (354). For Hyde and Smith, “if the hermeneutical situation is the reservoir of meaning, then rhetoric is the selecting tool for making-known this meaning. Hence, the making-known of meaning is dependent on the selective function of rhetoric. The ontological relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric operates therefore in a dialectical manner” (354). They are both codetermined; in other words, “without the hermeneutical situation there would be a meaningless void; without rhetoric the latent meaning housed in the hermeneutical situation could never be actualized” (354). In this relationship, “rhetoric functions as the telos of interpretive understanding; rhetoric is what situates and moves the hermeneutical situation in and through time” (354). Therefore, “if the hermeneutical situation, being the primordial signification of hermeneutics is constituted as the functional relationship of ‘understanding-interpretation-meaning,’ then rhetoric is the hyphen (-) binding the relationship” (354). From this, while it seems like hermeneutic is prior to rhetoric in the Heideggerian sense, given the way he emphasizes understanding and interpretation as if they are different activities; for Gadamer, understanding is interpretation and, interpretation is understanding, they are codetermined.
John Arthos offers a twofold response to the question on “what hermeneutics has
to offer rhetoric that rhetoric does not already have”: “First of all, hermeneutics as a
traditional discipline grew out of rhetoric and continues to feed from it as an
inexhaustible source of learning, as child to parent” (xi). Second, “the benefit works in
both directions. Just as the work quietly underway in rhetorical studies seeks a fuller
appreciation of the hermeneutic situation, so the radical achievements of a discursive
ontology only promote the place of rhetoric in the ongoing broad reconfiguration of
knowledge” (xi-xii). Precisely, in terms of the relationship between rhetoric and
hermeneutic, Arthos states: “In proposing my own approach to this relationship, I am
going to discard the usual orientation of rhetoric and hermeneutics as horizontally aligned
disciplines (as speaking to listening, writing to interpretation) and instead propose a
vertical alignment perspective and practice — hermeneutics as a theoretical orientation or
depth dimension and rhetoric as the education in and performance of discursive identity”
(xii). For Arthos, “the two are intertwined in such a way that it would be impracticable to
separate them into discrete disciplinary functions” (xi). He locates their relationship in
human experience or finitude, by viewing rhetoric as a humanist pedagogy attentive to
discourse and by maintaining Gadamer’s stance that hermeneutics is not a method or tool.
He describes “hermeneutic sensibility” as “an approach to human, social, and societal
matters that is committed to a sense of irremediable finitude, an aptitude for prudential
process, a commitment to dialogic openness, a refusal to separate the ethical, aesthetic,
and epistemic, and most especially an intimate familiarity with the circular finitude of
temporal discourse” (xiii). Arthos notes that “elements of this sensibility belong
recognizably to someone trained in rhetoric” (xiii). This implies that hermeneutics is
always already in rhetoric since it takes being rhetorical to be hermeneutically sensible.

The relationship of hermeneutics to rhetoric that Arthos wishes to illuminate is that “hermeneutics is a theoretical orientation to a rhetorical practice. . . [especially as] caught up in the circular structure of hermeneutic understanding” (xiv). He takes an ontological view to the relationship.

Arguing that hermeneutics grew out of rhetoric, Arthos states that “hermeneutics does not offer something to rhetoric that it does not already have; it turns its use in a particular direction. Its framing brings out what is latent in humanist rhetorical practice as a manner of critical self-awareness” (xi). That is, “hermeneutics develops a consciousness of and approach to human rhetoricality as an ontological condition. Hermeneutics becomes a heightened theoretical awareness of discursivity as it emerges from rhetorical practice. It exists in relation to it not as an external theory, but as a theoretical comportment” (xiv; Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science* 8). As such, hermeneutics is intrinsic to rhetoric and “not merely a second-order theory that helps to give rhetoric an ontological footing” (xiv). Since both rhetoric and hermeneutics are ontological, “like rhetoric, hermeneutics cannot be principally an academic theory, ‘as if there are, or perhaps should be, particular kinds of people who practice it,’ and someone demonstrating hermeneutic competence is not principally an academician who is ‘supposed to have a particular competence denied to others’” (xiv-xv). Viewed differently, since they are ontological, they are intrinsically part of man’s mode of being, and not merely a product of training. Arguing that they are not the preserve of the professionals, Arthos heightens their practical inseparability citing Steven Mailloux that “hermeneutics is the rhetoric of establishing meaning and rhetoric the hermeneutics of
problematic linguistic situations” (Mailloux 379; Arthos xv). Here, Arthos, like Gadamer, recognizes both rhetoric and hermeneutics as linguistic activities attentive to “dialectic, circularity and finitude” (xv). In terms of dialectic, “the basic hermeneutic principle is that truth ‘is not an object, but a relation’” (Gadamer 1975, 358; Arthos xv-xvi). In terms of circularity, “hermeneutics’ greatest borrowing from rhetoric, partly form its reading tradition but also partly from Aristotle’s ethics (which Gadamer associated with rhetoric), was the circle of understanding” (xvi). In terms of finitude, “the fact that there is practice at all and not just theory, the fact that we live in the realm of the particular and only gesture toward the ideal, the fact that we need to reason practically rather than just contemplate, is because we are finite, historically situated, material beings bounded by mortality, formed by interests, passions, and perspectives, and left to work out our meanings and identities with frail and compromised capabilities” (xvi). Dialectic, circularity and finitude are wedded to the linguisticality and historicality of understanding as an ontological event.

From the foregoing, Hyde and Smith, as well as Arthos, trace the relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics to be ontological events of understanding, hence, a lived experience, rather than merely theoretical. Arthos cites Gadamer that “the deepest understanding is soaked in the occasion of its birth; it emerges out of a situation and speaks to it. It only knows itself in its peculiar adhesion to life, the building up of a thousand plaited threads of experience and insight” (1). Understanding is practical, not theoretical; it arises out of living experience; and understanding embraces both rhetoric and hermeneutics. For Hyde and Smith, “rhetoric makes-known understanding. . . when people use rhetoric they use it in the immediacy of the present, of the now, wherein their
verbal and nonverbal behavior become situationally bound to their culture’s own understanding” (356). Hence, “all hermeneutics is rhetorical” (363); and the situatedness of rhetoric and hermeneutics in the event of understanding as a lived experience puts them up as praxis-oriented activities, reflective of *phronesis* — a virtue of concrete or contextual action. We now turn to this interplay of rhetoric, hermeneutics, and phronesis.

### 4.2 Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Phronesis

Given the ontological character of both rhetoric and hermeneutics as events of understanding, they are practical activities that are situated or contextual, and so, converge in phronesis as praxis. Gadamer notes that in both hermeneutics and rhetoric “theory is subsequent to that out of which it is abstracted, that is, praxis” (Hyde and Smith 350). Hyde and Smith explain that “what is meant here by ‘praxis’ is human existence as it is ‘lived through’ and experienced by individuals in its essential form, ‘the universal phenomenon of human linguisticality’” (350). Praxis as human lived experience in the concrete is also linguistic, for language belongs to man’s ontological or primordial mode of being. This notion of praxis resonates with Aristotle’s position that “caring for everyday material and practical needs and responsibilities ‘comes before’ the ‘non-practical’ and ‘non-productive’ activities of theoretical seeing-knowing” (Smith 84). In this sense, Gadamer states that “achieving concretization is the real concern of one who possesses the virtue of phronesis” (1981, 134). That is, phronesis as praxis is attentive to the concrete, the particular.

For Thomas Seebohm, “the complete interpenetration of the rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of the linguistic nature of human being is the principle which opens upon approach to practice in hermeneutics” (191). Here, hermeneutics as praxis is
linguistic and language is the domain of rhetoric. Gadamer states that “we should bear in mind that rhetoric is not merely or even primarily a specialized profession of trained speakers, but rather a common human attitude” (1982, 2). In like manner, he states that hermeneutics “above all refers to a natural human capacity” (1981, 114). This implies for Gadamer that philosophical hermeneutics “vindicates the noblest task of the citizen — decision-making according to one’s own responsibility — instead of conceding that task to the expert” (1975b, 315). Both rhetoric and hermeneutics are not the preserve of the experts or professionals but belong ontologically to man. Similarly, Heidegger, as cited by Zickmund, argues that “true speech’ should not be limited to the discourse in the courts and in the parliament, but that it should also include the everyday world of Dasein’s speaking-with-one-another” (409). This reiterates the fact that praxis rather than theory is central to rhetoric and hermeneutics since they are ontological or man’s primordial way of being.

Calvin Schrag, while arguing for a “linguistically oriented hermeneutic of everyday life” (1980, 110), explains that “the context of everyday life exhibits discontinuities and disjunctions as well as connections and conjunctions; and any hermeneutic of everyday life that is to succeed in its project will need to be attentive to these discontinuities and disjunctions” (1980, 99). He notes that due to “this shift of the hermeneutical issue to the text of everyday life. . . we are here no longer dealing with a literary text as an accomplished fact, but rather with an ongoing life activity in which human agents endow their perceptions and actions with meaning” (1980, 99). In other words, man’s everyday life is often punctuated by situations — rhetorical and hermeneutical — that disrupt its habitual flow or routine and requires a way of navigating
these moments that upset the routine. To accomplish this, hermeneutics has to be
attentive to praxis of man’s everyday life. For Daniel Smith, the “common” or ‘average’
ontic phainomena [of everyday life] are to be disrupted because their stability and
familiarity tends to foster a narrow sense of the different, the contingent, and the possible;
ye mute the strangeness and uncanniness immanent to the being of everydayness and
make it hard for us to not-be-at-home; that is, they make it hard to inhabit anywhere that
is not familiar” (100). In this direction, in designating ‘resoluteness’ as Heidegger’s
understanding of phronesis, Smith writes that “resoluteness, that is, phronesis, might be
otherwise understood as cultivating ways of inhabiting the social differently, with an aim
of disrupting the familiarity and common sense that is the very fabric of everyday life”
(100). Phronesis enables us in hermeneutic and rhetoric to attend to the unfamiliar —
discontinuities and disjunctions, or exigencies and constraints — in everyday life.
Engaging the unfamiliar in everyday life announces the need for Aristotle’s phronesis or
Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics.

The texture of everyday life or the texture of lived-through world experience
would require an extended hermeneutics that is attentive to “precategorial meaning-
formation and meaning establishment that characterizes the concernful preoccupations of
daily affairs” (Schrag 99). What Schrag considers the “hermeneutic of everydayness” is
akin to Heidegger’s description of Aristotle’s Rhetoric “as the first systematic
hermeneutic of the everydayness of being-with-one-another” (130; Smith 79). An
extended hermeneutic attentive to “man’s socio-historical existence” or daily affairs often
plays out as phronesis — the virtue of action in a concrete context or situation, especially
in situations of uncertainties, disjunctions and discontinuities, or in exigencies, in which
previous paradigms of interpretation or speaking may be improper or “in conflict,” what Lyotard calls “paralogy” (conflict of paradigms) (Gallagher 300). Following Hyde and Smith’s lead that “when people use rhetoric, they use it in the immediacy of the present, of the now, wherein their verbal and nonverbal behavior become situationally bound (356); a rhetorical situation that defies discourse, requires phronesis to navigate the immediacy of that rhetorical situation. This is so, since in a situation of paralogy, reason “is forced to cut its own path, to break with established habits, to think in a radical, ground-breaking way. At this point reason is put in play with the matter at hand . . . where no established way has been charted” (Gallagher 300); and no other reason undertakes such a task than practical wisdom, phronesis. This reinforces Gadamer’s stance that phronesis is precisely “the virtue that one can fall back on within a hermeneutical situation which is uncertain; it is to be relied upon precisely on those occasions when no formula is available in advance, in those situations where we must act kata ton orthon logon (according to right reason)” (Gallagher 303). Whether this uncertain situation is hermeneutical or rhetorical, phronesis rises to the occasion for “all hermeneutics is rhetorical” (Hyde and Smith 363). Similarly, Caputo affirms that phronesis is a “concrete moral insight,” a “judgment as to what is to be done here and now” in the concrete and ambiguous moral situation (as cited in Gallagher 304). In philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer states that “the universality of the rule is in need of application and that for the application of rules there exists in turn no rule” (1981, 49). His view on application in his philosophical hermeneutics led him to Aristotle’s practical philosophy, especially to “phronesis.”
In corroboration, Chen notes that “the notion of application makes Aristotle relevant: the application of *phronesis* (practical wisdom which is general moral knowledge) in guiding concrete action (when a human subject is called upon to act in particular situation)” (184-185). For Chen, “*phronesis* is moral and practical knowledge, a moral individual applies this general, not universal, knowledge in any particular situation which calls for action” (185). Phronesis is attentive to action in the contingent situation, invariably to praxis. For Chen, Gadamer’s reading of Aristotle’s notion of praxis yields the following points: “(1) our relationship with the world is not theoretical or technical but practical; (2) the distinction between the knowledge of *phronesis* and theoretical knowledge of episteme leads Gadamer to locate human sciences within the realm of *praxis*; human sciences are moral sciences; *praxis* is the realm of knowledge in which hermeneutics finds its home; (3) the question for hermeneutics is how to apply the general to the particular; the task of hermeneutics is the learning and application of *phronesis* in guiding concrete moral action” (186). Clearly, for Chen, phronesis—practical wisdom/knowledge—finds its home in praxis; it is a manifestation or expression of praxis.

Gadamer’s reliance on Aristotle’s practical philosophy according to Chen implies that “in effect, Aristotle becomes the authoritative source which Gadamer uses to attack the ‘misuse’ of the notion of *praxis*; [for] in modern time, ‘practice was understood as the application of science to technical tasks. It degrades practical reason to technical control’” (Chen 186; Gadamer 1975b 312). However, “the practical reasoning of ordinary life does not function in the same way as theoretical reason” (Hoy 55); for “praxis, in fact, involves a practical understanding that is not just pure reasoning but is inseparable
from action as such. Practical understanding involves more than knowing the general rules that guide action” (56). For Hoy, “praxis is, in fact, not the antithesis to theoria, since theoria is itself a form of praxis” (57). In this context, Gadamer states that “praxis is a universal form of human life which embraces, yet goes beyond, the technical choice of the best means for a pre-given end. Praxis concerns the making of responsible political and practical decisions about happiness, health, peace, freedom, and other stable factors of human-being-in-nature” (1975b 312; Chen 186). Praxis is the domain of phronesis, which in Gadamer’s term is philosophical hermeneutics.

Brooks affirms this position when she says that “Gadamer’s writings on interpretation illustrate that he too believed that the most important type of knowledge in regard to human realities was phronesis, or practical knowledge” (410); for “knowledge as phronesis, is developed in praxis” (412). In other words, “Gadamer believes that the development of phronesis and imagination is required for responding to unfamiliar and surprising circumstances or information that arise in praxis” (413). Brooks notes here that although Gadamer emphasizes understanding as praxis, “inquiring into praxis, or where actors attempt to engage in everyday activities with appropriate action for the exigencies before them is not for the goal of applying or acquiring general knowledge. The goal of praxis is for local and practical understanding” (416). The goal of praxis, as phronesis, is for action in the immediate concrete moment and not for all times. Stewart and Zediker (2000) refer to this understanding acquired in praxis as a “dialectic embodied in human experience” (as cited by Brooks 417). For Gadamer “we come to our interpretations of reality and how to accomplish living in that reality while communicating about our day-to-day situations with others. Gadamer calls this practical inquiry, or ‘discovering the real
through being intimate with others” (Gadamer 1998, 30; Brooks 418). Stated differently, for Gadamer, “people came to realize that the limited and finite character of man necessitates dialogue (the inner correspondence between persons) in the search for truth” (1982, 4). The way to achieve this intimacy is by asking how questions; for “when asking ‘how questions,’ you are being present with the other, participating in the experience with the other, and contemplating its beauty, its value; the good and the ethical. ‘How questions’ lead to a knowledge that emerges between those who are critically connected” (Gadamer, 1989, 465; Brooks 418). For Gadamer, “this type of understanding, he urges, cannot be prompted by the mechanical methodology of modern science because it is ‘a passion. . . an event that happens to one’” (Gadamer, 1989, 465; Brooks 418). This implies that phronetic understanding “is a genuine experience. . . [or] encounter with something that asserts itself as truth’ in the process of coming to understand shared circumstances” (418). Truth, for Gadamer, “is not objective or universal because it is a human phenomenon. Accordingly, it is existential, moral, aesthetic, and grounded in the circumstances of the event and of the relevant relationships” (Gadamer 1989, 489; Brooks 418). Truth is practical and attentive to the concrete and is always situated or embedded, like phronesis, a “knowledge that is ‘directed towards the concrete situation’” (Gadamer 1989, 21; Brooks 418). For Brooks, “a phronetic understanding of what is good and right is something that continues to develop with experience and through the confrontation of various concrete situations” (419). It is on this Aristotelian notion of phronesis that Gadamer’s notion of application in his philosophical hermeneutics as praxis found its grounding, giving rise to the event of understanding as praxis.
Remarkably, it is Gadamer’s restoration of application as one of the “subtilitas” (understanding, interpretation and application) that bridges the gap between understanding and praxis, where, understanding as application, is always already a praxis. Hence, application entails phronesis, for Bernstein notes that “understanding according to Gadamer, is a form of phronesis” (xv). For Bernstein, “not only is philosophic hermeneutics the proper heir to the tradition of practical philosophy, but the type of judgment and reasoning exhibited in all understanding is itself a form of phronesis” (40). Since all hermeneutics is rhetorical, some scholars see rhetoric as phronesis, or akin to phronesis. In agreement with this position, Lois Self argues that “Aristotle’s ‘productive art’ of rhetoric and ‘intellectual virtue’ of practical wisdom have much in common. Both function in the domain of the ‘variable,’ in the realm where human deliberation or calculation results in probable truth about contingent matters” (131-132). She notes their significant similarities, thus: “both are special ‘reasoned capacities’ which properly function in the world of probabilities; both are normative processes in that they involve rational principles of choice-making; both have general applicability but always require careful analysis of particulars in determining the best response to each specific situation” (135). Also, “both ideally take into account the wholeness of human nature (rhetoric in its three appeals, phronesis in its balance of desire and reason); and finally, both have social utility and responsibility in that both treat matters of the public good” (135). Similarly, Thomas Farrell writes that “the deliberative practice of rhetoric might go so far as to cultivate practical wisdom as a relational good for those membership groups and collectivities that are called to decide and act on civic matters” (1993, 146). Here,
rhetoric is likened to phronesis especially as both are attentive to particular action in concrete situation.

Farrell argues that phronesis is originally enacted as rhetoric: “My own position, is that classical rhetoric offers us a practical ideal of the appropriate; phronesis or practical wisdom. . . Within the context of classical theory, rhetoric is an art of practice to be developed in real-life settings, where matters are in dispute and there are no fixed or final criteria for judgment” (1991, 187). He notes that “the whole point of the rhetoric is not its monism, but its circumstantiality and eclecticism. That is what the practical ideal of phronesis really is all about” (1991, 188). Farrell urges us to remember that “rhetoric is practical reasoning in the presence of collaborative others” (189). Farrell considers rhetoric to be phronesis in action. To magnify this relationship between phronesis and rhetoric, one might argue for Rosalee McLaughlin’s “rhetoric of both/and” as phronesis; for she notes that “‘both/and’ rhetoric reflects the relative nature of truth while encouraging dialogue as a means of pursuing truth” (3). She views practice in the rhetoric of “both/and” as “a way to ward off the effects of the rhetoric of ‘either/or’ . . . a process of disagreeing and agreeing” (4-5). In this context, both/and is reflective of probable or uncertain situations, where things cannot be either/or, which for Aristotle, is the province of phronesis. Charles Allen affirms that “phronetic sense-making does not share the ‘either/or’ assumption lurking behind objectivism and tribalism” (368). Hence, both/and is the realm of praxis or phronesis, not science or method.

Citing Robert Scott, McLaughlin notes that “both/and” as “a process could be a way of using rhetoric in ‘a world of conflicting claims’ . . . in which we as human beings come to knowledge through a process of action. We learn because we act, we express
opinions, we discuss, we ask questions. This is how we come to understand or are enabled to know” (5). For McLaughlin, “if there is a way of acting in this world rife with disagreement that allows us to construct truths we can agree upon as we need them, then what I am calling a ‘rhetoric’ of both/and is a way of knowing conflicts, a way of arguing our differences” (5). A rhetoric of both/and “allows us rhetorical authority which seeks, as Bizzell said, to persuade but does not impose” (5). As phronesis, a rhetoric of both/and is attentive to praxis, it deals with man’s everydayness which often cannot be either/or, and it is in line with Arnett’s view on Martin Buber’s notion of “narrow ridge” that “life is often not an either/or, but frequently a simultaneous yes and no [both/and]” (1986). For McLaughlin, “understanding that truths can be relative, and that rhetoric-as-action is a way of making those truths for ourselves, should help alleviate the almost murderous need to be right, to have the Truth” (5). In sum, McLaughlin notes that “we would be wise to keep looking for a way out of a position of ‘either/or’ to an ‘emergence toward one another’ as a way to cope in a world as terribly violent as ours” (6). Phronesis shields us from this position of either/or in hermeneutics and rhetoric, especially at the ontological level where human reality or lived experience is involved. Thus, while rhetoric and hermeneutics are ontologically related, they converge in praxis as phronesis. This undergirds Schrag’s “communicative praxis,” where discourse and action converge in praxis. We will now examine this “communicative praxis” in depth.

4.3 Calvin Schrag on Communicative Praxis

While Gadamer notes the influence of modern science and indeed rationalism on hermeneutics, which tried to make hermeneutics a method that appeals to an enlightened mind or reason, Schrag notes the influence of modern science and rationalism on rhetoric
stating that “modernity’s effort to ground all knowledge on a criteriological concept of rationality, oriented towards unimpeachable truth conditions, left little room for the function of a praxis-oriented rationality that has always been the hallmark of rhetorical understanding” (2003, vii). In a move to re-engage praxis, Schrag notes, “the Greek term ‘praxis’... is usually rendered as practice. It could also, however, be translated as ‘action,’ ‘performance,’ or ‘accomplishment.’ The verbal root praxis, prasso, houses the related senses of doing, acting, performing, and accomplishing” (2003, 18-19).

Apparently, praxis is action oriented. Schrag notes that Aristotle contrasted praxis with theoria, “distinguishing praxis the sphere of human action and accomplishment from theory as the domain of rigorous science. Theoria, which lies along the path of demonstration yielding apodicticity and the achievement of knowledge for its own sake, follows the requirements of episteme” (19). This implies that “for theoreticians, practice is always in service of theory” (Arneson 6). This epistemological view of practice, for Arneson, presents two difficulties for praxis: First, “practice, as an application of theory, has to wait upon the determinations of theory for its meaning or intelligibility.” Second, “while practice without theory is blind, theory without practice is empty” (Arneson 6; Ramsey and Miller 21). In this context, practice appears to be subservient to theory. However, Schrag notes that “from this distinction between theory and praxis, however, Aristotle does not draw the conclusion that praxis is irremediably bereft of cognition” (19). This suggests that praxis is neither an unreflective action or an action without thought, nor is praxis tied to theory, it is not epistemological.

This reiterates Gadamer’s view that although “today practice tends to be defined by a kind of opposition to theory” (1981, 69); however, “practice consists of choosing, of
deciding for something and against something else, and in doing this a practical reflection is effective, which is itself dialectical in the highest measure” (1981, 81). Praxis or practice is not an unreflective action. Gadamer clearly posits that “practice, then, certainly does not rely solely upon an abstract consciousness of norms. It is always concretely motivated already, prejudiced to be sure, but also challenged to a critique of prejudices” (1981, 82). Thus, praxis is not subservient to theory. Hoy corroborates that “for Aristotle, Gadamer points out, the difference between theory and praxis was not, as it is today, the difference between reflective thinking (‘Wissenschaft’ in a broad sense) and the application of this thinking” (56). On the contrary, “for the Greeks the distinction concerns thinking itself, and specifically two different kinds of thinking: on the one hand, theoretical philosophy (with mathematics — the study of the unchangeable— as its ideal), and to the other, practical philosophy (the study of the changeable)” (56-57). This implies that praxis as practical philosophy has its own mode of thinking. Schrag affirms that “praxis comports its own insight in the guise of a practical wisdom. Aristotle’s term for this is phronesis, which although distinguished from the contemplative knowledge of pure theory is a type of knowledge, more broadly conceived, nonetheless” (2003, 19). This entails that “praxis displays a different sort of knowing than that which issues from theoria” (2003, 19). Praxis is a practical rather than theoretical knowledge or philosophy.

This buttresses Hoy’s view that “praxis, in fact, involves a practical understanding that is not just pure reasoning but is inseparable from action as such. . . practical understanding involves more than knowing the general rules that guide action” (56). Hoy notes that “for Aristotle, praxis is, in fact, not the antithesis to theoria, since theoria is itself a form of praxis” (57). Thus, praxis is broader than theoria, since for Gadamer, “the
normative character of practice and hence the efficacy of practical reason is ‘in practice’ still a lot greater than theory thinks it is” (1981, 83). Worded differently, Gadamer states that in fact, “theory is subsequent to that out of which it is abstracted, that is, to praxis” (1975, 21; Hyde and Smith 350). In this sense, Schrag states that “Hoy’s assurance that Gadamer does not see application as instrumentation of theory is to be heeded. The application of praxis is not the application of a fund knowledge delivered by pure theory. What Gadamer learned from Heidegger is that praxis, in the guise of ‘circumspection’ accommodates its own ‘insight’” (2003, 87). Praxis is not mere application of a scientific theory; praxis has its own insight. Arneson adds that “the subject matter of praxis is the actions in which humans engage as they go about their everyday lives as members of communities” (6). This reiterates Gadamer’s view that “practice has to do with others and codetermines the communal concerns by its doing” (1981, 82). For Gadamer, “practice is conducting oneself and acting in solidarity. Solidarity is the decisive condition and basis of all social reason” (1981, 87). Theoria is derived from praxis—man’s lived experience in acting with others, not vice versa.

Schrag writes that “there is an indissoluble linkage between praxis and the polis in the thought of Aristotle. The polis, as the interwoven fabric of man’s ethical and political existence, is displayed by Aristotle as the distinctive topos or locality for the exercise of practical wisdom” (20). Again, “it is the institutionalized context provided by the polis that regulates and vitalizes the interaction of human beings in the ongoing life of society” (20-21). Polis is the scene of praxis or phronesis; it is where man acts in solidarity with others. In conjunction with this, Hoy states that “when praxis is discussed specifically in terms of the status of free citizens in the polis, this is only one sense of the term, although
the most eminent one. More generally, it is applied to the whole range of life (bios) and to man as the only creature manifesting *prohairesis*, the ability to prefer and choose cogitatively” (57). Given this link between praxis and polis, Schrag writes that “the profound philosophical meaning of the notion of praxis is to place us in an order which is not that of knowledge but rather that of communication, exchange, and association” (1980, 37) as found in the polis. Praxis is oriented to action, interaction or engagement with another; it is active not passive; it is concrete not abstract; it is emergent. Praxis “is governed neither by objective ends nor by transempirical oughts. It deploys a pre-objective field of concerns in which a functioning intentionality of aspirations and expectations responds to the concrete conditions of the times” (Schrag 39). Praxis emerges in the moment of exchange, and not possessed as an *a priori* knowledge waiting to be applied; it is communicative. Schrag clearly states that “praxis as the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding. . . Praxis, as I understand it, is always entwined with communication” (Ramsey and Miller 21). To intensify the connection between praxis and communication, Schrag states that “the terminology of communication, like that of praxis, does not point us to a homogenous registry of meanings” (2003, 21); rather “communication, in its variegated postures, is a performance within the *topos* of human affairs and dealings that comprise our social world, making these affairs and dealings an issue not only by questioning, informing, arguing, and persuading but also by planning, working, playing, gesturing, laughing, crying, and our general body motility” (2003, 22). This *topos* of human affairs is
everyday life which is the scene of praxis; it is in the domain of praxis that communication takes place.

Communication, for Schrag, includes “the manner and style in which messages are conveyed and imparted always against the background of the tightly woven fabric of professional and everyday life, with its shared experiences, participative relationships, joint endeavors, and moral concerns” (2003, 22). With communication as a shared experience, “it thus becomes evident that the space of communication is a space that is shared by praxis. Communication has both a linguistic and actional dimension. There is a rhetoric of speech and there is a rhetoric of action” (2003, 22). To clarify this link between communication and praxis, Schrag states that “communication and praxis intersect within a common space. Communication is a qualification of praxis. It is a manner in which praxis comes to expression. But praxis is also a qualification of communication in that it determines communication as a performing and accomplishing” (2003, 22). In this way, he unites communication and praxis to form the phrase “communicative praxis” stating: “I chose the phrase ‘communicative praxis’ in which communication qualifies praxis — is even an intrinsic qualification of praxis, in that it provides the context for the very understanding of the meaning of what goes on in human action. When you link communication and praxis you now have a social form that provides the context for specific acts” (Ramsey and Miller 20). Schrag also adds that he chose the phrase communicative praxis to counteract the practice where “communication was being considered without attending to the actional component of our engagement with others; [that is], to avoid the division of communication and action attending the disciplinary separation of the philosophy of language from the philosophy of action”
(Ramsey and Miller 20). Thus, to communicate is at the same time to act, because it is a shared experience, an engagement or interaction with others. Notedly, to clarify Schrag’s view that “communication is an intrinsic qualification of praxis,” Ramsey and Miller state that Schrag does “not intend the term communicative to designate a particular kind of praxis among others, but rather that all praxis is communicative or, put inversely, that all communication is praxial” (22). This reiterates Schrag’s firm belief that praxis is always entwined with communication; hence, communicative praxis means that all action is communication, and all communication is action in man’s everyday life.

For Schrag, “our holistic notion of the space of communicative praxis calls attention to this contextuality and interplay of thought, language, and action in the comportment of everyday life” (2003, 6). Communicative praxis is always contextual. On this basis, Schrag argues that “to know and to communicate are not as neatly separable as some of the architects of modern philosophy had assumed” (2003, viii); for “the amalgam of communication and praxis has been designed to orient reflection on discourse and action as being about something; as being initiated by someone; and as being addressed to and for someone. . . These three moments comprise the binding texture of communicative praxis” (2003, ix). Expressed differently, the amalgam of discourse and action or communication and praxis give rise to “communicative praxis” and it is always tied to a context. Given the salience of context in this union, communicative praxis takes shape as a three-dimensional or tripartite phenomenon: “Discourse and action are about something, by someone, and for someone. Communicative praxis thus displays a referential moment (about a world of human concerns and social practices), a moment of self-implicature (by a speaker, author, or actor), and a rhetorical moment (directed to the
other)” (2003, xii). Communicative praxis is always attentive to a moment or context or person. In terms of the self-implicature, Schrag notes that “the subject is implicated not as an isolated speaking subject but as a subject whose mode of being in discourse is essentially that of being able to speak with other subjects” (2003, 125). It is about acting in solidarity. Thus, communicative praxis is reflective of the situation or experience of the participants.

Schrag writes that “the texture of communicative praxis is portrayed as an amalgam of discursive and nondiscursive practices, in which the meaning engendering patterns of the spoken and the written word mix and mingle with meaning-laden actions” (2003, xi). Communicative praxis comprises both spoken words and actions (communication is verbal and nonverbal) at the same time, and the scene of their interaction is everyday life. For Schrag, texture is “a third term, mediating those of communication and praxis. . . it indicates the bonding of communication and praxis as an intertexture within their common space” (2003, 23). Stated simply, Stewart, as cited by Arneson notes that “Schrag writes of the ‘texture’ of communicative praxis to underscore how all its elements are woven together, including everyday speech, the written word, and the ‘play and display of meanings’ within both perception and human action” (232; Arneson 6). To stress this texture, Arneson cites Schrag stating, “in the hermeneutical space of communicative praxis the epistemological subject is decentered and rationality is disseminated into the discursive practices that make up society” (Schrag 172; Arneson 6). This implies that the texture of communicative praxis helps it retain its character as a shared experience or activity with others where meaning is emergent or attentive to the moment or context of interaction. In sum, for Schrag, communicative praxis as praxis lies
“between the theoretical and the practical as they are generally understood” (Ramsey and Miller 21; Arneson 6). Schrag’s understanding of praxis, and indeed of communicative praxis is significant for the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. We now turn to rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

4.4 Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication Praxis

This discourse on rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is hinged on the inseparability of rhetoric and philosophy in meaning and function, for Schrag writes that “the ancient Greeks had already come upon the insight that the tasks of philosophy and rhetoric are entwined. This insight informed the institution of the medieval trivium, in which logic, rhetoric, and grammar were viewed as intercalating disciplines” (2003, vii). Nevertheless, he points out that “in the development of modern philosophy, rhetoric was marginalized at best, and relegated to the dustbin of sham wisdom at worst” (2003, vii); given that “modernity’s effort to ground all knowledge on a criteriological concept of rationality, oriented towards unimpeachable truth conditions, left little room for the function of a praxis-oriented rationality that has always been the hallmark of rhetorical understanding” (vii). While Lenore Langsdorf argues that “rhetoric and philosophy ‘lean upon’ but do not ‘collapse’ into one another” (15), she notes that they converge on interpretation (hermeneutics); they are “complementary modes of interpretation, rather than as opposed mode of extracting information from things and influencing persons” (2003, 177). Susan Mancino, like Samuel Ijsseling, notes that “since the origins of rhetoric and philosophy in ancient Greece, the two disciplines have converged and diverged at various points and times throughout history” (15; Ijsseling 5). Mancino posits that “attentiveness to historical moments illuminates the dynamic relationship between
philosophy and rhetoric with meaningful insight” (5), and this undergirds philosophy of communication.

Against the modern position on the relation between philosophy and rhetoric, Schrag argues that “to know and to communicate are not as neatly separable as some of the architects of modern philosophy had assumed” (2003, viii). This entails that “communication is veritably constitutive of the event of knowing... The enabling knowledge and communicability are twin moments within a more primordial space of self and world involvements” (2003, x). As such, communication and knowing (rhetoric and philosophy) are entwined in praxis. For Schrag, “the art of thinking, which philosophers by the mandate of their tradition have been called upon to develop, proceeds hand in glove with contextualization of thought in the polis, emerging from the rough and tumble of everyday social and political interactions” (2003, x). This suggests that philosophy always already involves rhetoric given that we think from a context or standpoint and cannot escape our situatedness or embeddedness in tradition, which Gadamer (1975) describes in terms of our “historicality” and “temporality” which are undergirded by our “linguisticality.”

Gadamer states that “it was the well-known antagonism between philosophy and rhetoric in the Greek educational setup that provoked Plato to pose the question concerning the cognitive character of rhetoric” (1981, 119). Gadamer writes that while “Plato in his Gorgias equated all of rhetoric as an art of flattery with the art of cooking and set it in opposition to any serious knowledge, the Platonic dialogue Phaedrus was dedicated to the task of endowing rhetoric with a more profound meaning and of allowing it a share of a philosophical justification” (1981, 119). Plato argued both against and for
rhetoric as philosophy. For Gadamer, it is Plato’s view of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* that informed Aristotle’s rhetoric “which presents more a philosophy of human life as determined by speech than a technical doctrine about the art of speaking” (1981, 119). This philosophic character of rhetoric, according to Aristotle, “links it with dialectics and ethics” (Rhet. 1356a; Gadamer 1981, 123). Thus, the *Phaedrus* shows that “when a rhetoric . . . wishes to overcome the narrowness of merely rule-governed technique, it ultimately has to be taken up into philosophy, into the totality of dialectical knowledge” (Gadamer 1981, 120). In this sense, “rhetoric is indissoluble from dialectics: persuasion that is really convincing is indissoluble from knowledge of the true” (1981, 122). Thus, rhetoric is philosophy. Timothy Crusius notes that Ernesto Grassi, in his book, *Rhetoric as Philosophy* showed him “that philosophy itself. . . is a rhetorical enterprise” (xiii).

Grassi, arguing for the intrinsic relationship between rhetoric and philosophy from the perspective of the relationship between *form* and *content* writes that “rhetoric generally was assigned a *formal* function, whereas philosophy, as *episteme*, as rational knowledge was to supply the true, factual content” (27). For Grassi, “this distinction is significant because the essence of man is determined both by logical and emotional elements, and as a result speech can reach the human being as a union of logos and pathos only if it appeals to both these aspects” (27). For Grassi, rhetoric and philosophy must interplay in every speech before the speech can become communication or meaningful to man. Again, Grassi argues for the relationship of rhetoric and philosophy from the perspective of “Plato’s union of knowledge and passion” in which “speech is neither purely rational nor purely pathetic” (32). He notes that “it [speech] does not arise from a posterior unity which presupposes the duality of *ratio* and *passio*, but illuminates
and influences the passions through its original, imaginative character. Thus, philosophy is not a posterior synthesis of pathos and logos but the original unity of the two under the power of the original archai” (32). This suggests that philosophy intrinsically involves rhetoric. Equally, for Grassi, “Plato sees true rhetoric as psychology which can fulfill its truly ‘moving’ function only if it masters original images [eide]. Thus, the true philosophy is rhetoric, and the true rhetoric is philosophy, a philosophy which does not need an ‘external’ rhetoric to convince, and a rhetoric that does not need an ‘external’ content of verity” (32). Here, Grassi notes that the true rhetorical speech “springs from the archai, nondeducible, moving, and indicative, due to its original images. The original speech is that of the wiseman, of the sophos, who is not only epistetai, but who with insight leads, guides, and attracts” (32). Thus, in the wiseman, both rhetoric and philosophy converge and are codetermined.

Grassi also argues for the relationship of rhetoric and philosophy from the basis of metaphor, stating that while “an essential moment of rhetorical speech is metaphor” (33), “philosophy itself becomes possible only on the basis of metaphors” (34). Both rhetoric and philosophy converge in metaphor; and metaphor “is derived from the verb metaphorin ‘to transfer,’ which originally described a concrete activity” (33). A metaphor possesses a meaning that cannot be taken literally. We think of rhetoric and philosophy as metaphor because “metaphor lies at the root of our knowledge in which rhetoric and philosophy attain their original unity. Therefore, we cannot speak of rhetoric and philosophy, but every original philosophy is rhetoric, and every true and not exterior rhetoric is philosophy’” (34). This is because “the metaphorical, pictorial nature of every original insight links insight with pathos, content with the form of speech. . . Philosophy
itself becomes possible only on the basis of metaphors, on the basis of the ingenuity
which supplies the foundation of every rational, derivative process” (34). In this
framework, Grassi argues that “thinkers [in the tradition of Italian Humanism that do not
separate res from verba] conceived philosophy as based on the faculty of ingenium and
did not understand philosophical thought as something independent of rhetoric” (35-36).
In sum, for Grassi, philosophy is rhetoric, and rhetoric is philosophy. The knowledge in
question in which rhetoric and philosophy converge, as metaphors, for Gadamer, is
historical, hence, contextual. Thus, Schrag writes that “context rather than elemental
syntactical units governs our speaking and thinking” (2003, 338); that is, context governs
our rhetoric and philosophy as praxis, and this context is a hermeneutical space. Rhetoric
and philosophy converge in hermeneutics as praxis.

To underscore the place of praxis in the relationship between philosophy and
rhetoric, Schrag notes that “philosophical discourse, both spoken and written, it has been
urged, is not only about something; it is also for someone” (2003, 2). Restated, “discourse
is for someone. It is also discourse by someone” (2003, 2). This not only highlights the
place of context in every discourse, but also portrays it as a practical endeavor where the
meaning can change as context or the audience changes. Schrag, apparently, refers to this
entwined nature of philosophy and rhetoric (to know and to communicate) as
communicative praxis in the shape of a three-dimensional or tripartite phenomenon:
“Discourse and action are about something, by someone, and for someone.
Communicative praxis thus displays a referential moment (about a world of human
concerns and social practices), a moment of self-implicature (by a speaker, author, or
actor), and a rhetorical moment (directed to the other)” (2003, xii). Undergirding
Schrag’s perspective on this relationship is his insistence that “it must be understood that praxis is always entwined with communication” (Ramsey and Miller 21). Communicative praxis textured as an amalgam of discourse and action provides the hermeneutical space or context in which rhetoric and philosophy take place. Again, Schrag states that he chose the phrase “communicative praxis” as a way of overcoming the Cartesian dualism where “communication was being considered without attending to the actional component of our engagements with others. . . to avoid the division of communication and action attending the disciplinary separation of the philosophy of language and from the philosophy of action” (Ramsey and Miller 20). Rhetoric and philosophy converge in praxis as interpretive activities; and if praxis, then communication, since for Schrag, “praxis is always entwined with communication” (Ramsey and Miller 21). Accordingly, Arnett and Arneson remind us “not to reify communication in the abstract” (31) for it is always praxis, hence, historical. In this sense, we think of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis as communicative praxis.

Similarly, Isaac Catt’s notion of communicology seems akin to Schrag’s communicative praxis, for Catt states: “as a communicologist, I do not assume behavior is communication or even a message until or unless it is perceived, that is, embodied. I am interested in the experience of communication, not merely its material or idealized manifestation as behavior, condensation as information, and reification as message” (3). In this context, Catt describes communication as “a semiotic process and phenomenological event of embodiment” (5). This implies that “communicology never begins with the message or messenger, because it is the construction of conscious experience that is under investigation and which must precede any subsequent
consideration of messages. The lived-body as affect and expressive cognition are grounded in nature, not social science” (14). Thus, in communicology, as in communicative praxis, the emphasis is on the praxis of communication as a lived experience. To stress lived experience, Catt reiterates Merleau Ponty’s eloquent expression and critique of Cartesian logic: “The world is not what I think, but what I live” (16). To intensify communication as praxis, as lived experience, Catt notes that “communication itself is not a skill” (19); it is ontological and a lived experience whereby “every meaning (perceptual ground) is a codification that must be converted into a message (expressive figure) to establish the necessary condition of its negotiability. To reiterate, at the semiotic border of the code and message lies the issue of context, the illumination of which reveals meaning” (21). In following this thought process, while emphasizing that “there is neither culture nor communication in the absence of lived-bodies” (21-22); Catt also notes that “communicology provides a unique, recursive strategy that fully appreciates the complexity of the human condition. Quite simply, there is no message where there is no code. . . the code is the minimal condition for communication to occur” (22). It is at the praxis level that this complexity of human condition is fully appreciated, where phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics is called forth for action. To affirm, Jeffery Bineham states that “philosophical hermeneutics primarily is an exercise in ontology rather than in epistemology” (307); that is, it is practical rather than abstract. For Catt, “communicology is thoroughly grounded in philosophy of communication” (4) as communicative praxis. Communicology coheres with rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis given its emphasis on communication as a lived or embodied experience.
As a lived experience, communication is not abstract but practical; this reechoes Arnett’s distinction of philosophy from philosophy of communication on the basis of “the preposition ‘of’ . . . [which] serves as a function word for, by, or about something else” (as cited in Holba 2021, 8). On one hand, mindful of “Arnett’s suggestion that philosophical inquiry without implications to, by, or for something is too abstract” (2021, 8), Holba notes, “philosophy of communication, on the other hand, focuses on the ‘of’ in that it emphasizes the to, by, and for. This means the application and implications of something ruminated on had to mean something to somebody. This is a very pragmatic understanding of philosophy of communication” (2021, 8). Unlike philosophy itself that tends to be abstract, philosophy of communication is attentive to praxis since communication is a lived experience. Philosophy of communication “underscores the value of seeing the ‘why’ of human action and it allows meaning to be shown as it is, not as you want it to be. The application of philosophy of communication can be a revelatory action equipped with opening new perspectives providing enhancement to meaningfulness by/about/for the human condition” (Holba 2021,19). For Holba, “doing philosophy of communication provides an opportunity to engage authentically and cocreates meaningfulness of the matters at hand” (2021,19). For Heidegger, according to Smith, to be authentic requires resoluteness, “phronesis” which disrupts the routine or familiar, demanding that one engage the unfamiliar or disjunctions. Remarkably, Schrag, in his *Radical Reflection*, notes that being authentic is being attentive to everyday life in its disruptions and disjunctions; and this is an activity of phronesis, it is praxis.

Accordingly, Arnett and Holba state: “We understand philosophy of communication as an intellectual shaping of habits of the heart, tempering information by
moving existential meaning into embodied and contextual understanding” (2012, 3).

Philosophy of communication is praxis, a practical activity attentive to communication as a lived or embodied experience. Philosophy of communication “requires life-world attentiveness that is meaning centered and only discernible in the particular” (Arnett and Holba, 2012, 5). As praxis or a practical activity, “philosophy of communication begins with the particular in hopes of a glimpse of what might be ironically termed a ‘temporal universal’ that works within a horizon of meaning within the human condition that is responsive to the particular and the unique” (2012, 4). Restated, as praxis, “philosophy of communication meets existence and organizes, coordinates, and offers meaning that can be tested in the public domain” (2012, 7). Also, as praxis, philosophy of communication engages the disruptions, disjunctions and the unfamiliar in man’s everyday life in order to offer a temporal meaning attentive to the context or particular situation. This implies that “philosophy of communication can only be understood in the doing... It is in the doing, the praxis of philosophy of communication, that one understands a unique and meaningful communicative texture, turning a two-dimensional understanding of a given event into three-dimensional meaningful understanding that cannot be totally possessed” (2012, 8-9). In this purview, Arnett states that “philosophy of communication, does not emerge out of a vacuum but out of real lives, real issues, and real people trying to address questions in a given historical time frame” (2015, 343). It is attentive to man’s concrete existence. Philosophy of communication is “a practical necessity for understanding and engaging the world before us, one that we have helped become confounded, confused, and perhaps corrupted” (2015, 344) via thoughtlessness enshrined by the pervasiveness of routine encouraged by scientific worldview. It is a practical endeavor that helps us find
our way in our convoluted everydayness. In this context, Ramsey Eric Ramsey notes that “before human beings are able to communicate in the everyday sense and being able to get better at doing this through practice and guidance, there is a communication they cannot help but be. . . communication is a way of human being’s ability to be at all (2015, 347). For Ramsey, communication “is not something we might do only when we decided to say something or remain quiet. From the start and always communication is what being human is” (2015, 347). Being human is a lived experience, it is practical; hence, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is a practical human activity operational as man engages his everyday life.

While stating that “discourse which expresses itself is communication” (2015, 349), Richard Lanigan notes that “philosophy of communication specifies that the Code of Discourse is synthetic (Grammar), that the Meaning of Discourse is synthetic (Logic), and that the Medium of Discourse is synthetic (Rhetoric)” (2015, 350). Being synthetic means that its truth or falsity is not known a priori, but is determined through a recourse to experience, and not abstract. This reiterates Schrag’s afore cited notion that for the ancient Greeks, philosophy and rhetoric are entwined, evident in the medieval trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric); and they are practical, for they are attentive to the practical life of the polis. For Lanigan, in “using Peircian normative logics dating back to the medieval trivium, we abandon the epistemological Taxonomy of Language known as Information Theory” (2015, 354), which invariably is a shift from the notion of communication as theory to communication as praxis— lived experience, an ontological event. Deborah Eicher-Catt and Isaac Catt affirm that “communication is not a probability of information exchange. It is, rather, a possibility of experience, of embodied
contact in a symbolic context” (121). In this framework, given the emphasis on communication as praxis, a lived or embodied experience, they also note that communicology’s aim is “to refocus our ‘attention on the performance and practice of persons communicating’ within a variety of contexts” (Lanigan, 1992, p. 2; 120). Rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis centers on this — the performativity of communication as an embodied or lived experience.

In consonance, Susan Mancino states that philosophy of communication attends to “the meaning of embodied experiences that are situated historically, culturally, and socially” (20). In these communicative spaces, philosophy of communication operates like communicative praxis. Given the contextual nature of communicative praxis or philosophy of communication, “in the questions that define a given historical moment, philosophy of communication offers temporal insights as answers. In this manner, philosophy of communication moves from an abstract notion to embedded responses situated within the particularity of a moment” (Mancino 20). To reiterate, “occurring in the exchange of questions and answers, philosophy of communication enacts a philosophical hermeneutics engagement attentive to human experience, culture, and meaning” (Mancino 20). In this way, Mancino ties rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics which is rooted in Aristotle’s phronesis. This implies that rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is the activity of phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics. It manifests itself as an action that makes sense in a particular context, especially in an uncertain or indeterminate situation where things can be otherwise and where no theory is readily available. To summarize, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis as communicative praxis is
enacted as phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, that is, as contextual reasonableness than rationality. We now turn to the interplay of reasonableness and rationality.

4.5 Reasonableness and Rationality

The concepts of reasonableness and rationality attend to the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. Christopher Johnstone, according to Walter Fisher, argued that “the very process by which philosophy becomes rational is rhetorical” (121). Fisher articulates the difference between rationality and reasonableness from the perspective of Chaim Perelman’s new rhetoric which is attentive to pluralism and not to monism. Fisher states that “Perelman’s distinction between the rational and the reasonable corresponds with his distinction between demonstration and argumentation” (131). Rationality “is associated with demonstration in theoretical domains and with calculated, nonemotional action in human behavior. . . strict rationality is devoid of passion, detached from considerations of circumstance, time, and place, and serves the interests of monolithic systems, whether philosophical or political” (Fisher 131). Rationality is associated with things that cannot be otherwise. Reasonableness “is associated with argumentation — as process and accomplishment. To reason is not merely to verify and to demonstrate, but also to deliberate, to criticize, and to justify, to give reasons for and against— in a word, to argue” (Fisher 131). Reasonableness is about things or situations that can be otherwise.

Reasonableness is a more flexible/fluid term than rationality for according to Fisher, “the reasonable is sensitive to the history, traditions, and culture of a community. What is reasonable in one society at one time may not be reasonable at another time or in a different society” (132). What is reasonable is not fixed or permanent like rationality; it is not opposed to the emotions like rationality; it can change as situations or contexts.
change. Fisher considers one a reasonable person “who in judgments and conduct is influenced by common sense” (127). The role of common sense in a reasonable person is reflective of phronesis—practical wisdom. To underscore the affinity of reasonableness to phronesis via common sense, Fisher writes that “one familiar with Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics may notice similarities between the logic of good reasons, including the concepts of rationality and reasonableness, and the Peripatetic’s notion of practical wisdom (phronesis)” (119). Their similarity or affinity is more from the perspective of reasonableness than rationality.

Ray McKerrow differentiates between rationality and reasonableness from the perspective of Paul Tillich’s (1953) idea of technical reason and ontological reason, stating that “the former [rationality], separated from values, is inextricably linked to a method as a systematic, unvarying adherence to rules of procedure. The latter [reasonableness] is ‘cognitive and aesthetic, theoretical and practical, detached and passionate, subjective and objective’” (Tillich 73; McKerrow 105). Simply stated, rationality panders to technical reason (method), while reasonableness panders to ontological reason (phronesis). McKerrow, like Fisher, also uses Chaim Perelman’s (1979) position to distinguish rationality and reasonableness, stating: “We understand the expression rational deduction as conformity to the rules of logic, but we cannot speak of a reasonable deduction. Perelman connects rationality with precision of mathematics and logic—it epitomizes technical reason. Reasonableness is more akin to ontological reason. It is a social rather than a purely personal or subjective concept” (112). Reasonableness is related to common sense or practical wisdom (phronesis); and “divorced from the arbitrariness of technical reason, reasonableness is subject to change as the common
opinion of society alters. . . what is considered reasonable in one age may seem unreasonable in another” (112-113). Reasonableness is variable, fluid, tentative, not fixed; it attends to things or situations that can be otherwise while rationality attends to things or situations that cannot be otherwise.

In a similar fashion, Lenore Langsdorf writes that “Perelman’s distinction between the reasonable and the rational suggests that reasonableness may be a characteristic of the ‘whole person’” (117) On the other hand, “the rational corresponds to mathematical reason… which grasps necessary relations… and immutable truths,’ but ‘owes nothing to experience or to dialogue, and depends neither on education nor on the culture of a milieu or an epoch’” (117; Krammer 174). For Langsdorf, rationality is not attentive to the context, it is abstract; while reasonableness is attentive to the context, and it is what makes sense practically. For Krammer, “deprived of humanity and insensible to the reactions of the milieu,’ the rational man, then, is ‘the opposite of the reasonable man. The latter is a man who in his judgments and conduct is influenced by common sense’” (Perelman 1979, 118; Krammer 174). As common sense, reasonableness is reflective of Aristotle’s practical wisdom (phronesis) or Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. For Darrin Hicks, “the reasonable can’t be derived from the rational, but must exist as a distinct, although complementary, ideal” (106). For Hicks, reasonableness differs from rationality.

Reasonableness is reflective of Schrag’s idea of ‘the fitting response’ in communicative praxis. For Schrag, “the fitting response proceeds not by first asking the teleological question: ‘What is my proper end?’ but from the existential question: ‘What is going on in the world to which I must now respond?’” (Ramsey and Miller 27). The
fitting response is attentive to a moment. Following Emmanuel Levinas’ ethics of responsibility, Schrag states that the fitting response attends to the question: “What is going on and how are we to respond to the situation?” (Ramsey and Miller 27). The fitting response implies being attentive to a particular moment or context. For Schrag, “the fitting response is not an accommodation to what is going on. It is not that you simply characterize the situation and then somehow fit in. . . For Gadamer, practical wisdom— a reclamation of Aristotle’s doctrine of *phronesis*— supplies the criteria for determining that which is fitting” (Ramsey and Miller 28). While Gadamer believes that the criteria for determining the fitting response are “always already firmly entrenched and immanent in the tradition,” for Schrag, “the fitting response is a questioning. It is always a questioning of what is going on and then making hard decisions regarding the extent to which we can appropriate the tradition and the extent to which we have to intervene in it” (Ramsey and Miller 28-29). This implies that the fitting response is not a mere appropriation of tradition, like applying a universal to a particular, but “there is a creative moment in the fitting response, a moment in which we have to invent something new, project something new, begin to enact something new. And it may call for a radical revision or indeed the overturning of traditional as well as current forms of thought and action” (Ramsey and Miller 28-29). The fitting response is what is reasonable in a particular context and time; it is a temporal response that can change as the context changes, and context determines its reasonableness.

To reiterate the temporality of the fitting response, Schrag states that “there is, of course, a need to acknowledge that what has been determined to be fitting in the past can, upon future enlightened reconsideration, be revalued” (Ramsey and Miller 31). That is,
what is fitting in one moment can be unfit in another and can again be found fitting in a future moment. Therefore, for Schrag, “determining what is fitting is much more difficult. It always remains open. . . But this openness is also the possibility of response and its undoing, an undoing that prevents the idolatry of response: ‘here now is the response for all time and eternity’” (Ramsey and Miller 31). In this sense, the fitting response is akin to reasonableness and invariably to phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics because it is always attentive to what is going on in man’s lived experience in a particular historical moment and context. It is seen as invaluable in the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis that offers temporal answers to the questions of the historical moment attentive to the context. We will now discuss the place of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

4.6 Phronesis/Philosophical Hermeneutics in Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication Praxis

Given the centrality of praxis in humanities education, this project, in walking the humanities into the marketplace, considers phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tool for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in the marketplace. Aristotle’s definition of praxis as “theory-informed practice” and Hannah Arendt’s description of praxis as a form of critical thinking that involves the combination of reflection and action, are viewed from Schrag’s notion that “praxis as the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding” (Ramsey and Miller 21). In other words, the kind of theory than informs the action of praxis is different from scientific
theory; little wonder Schrag states that his effort in his view of praxis is “to reclaim the Aristotelian sense of praxis before the separation of theory and practice in the tradition” (Ramsey and Miller 21). A key implication of this for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is that it extricates it from being solely the province of the learned or experts or professionals. Restated, mindful of Paul Watzlawick’s axiom that “one cannot not communicate,” rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is not the preserve of experts but everyone and it is practical rather than abstract.

This reechoes the Aristotelian view that “rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic. Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general ken of all men and belong to no definite science. Accordingly, all men make use, more or less, of both; for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit” (Rhetoric BK 1, Ch.1, 1354a, 1). Following Aristotle, everyone is capable of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, not just the experts or professionals. In accord with this, Gadamer notes, “we should bear in mind that rhetoric is not merely or even primarily a specialized profession of trained speakers, but rather a common human attitude” (1982, 2). This resonates his view that “rhetoric is not mere theory of forms of speech and persuasion; rather, it can develop out of a native talent for practical mastery, without any theoretical reflection about ways and means” (1976, 20). From this view of rhetoric as a “general human attitude,” Gadamer joins rhetoric with hermeneutics stating that “the art of understanding, whatever its ways and means may be, is not dependent on an explicit awareness of the rules that guide and govern it. It builds as does rhetoric, on a natural power that everyone possesses to some
degree” (1976, 20-21). For Gadamer, hermeneutics, like rhetoric “refers to a natural human capacity” (1981, 114). In other words, rhetoric and hermeneutics are ontological to man; and if so, everyone enacts rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

Similarly, John Arthos states that “like rhetoric, hermeneutics cannot be principally an academic theory, ‘as if there are, or perhaps should be, particular kinds of people who practice’ it, and someone demonstrating hermeneutic competence is not principally an academician who is ‘supposed to have a particular competence denied to others’” (xiv-xv). This goes to affirm that both rhetoric and hermeneutics are enacted by all men, learned and unlearned, since one cannot not communicate; and because “in both rhetoric and hermeneutics, then, theory is subsequent to that out of which it is abstracted; that is, to praxis” (Gadamer 1976, 21). Thus, at the praxis level, everyone practices rhetoric and hermeneutics. This viewpoint led Gadamer to Giambattista Vico’s idea of “sensus communis, common sense” and ultimately to Aristotle’s phronesis. Stated differently, as praxis, rhetoric and hermeneutics operate through common sense or phronesis— practical wisdom, which is not dependent on the possession of a special knowledge; “practical knowledge, phronesis, is another kind of knowledge. Primarily, it means that it is directed towards the concrete situation. Thus, it must grasp the circumstances in their infinite variety” (Gadamer 1975, 21). Phronesis as manifest in action is akin to a philosophy of communication that is attentive to communication as a lived experience, communication as action, or communicative praxis. The emphasis on lived experience as vital in communication aligns with Aristotle’s emphasis on experience as the school of phronesis.
In this context, Arnett and Holba describe the praxis of philosophy of communication as an activity of the craftsman rather than the expert; stating that “both the expert and craftsman understand the necessary information about a given craft; however, only a craftsman invests in the meaning of the craft” (3). It is the craftsman that tempers information “by moving the existential meaning into embodied and contextual understanding” (Arnett and Holba 3). This reinforces that phronesis is attentive to a contextual understanding rather than to enacting a universal understanding. This comparison of the expert and the craftsman resonates Vico’s sensus communis, common sense, on “the contrast between the scholar and the wise man on whom the scholar depends” (Gadamer 1975, 19). While the expert aligns with the scholar, the craftsman aligns with the wise man, and common sense which is the attribute of a wise man makes the difference between the two. In terms of phronesis, for Gadamer, “the old Aristotelian distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge is operative here” (1975, 21). This distinction “cannot be reduced to that between the true and the probable. Practical knowledge, phronesis, is another kind of knowledge. Primarily, it means that it is directed towards the concrete situation” (1975, 21). It is a kind of knowledge not limited to scholars or experts but is ontologically available to everyone. If philosophy of communication praxis is an activity of the craftsman more than the expert, as stated by Arnett and Holba, then, it is a phronetic activity or exercise, an activity of the wiseman rather than the scholar. Also, since rhetoric and hermeneutics converge in phronesis, then, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis implies phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics.
In this light, Arnett and Holba’s statement that “philosophy of communication is of pragmatic importance in a diverse world composed of multiple perspectives and meanings; we concur with Richard Bernstein (1983) in his argument that the practical and the philosophical have intersected” (3), finds resonance in Schrag’s notion of praxis as the in-between of theory and practice. In maintaining this posture on praxis, Schrag states that his effort, on the one hand, is “to liberate praxis from its subordination to theoria in the modern theory/practice distinction, and on the other hand to broaden the notion of praxis found in early and later Critical Theory, liberating praxis from its subordination to techne” (Ramsey and Miller 21). Schrag seeks to restore praxis to its understanding as phronesis. Kenneth Cissna and Rob Anderson highlight that “the between’ is a region of a relationship that is a ‘third entity’ necessitating the self and other but is ‘more than the sum of them’” (23). In consonance, Schrag states:

The ‘in-between’ is not a ‘what.’ It is not a ‘what’ in terms of a specifiable essence, or concept. There is no category of the ‘in-between’. The ‘in-between’ is that which gives rise to categories. . . the ‘in-between’ is not a matter of taking the ideas of the addresser and the addressee and then seeing what we can understand in terms of sort of combining the two— trying to get a meaning through the exchange. The ‘in-between’ is that which functions or operates in a way that allows for an understanding by the participants in the discourse and in such a way that the ideas are not possessed by any of the interlocutors (Ramsey and Miller 24).

Praxis, as the in-between of theory and practice, is more than the sum of theory and practice; it is a third in the interplay of theory and practice. Hence, Schrag states: “It must
be understood that praxis, as I understand it, is always entwined with communication” (Ramsey and Miller 21). For Schrag, “when you link communication and praxis you now have a social form that provides the context for specific acts” (Ramsey and Miller 20). The communicative contexts or situations that are strange, alien or unintelligible in man’s everyday life or condition, where interpretation or action is needed, but no theory is available to guide action, announce the need for phronesis/or philosophical hermeneutics to navigate such situation or contexts. Phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as praxis are communicative praxis.

To underscore this affinity between phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics, Bernstein posits, “one of the most challenging, intriguing, and important motifs in Gadamer’s work is his effort to link his ontological hermeneutics with the tradition of practical philosophy, especially as it is rooted in Aristotle’s understanding of praxis and phronesis” (38). According to Bernstein, “not only is philosophic hermeneutics the proper heir to the tradition of practical philosophy, but the type of judgment and reasoning exhibited in all understanding is itself a form of phronesis” (40). This highlights the relevance of phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics in the realm of praxis and portrays them as fitting for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. It is in praxis that rhetoric and philosophy of communication become a ken of all rather than just for the expert or professionals; and this is essential because communication is a lived experience, and not an abstract endeavor. Communication is always in context and not universal, hence, Schrag’s insistence that praxis is always entwined with communication. On this basis, Aristotle’s phronesis or Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics becomes a pragmatic tool for rhetoric and philosophy of communication.
praxis since they are attentive to the context and give rise to contextual meaning and understanding that are temporal rather than permanent or universal. This aligns with Arnett’s description of philosophy of communication in terms of judgement rather than reason; for while judgment is particular and contextual, reason is objective and universal.

In his distinction of philosophy of communication from philosophy, Arnett privileges Immanuel Kant’s distinction between reason and judgment, stating that, on the one hand, “reason rests within the abstract, the theoretically pristine, pursuing truth that dwells within universal precepts. Reason facilitates knowledge that stands above the tainted ground of particulars” (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007; Arnett 2010, 58). Reason in this context implies rationality not reasonableness. On the other hand, “judgment, begins with problematic particulars and works to discern not pristine truth, but something much more fallible— opinion in the public domain. Philosophy of communication accounts for the particulars, which renders temporal public opinion and brings multiplicity to the public domain” (Arendt, 1963; Arnett 2010, 58). This judgement implies reasonableness not rationality. This recalls Gadamer’s view that “the work of judgment, subsuming a particular under a universal, recognizing something as an example of a rule, cannot be logically demonstrated. . . it cannot be taught in general, but only practiced from case to case, and is therefore more a faculty like the senses. It is something that cannot be learned because no demonstration from concepts is able to guide the application of rules” (30). Judgment is akin to phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics from Gadamer’s perspective. This is reflective of the distinction between rationality and reasonableness afore highlighted in this work, based on the opinions of Chaim Perelman, Walter Fisher, Lenore Longdor and others, where reason is tied to rationality, and judgment to
reasonableness. As judgement or reasonableness, “philosophy of communication engages particulars contingent on a particular situation, a particular moment, and a particular public contribution to public opinion. Philosophy of communication does not give us unquestioned assurance; it is tested by public opinion” (Arnett 2010, 58). Philosophy of communication is connected to reasonableness much more closely than it is to rationality, and reasonableness is reflective of fitting response, phronesis, or common sense.

This resonates Vico’s idea of *sensus communis*, as highlighted by Gadamer who notes that “training in the sensus communis, is not nourished on the true, but on the probable. . . sensus communis here obviously does not mean only that general faculty in all men, but the sense that founds community” (1975, 21). Accordingly, Vico, as cited by Gadamer, notes that “what gives the human will its direction is not the abstract generality of reason, but the concrete generality that represents the community of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human race. Hence the development of this sense of community is of prime importance for living” (21). This concrete generality is tied to reasonableness, and not rationality. In other words, what is reasonable in one community in one historical moment may not be so in another. This buttresses Arnett’s position that philosophy of communication rests with public opinion as an activity of sensus communis held by a particular community or group that hold a particular opinion. These attributes of philosophy of communication cohere with the attributes and character of Aristotle’s phronesis and Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics.

For Arnett, “the pragmatism in philosophy of communication acknowledges multiple voices in the diversity of public opinion, recognizing that a philosophy of communication can atrophy and die and then, like a phoenix, arise again, ever dependent
on public opinion” (2010, 58). This view agrees with Schrag’s notion of “fitting response” which can change as situations change. Schrag highlights that a response that is fitting in one moment can become unfit in another moment and vice versa. This emphasizes the tentative or temporal nature of philosophy of communication which is also operational in phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics as offering a fitting response. Principally, Aristotle noted that the mean varies from one context to another and is not static; hence it is always the activity of phronesis (prudence) to determine the mean in any context; and to accomplish this, phronesis “must grasp the circumstances in their infinite variety” (Gadamer 1975, 21). Phronesis must understand the context to be able to determine the mean or what should be done. However, Gadamer notes: “Although the practice of this virtue [phronesis] means that one distinguishes what should be done from what should not, it is not simply practical shrewdness and general cleverness. This distinction between what should and should not be done includes the distinction between the proper and the improper and thus presumes a moral attitude, which it continues to develop” (1975, 22). This mirrors Aristotle’s treatment of phronesis within the ethical or moral framework, describing deliberating well (phronesis) as the activity of the good man. Thus, to deliberate well through “grasping the circumstances in their infinite variety,” one determines what should or should not be done. It is as phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics that rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis can determine a tentative answer, a mean in a given situation.

In view of determining the mean or temporal answer, Arnett states that “a philosophy of communication begins with attentiveness to the historical moment and emergent questions that define a given moment” (2010, 59). Like the fitting response, the
practical question that attends a philosophy of communication is “does a given philosophy of communication address the questions of this historical moment?” (Arnett 2010, 59). Attentiveness to the historical moment underlines the contextual and temporal nature of philosophy of communication, just like in the fitting response where Schrag emphasizes on the need to “prevent the idolatry of response: ‘Here now is the response for all time and eternity’” (Ramsey and Miller 31). Philosophy of communication operates in form of reasonableness rather than rationality; it is what makes sense in this historical situation and context, rather than what is logically coherent or objective for all time. This perspective equally reiterates the place of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis which does not operate from the framework of method or objective knowledge arising from rationality. While Schrag states that “what makes a response fitting is the gift understood in terms of a giving that expects nothing in return (Ramsey and Miller 32), he explains that “the fitting response is measured by the extent to which this giving gives what is called for” (Ramsey and Miller). If a philosophy of communication does not address the questions of a given historical moment, it fails to offer what is needed and so does not offer a fitting response. This happens if its praxis is not enacted through phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics that is always attentive to the moment or historical context.

In other words, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis operates more as phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics since communicative praxis as “discourse and action are [always] about something, by someone, and for someone” (Schrag 2003, viii). Arnett adds a fourth metaphor or preposition to communicative praxis, stating: “Schrag’s communicative praxis rests upon four basic prepositional guidelines/metaphors: about the
topic, by a given communicative agent, and for a given other or audience, and within responsiveness to a given historical moment” (2003, 182). He notes that “Schrag employs the first three metaphors explicitly, with the fourth (within) assumed” (2003 182). For Arnett, “Schrag’s constituent parts of communicative praxis are embedded, or situated, within content, within the temporal needs of a person/audience, within the narrative ground that shapes embedded agents and within the historical moment” (2003, 182). This amplifies the fact that rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis as communicative praxis is always contextual, temporal and attentive to the historical moment and to the persons/audience involved.

The fact that communicative praxis is always by and for someone aligns with Arnett’s position that “what makes a given question possible is the drama of human life;” that is, “in the emergence of a given question, it is the drama of human existence that announces the need for the importance of attending to a given question” (2010, 59). It is significant that Gadamer argues that the question of human existence or experience is beyond what a scientific theory or method can offer a fitting response or answer to; and it was this that spurred his philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer definitively states: “The ideal of method, which was the universal claim of the modern era and the natural sciences, and which attempted to eliminate prejudice, any preoccupation, any predetermination of experience from the standpoint of the observer, was totally inadequate in meeting the demand to ground human experience and humanity as such (1982,6). This is because “the ideal of method presupposes full self-control and the elimination of all the conditions of the observer” (1982, 6). Phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics are always attentive to issues that affect man mindful of the conditions or
experiences of the person/audience being affected, little wonder Aristotle treated phronesis in the context of a moral action of man.

Following this line of thought, Arnett highlights that “it is not sufficient for a philosophy of communication to offer information; it has a unique task of rendering the meaningfulness of information before us” (2010, 60). It is phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics that guarantees the transition from information to meaning. In other words, “tempering information by moving existential meaning into embodied and contextual understanding” (Arnett and Holba 3) is the activity of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics. This tempering of information in philosophy of communication is enacted through “the interplay of ideas, people, and historical situations that shape the dwelling of human meaning” (Arnett and Holba 3). Mindful of this tempering function of philosophy of communication as tied to the activity of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, Arnett and Holba note, “philosophical hermeneutics unites three coordinates – the interpreter, the text, and the historical moment – in dialogue” (87). These descriptions of philosophy of communication and philosophical hermeneutics tie both of them together as the same enterprise, where philosophical hermeneutics becomes the driver or pragmatic tool of philosophy of communication.

Intensifying philosophy of communication as the activity of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, Arnett writes that “philosophy of communication is not method-centered. . . [Although] a philosophy of communication cannot and should not reject the important contribution of method; however, a philosophy of communication chooses the vulnerability of public opinion over public verification of methodological findings” (2010, 61). For Arnett, “a philosophy of communication tied to public opinion
works differently than scientific theories linked to public verification” (2010, 61).
Significantly, for both Aristotle and Gadamer, phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics are not methods, and they do not give rise to unimpeachable truths. In this connection, Arnett highlights that “from a philosophy of communication perspective, the goal is understanding, not accumulation of unassailable truths” (2010, 61). To further highlight the affinity of philosophy of communication and philosophical hermeneutics, or that rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is the activity of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, Arnett states that “philosophy of communication follows the guidelines of Gadamer (1983), choosing the temporal and forever flawed and limited pursuit of truth as a public story over the Descartian (1956) method” (2010, 61). Arnett, in line with Gadamer, notes that “philosophy of communication as qualitative research begins with a question that seeks to understand experience within communication environments. One does not turn to philosophy of communication principally to explain what has happened but rather to understand what is before us” (2016, 2). Philosophy of communication is attentive to lived or embodied experience in a particular historical moment. Thus, “philosophy of communication does not offer final answers to questions but seeks temporal understanding. Philosophy of communication assists one in understanding temporal answers to the experience of human communication” (2016, 2). Both Aristotle in his phronesis, and Gadamer in his philosophical hermeneutics, highlight their concepts as significant in situations where final answers are impossible, but where one must have to make an immediate decision and act or offer a fitting response. Phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics becomes a handy tool in such moments for such temporal decisions and action.
Describing philosophy of communication in terms of thinking and interpretation, Arnett states that “thinking and interpretation unite inductive and deductive reasoning; however, in qualitative research from this perspective, abduction drives the implications” (2016, 4). He explains abduction as “an educated and reasoned guess taking the form of the best public explanation for an observed set of circumstances; it includes and transcends the inductive and deductive gathering of insight. Abduction is thoughtful reasoning that permits one to ascertain what might be around the corner that is momentarily out of sight” (2016, 4). Here, abduction is equivalent to phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics which are neither inductive nor deductive. From the foregoing, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is the activity of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics. Expressed differently, phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is a pragmatic tool for rhetoric and philosophy of communication of praxis.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter privileges Schrag’s rhetoric and hermeneutics informed communicative praxis to argue for phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as a pragmatic tool for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis within the framework of Schrag’s assertion that “praxis is always entwined with communication” (Ramsey and Miller). Shrag argues that rhetoric and philosophy originally belong together in Greek thought, stating: “The ancient Greeks had already come upon the insight that the tasks of philosophy and rhetoric are entwined. This insight informed the institution of the medieval trivium, in which logic, rhetoric, and grammar were viewed as intercalating disciplines” (2003, vii). To make the fact of this relationship clearer, this chapter began with the description of the relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics as discussed
by Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer, Schrag, Hyde and Smith, Arthos, and a host of others. In fact, Hyde and Smith describe this relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics as “seen but unobserved;” stating: “The overlooked relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric, ontological in nature, evolves from the basic mode of human understanding; in Heidegger’s words, this basic mode of understanding is an ontological (primordial) structure constituting the nature of human being (Dasein)” (Hyde and Smith 347).

Rhetoric and hermeneutics belong to our nature as human beings, they are ontological. Since they are ontological to man, they are also linguistic; and if ontological and linguistic, they are reflective of man’s historicality. This is because both Heidegger and Gadamer emphasize linguisticality and historicality as ontological to man. Concisely, Jeffery Bineham writes that “Schrag agrees with Heidegger’s description of Aristotle’s rhetoric as “the first systematic hermeneutic of everyday life” (1985, 171). Aristotle’s rhetoric assumes a hermeneutic character in Heidegger and Schrag given its emphasis on the importance of pathos, or affect, in the creation and management of meaning. Aristotle views meaning not as objective and unprejudiced, but as a matter of interpretation influenced by the “moods” and convictions of an audience (Heidegger 1962, 178; Bineham 308). Here, it is due to man’s historicality that meaning is not something objective and unprejudiced; that is, meaning is always attentive or tied to the historical moment or context.

Building on this established relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics, the chapter goes on to explore how phronesis plays into this relationship; and discovers that both rhetoric and hermeneutics converge in praxis and manifest as phronesis. Bineham writes: “Because both disciplines are concerned primarily with the practical uses and
implications of language, both emphasize praxis—practical activity or practical
cconduct—and phronesis—practical reasoning or practical knowledge. In both rhetoric
and hermeneutics, writes Gadamer, ‘theory is subsequent to that out of which it is
abstracted; that is, to praxis’” (1975, 21; Bineham 309). This interplay of praxis and
phronesis in the relationship of rhetoric and hermeneutics undergird Gadamer’s
philosophical hermeneutics. Thus, Bineham cites Bernstein stating that “the outstanding
theme in Gadamer's philosophic hermeneutics is his fusion of hermeneutics and praxis,
and the claim that understanding itself is a form of practical reasoning and practical
knowledge—a form of phronesis” (1983, 174; Bineham 309). This expresses the
connection between Aristotle’s phronesis and Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics
which are attentive to praxis. Bineham clearly affirms that “the concepts of praxis and
phronesis stem from the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition, where they account for the
activities and theoretical bases of pragmatic persuasive conduct enacted within a
particular community and for specific aims and interests” (309). Given this convergence
of rhetoric and hermeneutics in praxis and phronesis, Bineham also highlights that “all
knowledge, in philosophical hermeneutics, is practical knowledge. The hermeneutic
process of understanding, then, always involves the rhetorical activities of phronesis and
praxis. Rhetoric thus becomes an important part of the ontological philosophy offered as
hermeneutics” (309). This stresses the salience of praxis and phronesis in the interplay of
rhetoric and hermeneutics. Mindful of the emphasis on praxis in this relationship, this
chapter explored the concept “praxis” especially from the perspective of Schrag’s
communicative praxis.
Accordingly, Schrag notes that praxis is always entwined with communication, hence his chosen phrase “communicative praxis” in which “communication qualifies praxis – is even an intrinsic qualification of praxis, in that it provides the context for the very understanding of the meaning of what goes on in human action. When you link communication and praxis you now have a social form that provides the context for specific acts” (Ramsey and Miller 20). In this, Schrag strives “to reclaim the Aristotelian sense of praxis before the separation of theory and practice in the tradition,” stating that “praxis as the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding” (21). Praxis operates from a special kind of insight or theory that is not scientific but originary to man. For Schrag, praxis is the “in-between” of theory and practice; it does not entail the sum of theory and practice. Praxis is ontological to man via rhetoric and hermeneutics and via language for communication is also influenced by man’s historicality. As a result, Schrag notes that communicative praxis is always about something, by someone and for someone. Stated differently, “the amalgam of communication and praxis has been designed to orient reflection on discourse and action as being about something; as being initiated by someone; and as being addressed to and for someone” (2003, ix). These prepositions “about, by, to/for” portray communicative praxis as always attentive to the historical moment/audience. To underscore this fact, Arnett adds a fourth metaphor “within responsiveness to a given historical moment” to the three communicative praxis metaphors of “about, by and for” stating: “Schrag employs the first three metaphors explicitly, with the fourth (within) assumed” (2003, 182). Arnett states that “Schrag’s constituent parts of communicative praxis is embedded, or situated, within
the temporal needs of a person/audience, within the narrative ground that shapes embedded agents and within the historical moment” (2003, 182). To emphasize the historicality of communicative praxis, Arnett and Arneson write that “communication is a process guided by persons, text and the historical moment. . . Because communication is an ever-changing process, we cannot divorce our communicative understanding from the historical moment of interpretation” (1999, 32). Mindful of the historicality of praxis entwined with communication, Arnett and Arneson remind us “not to reify communication in the abstract” (1999, 31). Communicative praxis changes as time changes. As communication is praxis and not abstract, the project turned to its implication for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

This project highlights that rhetoric and philosophy of communication converge in praxis, and so are attentive to the historical context or moment. This implies that praxis in its original Aristotelian sense as argued by Schrag reflects rhetoric and philosophy of communication. While taking a similar stance and direction with Schrag to overcome the Cartesian dualism that created the conflict between rhetoric and philosophy, Bineham notes that “philosophical hermeneutics can provide a non-dualist perspective that is especially appropriate for rhetorical studies” (300). For Bineham, “to embrace philosophical hermeneutics as an alternative to the dualist paradigm is to displace traditional epistemological concerns and questions. Philosophical hermeneutics primarily is an exercise in ontology rather than in epistemology” (307). As an ontological activity, philosophical hermeneutics is practical rather than abstract. Hence, to say rhetoric and philosophical hermeneutics rather than rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis brings out the convergence of rhetoric and hermeneutics on praxis more clearly because
“both disciplines are concerned primarily with the practical uses and implications of
language, both emphasize praxis—practical activity or practical conduct—and
phronesis—practical reasoning or practical knowledge” (Bineham 309). In this
framework, it becomes clear that rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is an
activity in phronesis or philosophical hermeneutics. In other words, one can speak of
rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis as communicative praxis, which is
driven by phronesis, and phronesis manifests as reasonableness rather than rationality.

Scholars like Chaim Perelman, Walter Fisher, Stephen Toulmin, Lenore
Langsdorf and others all agree on the difference between reasonableness and rationality.
In this, Fisher upholds Gadamer’s position that “reason exists for us only in concrete,
historical terms, i.e., it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the
given circumstances in which it operates” (1987, 95). Fisher also adopts Perelman’s
stance in the distinction between rationality and reasonableness. Thus, on the one hand,
“the rational is associated with demonstration in theoretical domains and with calculated,
nonemotional action in human behavior. . . strict rationality is devoid of passion,
detached from considerations of circumstance, time, and place, and serves the interests of
monolithic systems, whether philosophical or political” (Fisher 131). As such, rationality
is geared towards objective, certain or scientific knowledge that cannot be otherwise. On
the other hand, “the reasonable is sensitive to the history, traditions, and culture of a
community. What is reasonable in one society at one time may not be reasonable at
another time or in a different society” (Fisher 132). Reasonableness, unlike rationality, is
geared towards a knowledge that can be otherwise, a temporal knowledge that is attentive
to the historical moment, and so, is subject to change. Reasonableness is the activity of
phronesis that is attentive to the practical and not to the abstract as rationality does. In this sense, reasonableness is more a communicative activity unlike rationality, because it is practical, and not abstract. Thus, it (reasonableness) operates as phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics and so, is salient for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

It is with this perspective that this project considers phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as a pragmatic tool for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. As communicative praxis, rhetoric and philosophy of communication is a practical endeavor rather than an abstract one, because communication, as a lived experience, cannot be “reified in the abstract” (Arnett and Arneson 1999, 27). Rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis operates with the pragmatic tool with which praxis functions, which is phronesis, as coming from Aristotle. Similarly, anchoring his practical hermeneutics on Aristotle’s practical philosophy, on the concept of phronesis, Gadamer speaks of philosophical hermeneutics which is a practical rather than an abstract exercise. Philosophical hermeneutics is another term for phronesis, and both operate like reasonableness and not rationality. Phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics offer temporal answers to questions confronting a historical moment and context. For Arnett and Holba, “philosophical hermeneutics unites three coordinates – the interpreter, the text, and the historical moment – in dialogue” (85). To maintain the practical and dialogical character of philosophical hermeneutics, Arnett and Holba state that “philosophical hermeneutics offers a philosophical picture of knowledge advanced through respect. First, the interpreter must respect the ideas and positions that shape his or her interpretive identity; positions and standpoints give rise to a particular perspective
on what is discovered or understood. Second, respect must guide engagement with the
text under consideration, which has a life of its own; we cannot make something say what
we demand” (85). It is reasonableness that operates through respect and not rationality.
As such, phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics keeps rhetoric and philosophy of
communication praxis as a practical exercise rather than an abstract endeavor; ontological
rather than epistemological. This has significant implications for rhetoric and philosophy
of communication praxis among which is retaining them as the ken of all rather than the
experts or professionals only. It also has a clear implication for the pastoral work of the
Church where the Gospel has to speak to every era or epoch in a new way in order to
evangelize that era or epoch; and seeking this pastoral implication is the focus of the next
chapter.
Chapter 5

Beyond Professionalism: A Pastoral Implication of Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication Praxis

This chapter seeks the pastoral implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis using the lens of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics. It notes that based on Aristotle’s view that rhetoric is the ken of all men, as affirmed by Heidegger, Gadamer, Arthos, Schrag and other scholars, and on their fundamental agreement on the relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics, hermeneutics is also the ken of all men. Hyde and Smith attest to this relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics as ontological, and so, belongs to man’s essential way of being, that is, they are attributes of all men and not that of only the professionals or experts. Taking this ontological approach, rather than the epistemological approach of modern science beginning from Descartes, implies that rhetoric and hermeneutics are fundamentally practical not abstract. Aristotle emphasized praxis stating that rhetoric is a practical activity; and praxis is enacted through phronesis (practical wisdom) which is not a method but an intellectual virtue obtainable in situations where things can be otherwise, where objective, unimpeachable truth is not possible. Similarly, Gadamer projects philosophical hermeneutics as an event of understanding and not a method and ties it to Aristotle’s phronesis. Thus, given that phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics functions as praxis, and Schrag insists that praxis is always entwined with communication, hence, communicative praxis, this project argues for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis as the activity of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics.
In seeking the pastoral implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, mindful that the pastoral field is a sphere that deals with things that can be otherwise, this chapter considers phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tool that can assist in making this transition. Expressed differently, phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is here considered as the pragmatic tool for walking the humanities — rhetoric and philosophy of communication— into the marketplace— the pastoral field. We will explore the pastoral field in order to understand or ascertain how rhetoric and philosophy of communication plays into it by exploring the pastoral and communication documents from the Catholic intellectual tradition. We now turn to these documents.

5.1 Ecclesiastical Documents on Pastoral Life

Undergirding every ecclesiastical document on pastoral life is the Biblical position of the “Good Shepherd” in John 10: 11-18, in which Jesus calls himself the “Good Shepherd” who searches for the lost sheep and who lays down his life for his sheep. In order to carry on his pastoral work, Jesus commissioned his disciples saying: “Go into the whole world proclaim the gospel” (Mtt.28:19; Mk.16:15). Here, in rendering the whole world as the pastoral field for the disciples and for the Gospel, Jesus is announcing a universal salvation, which is for all and not just for a particular segment of the world. Mindful of this universality of salvation, Pope St. John XXIII, in his opening address at the beginning of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on October 11, 1962, titled Gaudet Mater Ecclesia states that “the main task of this Council is not, therefore, the discussion of this or that theme of the fundamental doctrine of the Church. . . One thing is the substance of the ancient doctrine, of the “depositum fidei”, and another, way of formulating its expression; and great account must be taken of this — patiently, if
necessary — adhering to the norms and demands of a predominantly pastoral magisterium” (www.vatican.va). This pontifical allocution insists that “Vatican II would have to be a pastoral council rather than a doctrinal council. . . the council would present the old doctrines in a new way, adapted to modern needs. For this, he used the Italian word: ‘aggiornamento’ . . . he wished the council to steer away from a defensive and condemnatory style and adopt an open and welcoming discourse” (Schelkens et al. 35). Avery Dulles notes that “aggiornamento” is an “Italian term which may be translated by English words such as updating, modernization, or adaptation” (20); hence, the Council is to adapt and update the Church to the modern times. Schelkens et al., highlight that “other than Pius XII before him, this Pope [John XXIII] carefully distinguished between the eternal truth itself, contained in the ‘deposit of faith,’ and the expression and presentation of that truth, which is subject to rephrasing according to contemporary needs and forms of thought” (136). This implies that while times change, the deposit of faith does not change, and pastorally, each time or era has to be attentive to this deposit of faith for their salvation. Gaudet Mater Ecclesia notes that “what is most important to the Ecumenical Council is that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be preserved and presented more effectively” (No.5) to offer a fitting response in every era.

In undertaking this task, the allocution states that “it is first of all necessary that the Church never turn its eyes away from the sacred bank of truth received from the elders; but at the same time, it is necessary that the presence also looks at the times, which have introduced new conditions of life, new ways of living, and opened new paths for the Catholic apostolate” (No.5). Articulated differently, “it is necessary that this certain and immutable doctrine, to which faithful obedience is to be rendered, should be
investigated and expounded in such a way as our times demand” (No.6). It is essential that the Gospel be attentive to the particular historical moment in its proclamation in order to bear the fruit of aligning the moment to God in view of salvation to which it is geared. The Church is impelled to do this mindful of the openings the modern times have created for the Church, by opening her doors and windows to the modern world, hence the “aggiornamento”. This call for the Church to open up to encounter and dialogue with the modern world was emphasized by Pope Paul VI on September 29, 1963, when he inaugurated the second period of the council after the death of Pope John XXIII, in line with the spirit of the Council initiated by his predecessor. In his speech, Pope Paul VI proclaimed that “the Church is committed to dialogue with the modern world and to reposition itself both in its outward relationships and internally” (Schelkens et al. 46). This aggiornamento towards the modern world culminated in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes (GS) which states:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds (No.1).

To proclaim and stress the universality of salvation, GS states: “The council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the
world of today. . . the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; . . . so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God’s design and reach its fulfillment” (No.2). The way the Church tries to meet this pastoral obligation of identifying with the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of all men in order to fulfill the Biblical injunction: “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Rom. 12:15) is by attentiveness to the signs of the time, the realities in which men live and the context.

In concert with this, GS states: “To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (No.4). This emphasis on scrutinizing and interpreting the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel is significant in the pastoral life of the Church. It makes the Gospel relevant in every historical moment. In interpreting the Gospel to the modern world, the light of the Gospel is not merely adapted to fit the times or vice versa, like applying a general principle to a particular situation; it requires much more. It is for this purpose that this project thinks of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis from the lens of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics. In this context, Walter Fisher notes that “there is a difference between adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas, and designing discourse to render people objects rather than rational persons” (1987, 118). To reiterate this point, GS states that the Church “in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics” (No.4). In terms of the role of rhetoric and philosophy
of communication praxis in this pastoral goal, this project thinks of phronesis/or philosophical hermeneutics which interplays ideas/text, the interpreter/people, and the historical moment in order for the meaning of the Gospel to emerge in that moment.

GS’s use of the expression “in language intelligible to each generation” (No.4) is significant for its recognition that language changes as generations change or as historical moments change, and this aligns with the position of Arnett that “philosophy of communication offers temporal answers attentive to the historical moment which can atrophy and die when it no longer offers fitting response to the questions or realities of the historical moment (2010, 59). In this purview, pastoral work enacted via the lens of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis becomes attentive to Schrag’s emphasis on the need to avoid in the fitting response “the idolatry of response: Here now is the response for all time and eternity” (Ramsey and Miller 31). Mindful that no one response fits all contexts or realities or historical moments, or that no one language fits all generations, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis becomes significant for the pastoral field which is always in search of answers for ways to fuse the new realities in man’s life with the light of the Gospel. It follows that rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis offers phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as a pragmatic tool the pastoral field should embrace in the fusion of any historical moment and the Gospel.

In this framework, GS reiterates the place of context in the pastoral field asserting that “the ability to express Christ’s message in its own way is developed in each nation, and at the same time there is fostered a living exchange between the Church and the diverse cultures of people” (No.44). This entails that no one expression or meaning fits all contexts or nations in the pastoral field; the Gospel should be ever attentive to the
context. Thus, although “the Church has a single intention: that God’s kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass. . . [for] the Church is ‘the universal sacrament of salvation’” (No.45), it has to be attentive to every context where the message is spread in order to read the signs and realities in people’s lives and interpret them accordingly in the light of the Gospel or shine the light of the Gospel on them. This aligns with the stance in rhetoric and philosophy of communication that meaning is contextual and not universal, temporal not permanent or fixed.

In this undertaken, the Church is attentive to the notions of discourse with “big D and discourse with “little d” by Joy Hart in a review of Gail T. Fairhurst’s discursive leadership. She refers to “language use in interactions” as “little d” discourse; and Foucault’s idea of Discourse as “a system of thought and a way of talking about a subject that together supplies the necessary linguistic resources for communicating actors” as “big D” discourse (185). For Arnett, McManus and McKendree, “Discourse as background and discourse as foreground suggest that Discourse (with a capital D) shapes the perimeters and limits of interpretive possibilities while discourse (with a small d) implements possibilities within a given context” (71). Within the Church, the Scripture, the Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium form the Discourse with a “big D” which sets the limits for the Church’s discourse with “little d” as it encounters other traditions or contexts or difference. In fusion of horizons in philosophical hermeneutics, the Church’s “big D” Discourse is always preserved as she engages other horizons or contexts or alterity with her “little d” discourse which “brings persons and context into interaction” (Arnett et al. 85). Accordingly, Arnett et al. note that “institutions restrain and constrain discourse as “capital D” (28); and the Church does this to preserve the depositum fidei
(deposit of faith) — an eternal and unchanging truth that remains relevant in every age for salvation — her Sacred Tradition and Magisterium. This accounts for why phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is salient for the Church, for in a fusion of horizons, the two horizons keep their differences intact without any horizon imposing its view on the other or colonizing the other. Restated, when the Church engages alterity via phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, something new emerges as a “third”, an “in-between”, or what Gadamer calls a “new horizon”, which does not imply the sum of the two horizons in dialogue. Rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis leads to this emergent and contextual and temporal meaning in every historical moment/context.

Further, just as rhetoric and philosophy of communication is not solely the province of experts or professionals, GS posits that “with the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage” (No.44). In this light, reading the signs of the times is not merely the task of pastors or theologians but every member of the Church. To amplify this, GS adds, “let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission” (No.43). This implies that pastoral work is akin to that of a craftsman rather than expert, a wise man rather than a scholar or academician, an ontological or practical activity in phronesis/or philosophical hermeneutics rather than an epistemological enterprise.
In order to underscore the significance of attentiveness to context and the historical moment, GS states that “there are many ties between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch” (No. 58). In other words, even God wants the pastoral field to be attentive to context (culture) and the historical moment (each epoch) in unpacking the meaning of divine-human relationship or the Gospel. GS highlights the historicality of the Church stating that “the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, any particular way of life or any customary way of life recent or ancient” (No. 58). The Church keeps changing and always reforming herself attentive to the signs of the times. Hence, “theologians, within the requirements and methods proper to theology, are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times; for the deposit of Faith or the truths are one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated, in the same meaning and understanding, is another” (No. 62). From the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis perspective, this pastoral task can be accomplished utilizing phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics which respects the differences of the horizons in dialogue, so that “the knowledge of God is better manifested, and the preaching of the Gospel becomes clearer to human intelligence and shows itself to be relevant to man’s actual conditions of life” (No. 62). For the Gospel to be reflective of every age or moment in which it is proclaimed, it has to be attentive to the human condition of that moment.

GS stresses that “Theological inquiry should pursue a profound understanding of revealed truth; at the same time, it should not neglect close contact with its own time that
it may be able to help these men skilled in various disciplines to attain to a better understanding of the faith” (No. 62). This agrees with Arnett’s (2010) stance that philosophy of communication is not against the contributions of method, but however is more attentive to the “of” that announces its contextual application. Without this “of” communication will be reified in the abstract, and pastoral life, like communication is attentive to praxis. This project argues that a way to always guarantee the place of the “of” or praxis in rhetoric and philosophy of communication, and indeed, in pastoral life of the Church, is to utilize phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics. Utilizing this pragmatic tool is essential in pastoral field as “this common effort will greatly aid the formation of priests, who will be able to present to our contemporaries the doctrine of the Church concerning God, man and the world, in a manner more adapted to them so that they may receive it more willingly” (No.62). In other words, pastoral agents need phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics to be practical rather than abstract in their pastoral work and in order to take cognizance of the human condition in their pastoral work. 

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) exhorts:

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it addresses, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. But on the other hand, evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it... out of a wish to adapt a universal reality to a local situation (No.63)
Mindful of this exhortation, pastoral agents need phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in discharging their pastoral work attentive to the “big D” and “little d” discourses.

Schelkens et al., writing about GS stress that its “entire schema put the dignity of the human person at the central core of attention. . . it is in this text that the council fathers ‘acknowledged that the Christian message should be formulated anew in a new age and amid new circumstances. This was necessary in order to convey the fundamental essence of faith to the modern world” (156). While the Church geared up in GS to embrace the modern world, she did not lose sight of the fact that the ultimate purpose is to maintain “communion” of the faithful given that the council was an ecumenical council. Given the centrality of “communion” as the overarching aim of the entire Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the council document, Nostra Aetate notes, “the Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion” (Schelkens et al.158). In sum, they assert that the “Second Vatican Ecumenical Council’s ‘pastoral reflex’ was indebted not only to the vision of Gaudium et Spes; but equally to the three documents. . . Nostra aetate, Dignitatis humanae, and Unitatis redintegratio. If anywhere, Vatican II’s willingness to enter into conversation with the ‘other’ is reflected there” (159). This idea of the Church—embracing the modern world and ensuring communion—that pervaded the Council, were reflected and very manifest in the various ecclesiastical documents on communication, and to this we turn.

5.2 Ecclesiastical Documents on Communication

At different times, following the emergence of every new technology or means of communication, the Church provides general guidelines not specific dictates to guide the
use of that new technology especially in evangelization for her members to whom she owes a pastoral obligation and care. This has given rise to several ecclesiastical documents on communication. Arnett notes that “the limits placed on a practical philosophy are not specific dictates, but general guidelines that shape without totally framing the appropriate form of action” (1990, 211). The Church provides general guidelines not specific dictates about each technology or means of communication mindful that context and historical moment matter in the use of each media of communication; and this is reflective of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics which abhors one response fits all media or technologies of communication.

Thus, prior to the Second Vatican Council, in 1936, Pope Pius XI in his encyclical on Motion Picture, *Vigilanti Cura (VC)*, notes that the Church’s pastoral office follows with vigilant eye or watchful care the new media of communication and its use and influence on the people. He states that “the essential purpose of art, its raison d’être, is to assist in the perfection of the moral personality, which is man, and for this reason it must itself be moral” (*VC*, 1936). Mindful of this purpose of art, *VC* argues that “since then the cinema is in reality a sort of object lesson which, for good or for evil, teaches the majority of men more effectively than abstract reasoning, it must be elevated to conformity with the aims of a Christian conscience and saved from depraving and demoralizing effects” (1936). To ensure that the motion picture or cinema serves the pastoral needs of that era, the Church encourages the practitioners, users and viewers to be vigilant less it does a disservice to the Gospel. For *VC*, it is “one of the supreme necessities of our times to watch and to labor to the end that the motion picture be no longer a school of corruption but that it be transformed into an effectual instrument for
the education and the elevation of mankind” (1936). This vigilance against the corrupting influences of the cinema or motion picture rests on every member of the Church to “assure that a great international force— the motion picture— shall be directed towards the noble end of promoting the highest ideals and the truest standards of life” (VC 1936).

While the Church does not condemn the motion picture, she calls for caution in its use in evangelization to ensure it does not harm the salvation of men. Other documents also conform and uphold this line of reasoning.

In 1957, twenty years after VC, Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical on Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, Miranda Prorsus (MP), states: “Those very remarkable technical inventions which are the boast of the men of our generation, though they spring from human intelligence and industry, are nevertheless the gifts of God, Our Creator, from Whom all good gifts proceed” (1957). The Church recognizes these means of communication as gifts of God and so, ought to be put at the service of the Gospel.

Among the technical inventions, MP notes that “in our own age the greatest impetus has been received by the arts connected with Motion Pictures, Radio and Television [because] these new forms of art exercise very great influence on the manner of thinking and acting of individuals and of every group of men” (1957). Mindful of the (positive and negative) influence of these media on people, MP states that “the Church may use these technical discoveries in so far as they may assist the sanctification of souls” (1957). In keeping with this view, MP notes, “this should be the first aim of the arts of the Motion Pictures, Radio and Television: to serve truth and virtue. . . [and] also the perfecting of human life and morals. Let them make an active contribution to this in three ways. . . in the news published, in the instruction imparted, in the shows presented” (1957). In Sum,
MP approves the Church’s use of these means of communication for evangelization and sets forth general guidelines for their use. This trend continued in the Second Vatican Council’s document on communication.

The Second Vatican Council document, Decree on the Media of Social Communications, Inter Mirifica (IM) welcomes the advancements in communication technologies or media through which many people can easily be reached with news and information. For IM, “the most important of these inventions are those media which, such as the press, movies, radio, television and the like, can, of their very nature, reach and influence, not only individuals, but the very masses and the whole of human society, and thus can rightly be called the media of social communication” (No.1). By calling these information technologies, “the media of social communications,” the Church lays emphasis on how fitting they are for the spread of the Gospel stating: “The Catholic Church, since it was founded by Christ our Lord to bear salvation to all men and thus is obliged to preach the Gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the Good News of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men in their proper use” (No.3). While approving that the media of social communication be at the service of the universality of salvation and not vice versa, IM states:

For the proper use of these media, it is most necessary that all who employ them be acquainted with the norms of morality and conscientiously put them into practice in this area. They must look, then, to the nature of what is communicated, given the special character of each of these media. At the same time, they must take into consideration the entire situation or circumstances, namely, the persons, place, time and other conditions under which communication takes place and
which can affect or totally change its propriety. Among these circumstances to be considered is the precise manner in which a given medium achieves its effect (No.4).

*IM* calls attention to reasonableness rather than rationality in the use of these media. The *IM’s* attentiveness to the “why” behind the “how” in the use of these media coincides with the hub of philosophy of communication; and announces the need for phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in the Church’s communication. Attentiveness to the moral norms is valuable for phronesis in its deliberation about the mean in every context; and being mindful of persons, place, time, and other human conditions or realities in their use is an activity of philosophical hermeneutics. This implies that the Church advances the need for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis via phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in the use of the media of social communication for evangelization, and this is recurrent in other ecclesiastical documents on communication.

The document, Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication, *Communio et Progressio (CP)* which, apparently, is the Church’s magna carta on communication, notes that “the unity and advancement of men living in society: these are the chief aims of social communication and of all the means it uses. More than ever before, the way men live and think is profoundly affected by the means of communication” (No.1). However, as reflective of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, *CP* notes, “this pastoral instruction… carefully refrains from going into minute details on a subject which is continually changing and developing, and which varies so much according to time and place” (No.3). *CP* recognizes the historicality of these media and calls attention to it. Stated simply, since the media of social communication serve the
unity and advancement of men, CP beckons that they be utilized with attentiveness to the time and context or place. For instance, people without electricity cannot be reached through the television or videos; so pastoral agents have to be attentive to the context in order to use a fitting means/medium. This implies that, like rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, in using these media for evangelization, attention to the “why” rather than merely to the “how” of use is necessary. Even in a context where different media can be used, phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is needed to make judgment as to the media fitting in that context for the particular pastoral task so that communion or unity and salvation— the essential goals in Church’s communication— are maintained.

CP notes that “in the Christian faith, the unity and brotherhood of man are the chief aims of all communication, and these find their source and model in the central mystery of the eternal communion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who live a single divine life” (No.8). As an exemplar for the Church’s communication to be attentive to context and time, CP states that “in the fullness of time, He [God] communicated His very self to man and ‘the Word was made flesh’. From that moment, communication among men found its highest ideal and supreme example in God who had become Man and Brother” (No.10). Stated differently: “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. . . The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Heb.1:1-2). This implies that other means of communication were used in other contexts and times, but in a particular historical time, God chose to become man as a fitting way to make the
message heard. To stress the rhetoric and philosophy of communication import of the incarnation, CP states:

While He was on earth Christ revealed Himself as the Perfect Communicator.

Through His “incarnation”, He utterly identified Himself with those who were to receive His communication and He gave His message not only in words but in the whole manner of His life. He spoke from within, that is to say, from out of the press of His people. . . He adjusted to His people’s way of talking and to their patterns of thought. And He spoke out of the predicament of their time (No.11).

Here, Christ, the Good Shepherd, is the perfect exemplar for pastoral communication; he mirrors rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis as phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics via attentiveness to the context, the audience, and the historical moment as he carried out his pastoral work; hence, CP calls him “the perfect communicator” (No.11). He used the means of communication fitting for his era and people to communicate his message.

Accordingly, CP notes that “the importance and ultimate significance of the media of communication depend upon the working of man’s free choice in their use” (No.13). Thus, there is no one way of using these media, since they cannot use themselves; they depend on the user for their usefulness. To use them in the spirit of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis, to offer a fitting response or message requires phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in order to make the right judgment about their use, attentive to the historical moment, the context or place, the audience, and the message itself. For CP, “every communication. . . must accurately reflect the situation with all its implications. . . [and] the moral worth and validity of any communication does
not lie solely in its theme or intellectual content. The way in which it is presented, the
way in which it is spoken and treated and even the audience for which it is designed—all
these factors must be taken into account” (No.17). Communication has to be contextual
and respect the place and moment of its enactment and the audience to whom it is
directed. To reiterate, CP notes that “it is impossible to put the means of social
communication into a quite separate category from that of the everyday life and attitudes
of the people” (No.22). The means of social communication used in pastoral work have
to reflect people’s everyday life and attitude; they have to be attentive to how the
particular audience is engaged in the world.

Towards this end, CP highlights that “since the media of social communication
are for mankind, communicators should be consumed by the desire to serve men… The
more they get to know their audience, the more they understand it and appreciate it, the
more they will suit what they communicate to those who receive it” (No.72). Thus, “if
they do this, they help to make the process of communication a communion of the spirit”
(No.72). Sensitivity to the audience or the rhetorical situation is central to rhetoric; and
the process of communication as a communion of the spirit tallies with Gadamer’s fusion
of horizons where the horizon of the communicator and that of its audience are fused in
order for a meaning fitting to the context to emerge. Communicating the Gospel in this
way makes it a fitting response to the situation or the audience it addresses. To reinforce,
CP notes that “Pope Paul said of communicators that they are obliged to pay continual
attention to and to carry on an uninterrupted observation of the external world: ‘You must
continually stand at the window, open to the world; you are obliged to study the facts, the
events, the opinions, the current interests, the thought of the surrounding environment’”
This depicts the Church as very cognizant of man’s historicality and situatedness and applies this consciousness in disseminating the message of the Gospel for human salvation fitting for every age, time and place in her pastoral engagements. In this context, *CP* notes, “the Church moves with the movement of man. She therefore has to adapt herself to the special circumstances that arise out of time and place. She has to consider how the truths of the faith may be explained in different times and cultures. She has to reach a multitude of decisions while adjusting her actions to the changes around her” (No.117). This is the Church’s central pastoral stance and strategy in order to meet the needs of every age; *GS* calls it alertness to “the signs of the times” (No.4). This ensures the Gospel remains ever new, relevant and fitting in every age.

*CP* enumerates a threefold benefit of the means of social communication to Catholics: “They help the Church reveal herself to the modern world. They foster dialogue within the Church. They make clear to the Church contemporary opinions and attitudes. For the Church has been ordered by God to give men the message of salvation in a language they can understand and to concern herself with the concerns of man” (No.125). Communication is for man and not man for communication; it has to be reflective of man’s condition and circumstances, man’s everyday experience. In the Church’s understanding of her pastoral role, no one message fits all contexts, but all contexts fit the Gospel; that is, each moment contributes to the meaning of the Gospel. For *CP*, “the People of God walk in history. As they, who are, essentially, both communicators and recipients, advance with their times, they look forward with confidence and even with enthusiasm to whatever the development of communications in a space age may have to offer” (No.187). This reaffirms that the Church is aware of the
tentative nature of communication and even of the media of social communication, and so calls attention to it in her pastoral life. Given this pastoral outlook of the Church, rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis with phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tool becomes very salient for the proper dissemination of the Gospel in every age to all people.

In *Centesimus Annos* (*CA*), the encyclical on the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope St. John Paul II affirms that “it goes without saying that part of the responsibility of Pastors is to give careful consideration to current events in order to discern the new requirements of evangelization” (No.3). This reinforces the need for sensitivity to the context and historical moment in order to understand how it can cohere with the Gospel. For Arnett, “it is the drama of human existence that announces the need for the importance of attending to a given question” (2010, 59). It is always the events in human life that influence how the pastoral work is enacted in order to serve man’s salvation for which Christ became incarnate. In view of this, *CA* states: “Now, as then, we need to repeat that there can be no genuine solution of the ‘social question’ apart from the Gospel, and that the ‘new things’ can find in the Gospel the context for their correct understanding and the proper moral perspective for judgment on them” (No.5). The proper moral perspective to enacting the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis is phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics. By implication, pastoral work cannot be driven by a method since context matters in evangelization. The work of evangelization requires phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics lest its communication becomes “reified in the abstract” (Arnett and Arneson 1999, 27). Evangelization is attentive to praxis; it tries
to keep pace with the fluidity of the media where new trends keep emerging as portrayed by other documents.

The Pastoral Instruction on Social Communication, *Aetatis Novae* (*AN*), on the twentieth anniversary of “*Communio et Progressio*” states that “at the dawn of a new era, a vast expansion of human communications is profoundly influencing culture everywhere. . . Nowhere today are people untouched by the impact of media upon religious and moral attitudes, political and social systems, and education” (No.1). Given the pervasive impact of the media on human life, in *AN*, the Church wishes to reflect on the pastoral implications of this situation. In this context, *AN* clearly states that “we do not pretend to say the final word on a complex, fluid, rapidly changing situation, but simply wish to provide a working tool, and a measure of encouragement, to those confronting the pastoral implications of the new realities” (No.1). It acknowledges that situations change, and that as situations change, responses also change; hence, no response is fitting for all situations or moments. The document avoids what Schrag calls the “idolatry of response: Here now is the response for all time and eternity” (Ramsey and Miller 31). *AN* calls for vigilance in the use of media since “the media can be used to proclaim the Gospel or to reduce it to silence in human hearts. As media become ever more intertwined with people’s daily lives, they influence how people understand the meaning of life itself” (No.4). In an age of media proliferation, if communication does not serve the vision of the Church — communion, it silences the Gospel in human hearts. The Church has to be aware of the historical situation/context in her use of the media of social communications in order to offer a fitting message of the Gospel in every age.
In this purview, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in her 1996 document, *100 Years of Cinema*, states that the moving image, in particular the motion picture, the film “cannot be considered exclusively as an emanation of the society which produced it; it must also be seen as a product of that same society in a specific historical period” (www.vatican.va). In other words, “the images of the mass media are a reflection of society itself” (www.vatican.va). As a result, the Church notes that “it is important for young people to be critically aware of the mass media environment, including the press, that they are living in” (www.vatican.va). Critical awareness entails knowing and understanding how the media works and crafts information. This awareness helps to make a better interpretation of the meaning being communicated via these means of communication. We need to understand a particular medium and how it works in order to understand its messages and influence based on the moment and context of its use.

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications in her document, *Ethics in Advertising* (*EA*), notes that “just as the media of social communication themselves have enormous influence everywhere, so advertising, using media as its vehicle, is a pervasive, powerful force shaping attitudes and behavior in today's world” (No.1). In defining advertisement as “a public notice meant to convey information and invite patronage or some other response,” *EA* notes that “advertising has two basic purposes: to inform and to persuade, and — while these purposes are distinguishable — both very often are simultaneously present” (No.2). Mindful of the persuasive and pervasive influence of advertising, among other relevant moral principles necessary for good practice of advertising, the Church identifies these three: “truthfulness, the dignity of the human person, and social responsibility” (No.14). *EA* calls upon “advertising professionals and
upon all those involved in the process of commissioning and disseminating advertising to eliminate its socially harmful aspects and observe high ethical standards in regard to truthfulness, human dignity and social responsibility” (No.23). It is “in this way, they will make a special and significant contribution to human progress and to the common good” (No.23). *EA* urges that advertising has to serve the common good, for a “communication that meets this standard is, among other things, a true expression of solidarity” (No.17). Solidarity mirrors communion which is key in Church’s self-understanding of herself since the second Vatican Council and in her pastoral work.

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications in the document, *Ethics in Communications (EC)*, states that “great good and great evil come from the use people make of the media of social communication. . . For even though acts of communicating often do have unintended consequences, nevertheless people choose whether to use the media for good or evil ends, in a good or evil way” (No.1). This implies that “the media do nothing by themselves; they are instruments, tools, used as people choose to use them” (No.4). A lot depends on the user of the media and how he or she chooses to use it. For *EC*, “to choose rightly, those choosing need to ‘know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully’” (*IM No.4; EC*, No. 4). In terms of the principles of the moral order necessary in communication, *EC* notes, “ethical principles and norms relevant in other fields also apply to social communication. Principles of social ethics like solidarity, subsidiarity, justice and equity, and accountability in the use of public resources and the performance of roles of public trust are always applicable” (No.20). As such, “communication must always be truthful, since truth is essential to individual liberty and to authentic community among persons” (No.20). Community or communion is central to
the Church’s self-understanding of herself; and it has to be maintained in all communication and in the use of all media of social communication, for “the good of persons cannot be realized apart from the common good of the communities to which they belong” (No.22). To achieve the good of persons, one has to think in terms of the common good of the community, for no man is an island. Hence, “media of social communication must remain an ‘Areopagus’ (cf. Redemptoris Missio, 37)—a forum for exchanging ideas and information, drawing individuals and groups together, fostering solidarity and peace” (EC, No.24). The Areopagus is a form of public domain or sphere where philosophy of communication lives or atrophies in public opinion (Arnett 2010, 58). EC identifies Jesus as the model and the standard for our communication just like CP refers to Jesus as “the perfect communicator” (No.11), and calls on all to emulate the Jesus’s model of communication. In sum, EC notes, “serving the human person, building up human community grounded in solidarity and justice and love, and speaking the truth about human life and its final fulfillment in God were, are, and will remain at the heart of ethics in the media” (No.33). Insofar as these principles guide man’s use of the media of social communication mindful of the signs of the times in pastoral work, the goals of communion and salvation will be attained.

Similar to EC, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in her document, Ethics in Internet (EI) observes that “the Internet is being put to many good uses now, with the promise of many more, but much harm also can be done by its improper use. Which it will be, good or harm, is largely a matter of choice—a choice to whose making the Church brings two elements of great importance: her commitment to the dignity of the human person and her long tradition of moral wisdom” (No.2). Here, as
in *EC*, the Church restates her stance that the media of social communication ought to be at the service of communion by ensuring solidarity that guarantees common good; and phronesis, a practical moral wisdom is necessary to do this. For *EI*, “the virtue of solidarity is the measure of the Internet’s service of the common good. It is the common good that supplies the context for considering the ethical question: ‘Are the media being used for good or evil?’” (No.15). It has to be noted here that the common good is fluid and varies in different contexts and moments. Mindful of this, *EI* concludes, “all users of the Internet are obliged to use it in an informed, disciplined way, for morally good purposes; . . . Those whose decisions and actions contribute to shaping the structure and contents of the Internet have an especially serious duty to practice solidarity in the service of the common good” (No.15). The internet as the new “Areopagus” must ensure solidarity in order to serve the communion emphasized by the Church; and the Church makes this known in a separate document on the Church and the Internet.

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications, in an accompanying document to *EC* titled *The Church and Internet*, reaffirms the stance of the Church on media in *Miranda Prorsus* and *Communio et Progressio*, stating: “The Church sees these media as ‘gifts of God’ which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation. This remains our view, and it is the view we take of the Internet” (No.1). The Internet has to be at the service of communion and salvation. In stressing that “the Church herself is a *communio*, a communion of persons and eucharistic communities arising from and mirroring the communion of the Trinity” (No.3); the document notes, “communication therefore is of the essence of the Church. This, more than any other reason, is why ‘the Church’s
practice of communication should be exemplary, reflecting the highest standards of
thuthfulness, accountability, sensitivity to human rights, and other relevant principles and
orms’’ (No.3). The Church is communication; so, every means of social communication
that emerges has to be at the service of the Gospel, and the Church has to use them in a
fitting manner for her purpose. To this end, the document states, “it is important, too, that
people at all levels of the Church use the Internet creatively to meet their responsibilities
and help fulfill the Church’s mission. Hanging back timidly from fear of technology or
for some other reason is not acceptable, in view of the very many positive possibilities of
the Internet” (No.10). This invitation to not be afraid of technology resounds greatly in
the Apostolic Letter of Pope St. John Paul II on the rapid developments in technology and
means of communication.

John Paul II states, “the rapid development of technology in the area of the media
is surely one of the signs of progress in today’s society” (No.1). Conscious of the danger
that these technologies could pose to the Gospel if not properly used, the Pope highlights
that “the current phenomenon of communications impels the Church towards a sort of
pastoral and cultural revision, so as to deal adequately with the times in which we live”
(No.8). Revision is geared towards making the idea fit to the moment or context. To
fulfill this purpose, he notes, “we are faced with three fundamental options: formation,
participation and dialogue” (No.11); thus: “[A] vast work of formation is needed to
assure that the mass media be known and used intelligently and appropriately. . . co-
responsible participation in their administration. . . The culture of co-responsibility must
be nurtured. . . They become a powerful resource for good if used to foster understanding
between peoples; a destructive ‘weapon’ if used to foster injustice and conflicts” (No.11).
John Paul II exhorts all saying: “Do not be afraid of new technologies! These rank ‘among the marvelous things’ – *inter mirifica* – which God has placed at our disposal to discover, to use and to make known the truth, also the truth about our dignity and about our destiny as His children, heirs of His eternal Kingdom” (No.14). Despite the pervasive presence and development of new technologies, the Pope encourages us to not be afraid, rather, let us engage technology and maximize its potentials for the service of the Gospel. Like John Paul II, his successor, Benedict XVI has also weighed in on new technologies.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for the 43rd World Communications Day, states: “The new digital technologies are, indeed, bringing about fundamental shifts in patterns of communication and human relationships. . . These technologies are truly a gift to humanity, and we must endeavor to ensure that the benefits they offer are put at the service of all human individuals and communities, especially those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable” (2009). To this end, Benedict XVI encourages “all people of good will who are active in the emerging environment of digital communication to commit themselves to promoting a culture of *respect, dialogue and friendship*” (2009). While encouraging the use of the media to build friendships, he notes that “it would be sad if our desire to sustain and develop online friendships were to be at the cost of our availability to engage with our families, our neighbors and those we meet in the daily reality of our places of work, education and recreation” (2009). He concludes by calling on young Catholic believers “to bring the witness of their faith to the digital world. . . to introduce into the culture of this new environment of communications and information technology the values on which you have built your lives” (2009). Restated, “it falls, in particular, to young people, who have an almost spontaneous affinity for the new means
of communication, to take on the responsibility for the evangelization of this ‘digital continent’” (2009). In line with other documents, he announces the need for the Church to always encounter and engage the emerging technologies for the service of the Gospel and phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is essential in this interaction.

In this connection, Pope Francis, in his message for the 48th World Communications Day, states: “A culture of encounter demands that we be ready not only to give, but also to receive. Media can help us greatly in this, especially nowadays, when the networks of human communication have made unprecedented advances. The internet, in particular, offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God” (2014). In articulating how media/communication can help us in this culture of encounter, Pope Francis invites us to think on “how can we be ‘neighborly’ in our use of the communications media and in the new environment created by digital technology?” (2014). He uses the parable of the Good Samaritan, as a parable about communication, positing that “those who communicate, in effect, become neighbors. . . Jesus shifts our understanding: it is not just about seeing the other as someone like myself, but of the ability to make myself like the other” (2014). For him, “communication is really about realizing that we are all human beings, children of God. I like seeing this power of communication as ‘neighborliness’” (2014). To this idea of communication as neighborliness, which is at the service of the culture of encounter, Pope Francis adds that “it is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply ‘connected’; connections need to grow into true encounters. . . The digital world can be an environment rich in humanity; a network not of wires but of people” (2014). This is what it means to be neighbors. In line with aggiornamento began by the Second Vatican
Council, Pope Francis notes that “keeping the doors of our churches open also means keeping them open in the digital environment so that people, whatever their situation in life, can enter, and so that the Gospel can go out to reach everyone. We are called to show that the Church is the home of all” (2014). The Church as the home of all reechoes the universality of salvation, with the Church as the pastoral means of salvation.

In the preceding exploration of the Church’s stance on communication and media of social communications, it is significant that in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the Church, in responding to “the signs of the times” has continually encountered and engaged every medium or technology of communication at every historical moment. In this way, she avoids the tendency of one message fits all media or contexts or historical moments in her use of means of social communications; and this is reflective of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis operating as phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics where contexts matter, and where meaning is not permanent but temporal. We now turn to the Church as communication.

5.3 The Church as Communication

The document of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, The Church and Internet, states that “the Church herself is a communio, a communion of persons and eucharistic communities arising from and mirroring the communion of the Trinity; communication therefore is of the essence of the Church” (No.3). In this direction, Craig Maier writes that “the very life of the Church appears in speaking or as Avery Dulles once wrote: “The Church is communication” (vii). For Dulles, communication is “the way in which people are brought to share certain ideas, feelings, attitudes, or styles of action through contact with others” (110). Thus, “it does not necessarily signify the
transfer of articulated thoughts from a teacher to a learner, though this is one prominent form of communication. It can take place equally well through a kind of catalytic action in which ideas or attitudes come to birth through social encounters” (110). This notion of communication takes seriously the idea of communication as a lived experience which is contextually emergent in that it is the experiences of the interacting parties that give rise to the communication between them. Communication is in the “between” and belongs to neither of the interacting parties. For Gadamer, communication emerges from fusion of horizons of the interacting parties. This idea of communication presented by Dulles is significant for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis and has pastoral implication.

Continuing in this direction, Dulles writes that “religious knowledge and attitudes are not passed on like a baton. They are often ‘maieutically’ induced by processes that activate the religious propensities of the recipients” (110). In other words, in communication, even in religious communication, everyone’s experience counts in the communication that emerges. It is in this sense that Dulles considers the Church as communication stating that “the church may be seen as ‘a vast communication network designed to bring men out of their isolation and estrangement and to bring them individually and corporately into communion with God in Christ’” (110). Here, the Church as communication is reflective of the expression “the Church is communion.”

Maier uses the metaphor of conversation for communication, stating that “the conversation that defines the church mirrors the conversation in which the Word became flesh” (vii). Similarly, Robert White writes that “Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of communication, placing central emphasis on a divine revelation, on the Incarnation
and a Church that is continually becoming incarnate in different cultures. . . The vitality of the Church has depended very much on adapting its gospel witness to the forms of communication of a particular era” (4). Here, as communication or conversation, the Church engages the language and communicative pattern of every era; and for Maier, this is salient because “the Catholic Church, as a conversation, needs the continual renewal of new conversational partners, new languages, and new methods in order to give witness to the unchanging Word who calls it into being” (ix). The Church is a conversation or communication that engages every era or historical moment so that the meaning of the Gospel may emerge from that historical moment and not passed on to it like a baton.

This is the case because “every historical moment presents both challenges and opportunities to the Church” (Maier xxi); and offering a fitting response to these challenges and opportunities which often might appear as a crisis moment for the Church because it harps on her status quo, keeps the Church’s pastoral life relevant in that era. Thus, Robert White writes that “the motivating source of change is often the sense of ‘crisis’ in the Church, the awareness that its style of communication and communicating symbols are no longer a religious inspiration to people and that Christians are sinking into worldly secularism or are being drawn into other religious or ideological movements” (4). In this sense, White states that “two major responses of Christian communities to crisis are an intensification of internal communication bringing members back into a union of faith and the generation of new religious symbols that express the cultural and religious spirit of the time” (4). To offer a fitting response to crisis entails engaging the crisis of the age or the era, and it requires the pragmatic tool of phronesis/philosophical
hermeneutics. In this, White writes that the Church changes or adapts her communication to fit the historical moment in five ways:

- Change in the communicative relationship of the Church to the wider society around it;
- Adapting the religious language and the cultural logic of theological argument so that it is intelligible and reasonable in terms of the dominant philosophical, scientific, literary-artistic and socio-political expression of the period;
- Developing a style of popular religious communication, largely within the Christian community, which incorporates contemporary forms of communication and religious expression;
- New models of Church, especially new forms of local Christian community;
- New role models for ministry, especially priestly ministry (6-7).

It is by engaging the questions of the historical moment that the Church can offer a response that might look like any of these five actions; and this entails that there is no one way the Church responds, it is her attentiveness to the moment that gives rise to any of these actions. For White, undergirding this attitude of the Church is his view that “the Second Vatican Council encouraged a new social dramaturgy: the fullest involvement of Christians in the human and social development of the larger society” (12). Hence, “instead of a sectarian, triumphalist image, the Church entered the public debate making the paradox of its powerlessness, simplicity and commitment to the poor the basis of socio-ethical witness in an affluent, consumer-oriented society” (12). Dulles, apparently, sharing the same view identifies five major outlooks rather than a single theology of communication in the documents of Vatican II.
Dulles writes that “the theology of communication does not deal with the entire range of God’s saving work but studies in particular how God brings about attitudes, convictions, and commitments connected with religious faith” (110). Clearly, these attitudes, convictions, or commitments have not been the same for every age or historical era, and this opens a space for a rhetoric and philosophy of communication that seeks the “why” behind the “how” of these attitudes, convictions or commitments that God brings about. Rhetoric and philosophy of communication helps elicit a fitting response or communication that can incarnate the Gospel in every age; for “without [proper] communication, the sanctity of grace of the sacrament (*munus sanctificandi*) and liberating power of Catholic teaching (*munus docendi*) would be unintelligible, and the Church’s rich institutional life (*munus regendi*) would be impossible to sustain” (Maier xxxi). This is because “communication as com-*munus* is the very stuff by which the Church makes and remakes itself and forges the delicate balance between permanence and change” (Maier xxxi). These three offices through which the Church communicates herself are ever attentive to the historical moment, and so, are rhetorical. They are rhetorical following Michael Hyde’s (2006) position as cited by Maier that “rhetorical life begins in acknowledging the call of the moment. . . rhetoric does not exist of its own accord. Something – a situation, a decision, a problem – always calls it into being. Rhetoric responds. Rhetoric does not release one from the cares of the historical moment but enables one to answer them” (1-4). Similarly, Lloyd Bitzer (1999), according to Maier, “contends that if we are truly to understand rhetoric, we need to look to the situation or context that calls it forth” (10). The communicative offices of the Church are rhetorical, for the Church is communication, and communication is in the moment.
In this connection, Maier cites Avery Dulles’s five outlooks on theology of communication as rhetorical ways the Church responds to different historical moments, stating that “persuasive communication in the Catholic context, is at times, hierarchical, heraldic, sacramental, communal, and secular dialogic” (37). Maier explains that each of these metaphors describes a particular aspect of communication in the Church: “that it proceeds from an institutional structure; that it carries the message of Jesus Christ; that it conveys meaning through liturgical action; that it lives in informal forums as well as formal ones; and that it is always situated within a broader secular, ecumenical, and interfaith world” (37). The communicative response of the Church to the questions of the historical moment often plays out as any of these metaphors, although these metaphors are not methods designated for responding to different moments. This relates to the fact that rhetoric is always a response to the call of the moment; and discerning a proper response in moments of crisis or uncertainty is always a function of phronesis/or philosophical hermeneutics in rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

Nevertheless, Maier states that “the experience of rhetoric in Catholic life is different than secular or even other Christian contexts because it takes place within the experience of an institution whose corporate life transcends the life of an individual rhetor. Rhetorical competence is thus not merely individual but is also corporate” (43). This implies that in the Catholic context, “the success of individual rhetors is intertwined with the success of the Church as a whole. No matter how eloquently a rhetor speaks, the rhetor will fail if the Church fails, and no matter how ill-spoken a rhetor is, the rhetor will succeed if the Church succeeds” (44). Rephrased, the “Catholic rhetoric is always aware that it participates in a history and is responsible for sustaining a tradition broader than
the actions of any individual person” (44). In this way, the Church maintains the core of her faith identity despite offering a fitting response to the questions of a particular historical moment. Restated, her “big D” Discourse restrains and constrains her “little d” discourse. This is significant for the Church and helps “to distinguish the Catholic concept of evangelization, which includes personal transformation and the regeneration of society, from the narrower concept of evangelization as the mere call to put one’s trust in Christ as savior, which is evident in certain Protestant ‘evangelistic’ circles” (Dulles 124; Maier 50). This entails that the Catholic evangelization is directed towards making the historical moment or context reflect the Gospel; it makes the Gospel speak out of the press of the people (cf. CP, No.11). In this, the Gospel is always new in every age.

White writes that in evangelization, that is, in communicating the Gospel, “the Christian community attempts to identify those symbols and actions in the culture which seem close to the way Christ would act in this situation” (13). Thus, “being a ‘good Catholic’ does not mean passing into a separate catholic culture or trying to straddle a dichotomy of ritual devotion and secular life activities but becoming immersed in the culture and living out the meaning of the gospel in that culture” (13). Every historical moment or context bears traces of the Gospel which needs to be identified to incarnate the Gospel in it, as Maier notes that “every historical moment presents both challenges and opportunities to the Church; the challenge of ecclesial leadership lies in navigating these perils and potentialities (xxi). Similarly, Byun-Chul Han writes that “every age has its signature afflictions” (1), which have to be attended to. It is in navigating such impasse between challenge and opportunity or afflictions that “some scholars of religion are beginning to recognize the importance of rhetoric as a theoretical resource in a
moment in which the ground of pastoral ministry is increasingly uncertain” (Maier 66). In other words, “in a moment of tremendous change and uncertainty, rhetoric can teach religion how to live in a world that increasingly contradicts its claims to clarity, certainty, and transcendent truth” (66). It is an essential characteristic of rhetoric to operate in probable and uncertain situations where things can be otherwise. This announces its connection to phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics which attends to probable or uncertain situations where things can be otherwise. For the Church as communication, taking this rhetorical poise is evident in her pastoral outlook and emphasis on attending to contexts/historical moments in her pastoral work/care as we shall see in pastoral care to which we now turn.

5.4 Pastoral Care: Beyond Professionalism

Impelled by the Biblical injunction: “Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep” (Rom.12:15), the Church, in the Second Vatican Council took a pastoral approach; hence, in Gaudium et Spes (GS), she states: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts” (No.1). In terms of how this is to be done, GS states that “to carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (No.4). This means that the Church always has to communicate in a way that her message is reflective of the age, context and moment; for communication is of the essence of the Church, and the Church is communication. Mindful that an effective communication is always attentive to the signs of the time and moment, Communio et
Progressio states that, “this pastoral instruction… carefully refrains from going into minute details on a subject which is continually changing and developing, and which varies so much according to time and place” (No.3). Since communication and the means of social communication change as historical moments/situations change, for time and place matter in communication, the document leaves it open for communication practitioners and indeed every evangelizer, to be attentive to these in communicating, especially, in the work of spreading the Gospel (evangelization). This idea informed the sense of pastoral care in the Church.

Henri Nouwen in his book, “Creative Ministry” writes that “one of the many frustrations, pains, and disappointments in the life of numerous Christian ministers is rooted in the still-growing separation between professionalism and spirituality” (intro). To bridge this gap between professionalism and spirituality in ministry, he writes, “let us not close our eyes in order to indulge in nice and gratifying thoughts about God and his mysteries, but let us keep them open to the growing needs of the world around us” (intro). Nouwen exhorts Christian ministers, in their pastoral care/work, to pay attention to the person, context, time or place of work, to what is going on in the moment, in order to offer a fitting response to the situation. To this end, Nouwen argues that Christian ministries — teaching, preaching, caring, organizing and celebrating — must go beyond professionalism; that is, they must go beyond mere exercise of skills/techniques, methods or application of principles. He asks, “what is there beyond professionalism – is ministry just another specialty in the many helping professions? . . . or is ministry about the application of ‘the best technique, the most appropriate method, the most effective approach?’” (intro). Given that ministry is none of these, he notes: “If professionalism is
to be prevented from degenerating into a form of clerical manipulation, it has to be founded on the deep-rooted spiritual life of the minister himself as it develops out of his constant care for those he works with” (intro). This implies that ministry is not a method driven exercise, but an exercise driven by attentiveness to the context – the audience, historical moment, place; it is a praxis.

In this direction, Nouwen notes that the pastoral ministry of teaching would go beyond professionalism, that is, beyond being mere transference of knowledge, if the method of teaching becomes a redemptive rather than a violent process. He notes that while “the violent process of teaching is competitive, unilateral and alienating (6), “the redemptive process is evocative, bilateral and actualizing” (11). The redemptive process of teaching is a creative process that authentically engages the students in Socrates’ midwife manner. In this, the teacher, as a pastoral agent, is attentive to both the rhetorical and hermeneutical situations, and not just to the content. In terms of preaching, Nouwen considers the message and the messenger as the main difficulties which cause indifference and irritation to the hearers (25); for while the message might be redundant and fearful; the messenger might exhibit non-existent feelings, and preoccupation with a theological point of view that do not resonate with the people (25). If the message and the messenger are not reflective of the historical moment or context of the hearers, it will elicit indifference and irritation from the hearers; and this is what professional preaching that is method driven does. In order for preaching to go beyond professionalism, Nouwen notes that “there is no tool, no technique, no special skill which can solve the preacher’s problem. But perhaps there is a ‘spirituality’ — a way of living— that can give hope to the man who wants to bring his people to a liberating insight which can make them free
to follow Christ” (33-34). Preaching has to be practical via attentiveness to the moment and transforming it into a *Kairos* – “the transformation of *chronos*, the experience of linear, historical time into a sense of momentousness and fullness. Through *Kairos* the mundane becomes transformed, the weaker challenges the stronger, decisions are made, and opportunities are seized” (Maier 41). Thus, “most important for Christian rhetoric however, *Kairos* breaks through the mundane façade of human life to create space for hope and faith” (Maier 41). Preaching has to exhibit the character of *Kairos* through phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics.

Sullivan (1992) as cited by Maier, describes *Kairos* by taking the famous discourse of St. Paul on the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34) as his point of departure, noting “how Paul embraces the ambiguity and indecision of a particular moment to craft a rhetorical response that meets the present so perfectly that the speech resonates with numinous power” (41). Here, “the *Kairos* that Paul experiences on the Areopagus emerges not by accident – or by a willingness to play fast and loose with Christ’s message – but through Paul’s own willingness to engage the moment, a courageous encounter that reveals the light of faith in a new and profound way” (42). This is rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis via phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in action. For Sullivan, according to Maier, “while Paul remains committed to his strong, absolute Christian conviction, his embrace of *Kairos* is surprisingly Sophistic in nature, focusing on discerning the particular moment that God provides him and offering a fitting response to it” (Maier 42). This implies that the preaching that can avoid the danger of indifference and irritation from the hearers has to be in the form of *Kairos*; that is, it has to be mindful of the moment, the place, the time. This is why *Communio et Progressio*
views Christ as the perfect communicator for “through His ‘incarnation’, He utterly identified Himself with those who were to receive His communication and He gave His message not only in words but in the whole manner of His life. He spoke from within... from out of the press of His people. He adjusted to His people’s way of talking and to their patterns of thought. And He spoke out of the predicament of their time” (No.11).

For preaching, and indeed, for every pastoral activity to go beyond professionalism, it must embrace this example of Christ.

Nouwen states that in a world that is becoming more and more professionalized and where one specialty after another is developing, ministers tend to feel that “they are amateurs in every field and professional in none, [or] feel very inadequate, suffer from a painfully low self-esteem and doubtful if their theology can be made operational to such a degree that people can be helped in an effective way” (46). Thus, increasingly, ministry tends to be viewed in the rationalistic world in terms of skills or techniques. However, Nouwen writes that “pastoral care means a careful and critical contemplation of the condition of man. Ministry is contemplation” (63). Again, “it [ministry] is the ongoing unveiling of reality and the revelation of God’s light as well as man’s darkness. pastoral care can never be limited to the application of any skill or technique since ultimately it is the continuing search for God in the life of the people we want to serve” (63). In this framework, “if the pastoral approach does not go beyond the level of skill and techniques, the minister is tempted to become a manipulator of people” (63).

Restated, if pastoral approach or ministry does not go beyond professionalism, it will be merely manipulative or an empty exercise of skills. Nevertheless, for a pastor to act in line with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, that is, attentive to the signs of the
times, he has “to break through the chains of our manipulative world, he has to move beyond professionalism. . . The minister who cares for people is called to be skillful but not a handyman, knowledgeable but not an imposter, a professional but not a manipulator” (64-65). A pastor has to be able to meet the moment as Paul in the Areopagus; for “an attitude of having preconceived ideas about how things should be, or of what people need, makes one blind to what people really need, and deaf to what they say. So often, totally in contrast to their desire, they create hostility in the people they want to help” (73). Thus, attending the moment where things can be otherwise requires phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in order to engage the moment authentically. It is in this way that a pastor can offer a fitting response to a situation via temporal answers that keep faith alive in every moment.

The answer is tentative because the pastor is still in search of answers too, since times change; hence, Nouwen writes that “ministry means the ongoing attempt to put one’s own search for God, with all the moments of pain and joy, despair and hope, at the disposal of those who want to join this search but do not know how. Ministry in no way is a privilege. Instead, it is the core of the Christian life. No Christian is a Christian without being a minister” (114). As such, pastoral work is not solely a task of ordained pastors or designated ministers, it is the task of every Christian by virtue of baptism. It is not the preserve of experts, but for every Christian. Hence, for pastoral work to meet the needs of the moment, it has to go beyond professionalism, beyond application of principles or skills or techniques, by encountering the situation or historical moment where issues can be otherwise. In this context, Nouwen’s understanding of pastoral care aligns with Aristotle’s position that everyone practices rhetoric; with Heidegger and
Gadamer’s notion that hermeneutics is ontological; with Arnett and Holba’s position that philosophy of communication is an act of a craftsman rather than an expert; and with Arthos’s notion that rhetoric and hermeneutics is not the preserve of professionals. As such, the pastoral implication of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis portrays that pastoral work/care or ministry is an exercise in phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics. Pastoral work or ministry is not an application of skills, or techniques, for indeed, there are no tools, skills, methods or techniques as Nouwen noted; however, one has to encounter and engage the moment as it is in order to find a temporal answer or a fitting response; and this is the highpoint of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis via the lens of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics, as Aristotle and Gadamer noted. Invariably, an effective ministry is more about action in the moment rather than about a lifeless theory or doctrine.

Maier reaffirms that “pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’” (Evangelii Gaudium 2013, sec. 33; Maier 192). It has to abandon the routine in order to encounter the moment as it is. Maier adds that “Christian rhetoric in times of challenge must be profoundly faithful but also remarkably resourceful and open to possibilities of the moment” (188). Here, being open to the possibilities of the moment is a way of attentiveness to the signs of the time in order to make every message Kairotic; for a “Kairotic rhetoric embraces the opportune, the appropriate, and the possible” (183). Maier also explains that “attentiveness is a practice of thinking, learning, and understanding. . . it is much more inclusive than listening, which restricts attention only to those discourses that can be ‘heard’ in a traditional sense” (143); “attentiveness is broader than dialogue” (144). It is
through attentiveness that we authentically encounter the moment or the mud of everyday life in the pastoral field without the thoughtlessness occasioned at times by scientific theories that are inattentive to the human condition or experience. Similarly, to underscore the need to pay attention to the moment, Arnett, as cited by Maier notes that “it is the lurking darkness, the mundane, the routine, the repetitive commonality, and the everyday, that nourishes the embers of ‘holy sparks’” (Arnett 2006, 6; Maier 125). We have to be attentive and engage the moment in order to see or discover these holy sparks. This implies that “engagement and learning. . . [are] essential to communication practice in complex, uncertain environment” (Maier 138). Communicating in probable/uncertain environments, is the province of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis via the lens of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics.

5.5 Chapter Summary

Given that pastoral ministry is more the purview of action than theory, Robert White writes that “already in the nineteen-fifties and nineteen-sixties the liturgical and biblical movements encouraged the laity toward a spirituality centered around the great mysteries of the history of salvation celebrated in the liturgical year” (16). Following this path, “homiletics and catechetics gradually began to shift from instruction and exhortation regarding the doctrinal and moralistic formulas of Church teaching to reflection on the meaning of the biblical passages in one’s daily life” (16). For White, “this kind of pastoral communication did not provide explicit formulas for belief but allowed the Word of God to suggest how to live a Christian life in particular contexts” (16). In other words, there was a shift from attention to theory or formula in pastoral work to attention to action—a response to the signs of the times; a praxis dimension was
emphasized. For White, “this, combined with group discussion methods such as the ‘see, judge and act’ approach of Catholic Action, encouraged Catholics to take as the starting point, not the received theology, but their socio-cultural context and to ask how the group could give witness to the gospel and reproduce the actions of Christ in this context” (16).

This move values praxis/action over theory because praxis is more in tune with the moment than formulaic theories. Given Schrag’s position that “praxis is always entwined with communication,” thus, “communicative praxis” (Ramsey and Miller 20); as the Church focuses more on praxis than on theory in her pastoral work, to that extent does she valorize communication; hence, the Church’s self-understanding of herself as communication.

In keeping with this approach, Maier writes that “the Church established communication as a form of intellectual reflection and engagement with the modern world” (84). This focus on or attentiveness to the modern world became the driving influence of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council which took a pastoral dimension, especially on the praxis of the Church in the modern world, in order to make the mission of the Church relevant in the modern world. This led to a number of documents that emphasize the need for the Church to take her communication of the Gospel and the means of social communication very seriously in order to meet the modern world on its own terms; hence, the metaphor of “aggiornamento”, that is, “the adjustment of Christian doctrines to the exigencies of modern day living” (Dulles 10). In applying the principle of aggiornamento in the pastoral work of the Church, Dulles notes that “it requires prudence and discretion lest the gospel, in being accommodated to the spirit of the age, lose its challenging power” (21). He adds that “still, the principle itself is sound and important.
The Church, gloriing in its magnificent heritage, should not allow itself to become a museum piece. It must not become a relic of the Middle Ages or any past period but rather a vital part of the modern world as it presses forward into God’s future” (21). This entails that the Church in trying to “live in close union with their contemporaries” (GS No. 62), that is, in the modern age, requires a rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis tool of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in order to avoid losing itself as it accommodates the times. In this, what the Church does in her pastoral work in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council becomes a fusion of horizons of the Church’s text or heritage and the historical moment by a pastoral agent in order to meet the pastoral needs of the particular moment or context. This accounts for the numerous documents of the Church on communication among which some were highlighted in this work.

The various documents of the Church on communication beginning with the Vigilanti Cura (on Motion Picture, 1936), Miranda Prorsus (on Motion Picture, Radio and Television, 1957), Inter Mirifica (on the Media of Social Communication, 1963), Communio et Progressio (on the Means of Social Communication, 1971), Centesimus Annus (on the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, 1991), Aetatis Novae (on the Twentieth Anniversary of Communio et Progressio, 1992), 100 Years of Cinema (1996), Ethics in Advertising (1997), Ethics in Communication (2002), Ethics in Internet (2002), The Church and Internet (2002), Apostolic Letter, Rapid Development (2005) and a host of other documents, speak to how the Church responds to the different media/means of communication and indeed to different communicative contexts and moments. In these documents, the Church engages and responds to every media or means of social communication ranging from radio, cinema/motion picture, television, videos, cassettes,
internet and digital media and social media, as a way of attending to the signs of the times in her pastoral work. In addition, each year, the Pope releases a message on the World Communications Day which equally addresses the Church’s stance or response to the questions of the communicative environment of that historical moment/context. The Church engages these modern means of social communication in her pastoral work of evangelization mindful of Pope Paul VI’s assertion in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that the Church “would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means” (No.2) to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Similarly, the document, *The Church and Internet* notes that “Pope John Paul II has called the media ‘the first Areopagus of the modern age’, and declared that ‘it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications’” (No. 4). This is due to the fact that “not only do the media now strongly influence what people think about life but also to a great extent ‘human experience itself is an experience of media’” (No.4). To integrate the Gospel into a new culture entail encountering and engaging the culture in order to speak out of the press of that culture. To do this effectively requires understanding how the media works and why it communicates the way it does, as well as understanding that culture. This is an activity of rhetoric and philosophy of communication that tries to understand the “why” behind the “how” of practicality of these media (Arnett and Holba 3). It is through the lens of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics that the Church accomplishes these tasks of engaging the new media in her pastoral work and meeting every moment in its unique concreteness.
Engaging the new media is often a challenging, though an enriching experience for the Church; hence, Maier writes that “engaging the world certainly requires extraordinary courage” (151). For Maier, “communication in the Church is difficult and requires tremendous dedication, intelligence, discernment, wisdom, and skill, as well as a deep faith” (179). This calls for attentiveness to what is going on in the moment in order to come to a fitting response which Schrag says “proceeds not by first asking the teleological question: “What is my proper end?” but from the existential question: “What is going on in the world to which I must now respond?” (Ramsey and Miller 27).

Understanding the difficulty of communication in the Church in terms of the search for a fitting response, Schrag states that “the fitting response is a questioning. It is always a questioning of what is going on and then making hard decisions regarding the extent to which we can appropriate the tradition and the extent to which we have to intervene in it” (Ramsey and Miller 28). In addition, Schrag states that “there is a creative moment in the fitting response, a moment in which we have to invent something new, project something new, begin to enact something new. And it may call for a radical revision or indeed the overturning of traditional as well as current forms of thought and action” (Ramsey and Miller 28-29). Thus, these challenges encountered in coming to the fitting response are reflective of why Aristotle considers phronesis an intellectual virtue for the experienced rather than the young. Also, communication in the Church is difficult because it requires experience with the media, the Scripture, the Sacred Tradition, the Magisterium, the culture, and maturity in faith, in order to integrate the Gospel in the new culture of digital communication, and in the new context of evangelization in the pastoral field. This dissertation finds that the pastoral implication of rhetoric and philosophy of
communication praxis via the lens of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is that it helps to interpret the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel as a fitting response in every era or historical moment without altering the eternal truth of the Gospel. It enables the Gospel to speak out of the press of every historical moment or pastoral context, and renders the pastoral work the ken of all rather than solely of professionals.

5.6 General Summary and Conclusion

This dissertation focuses on how to enact the rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis in walking the humanities into the marketplace. It explores the fields of rhetoric and philosophy of communication in search of pragmatic ways of enacting the praxis of these arts especially in the pastoral field visualized as a marketplace. Towards this end, phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics are considered as pragmatic tools for enacting the praxis of rhetoric and philosophy of communication. This is informed by the fact that Aristotle’s idea of praxis, in his practical philosophy, is essentially an activity of phronesis. Bineham notes that “the concepts of praxis and phronesis stem from the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition, where they account for the activities and theoretical bases of pragmatic persuasive conduct enacted within a particular community and for specific aims and interests” (309). In praxis, rhetoric and philosophy of communication are usually attentive to a particular context or historical moment. Balaban notes, “in Aristotle’s philosophy there are two distinct kinds of human activity: Praxis and Poesis. In the first kind, the activity is an end (telos) in itself; in the second it is a means to an end” (185). For Balaban, “the telos of praxis coincides with the performance of the act itself; [hence] praxis is an act without potentiality, and has no degrees of perfection. It is complete, though not in the sense that it does not take time, but
in the sense that at any moment of time it is complete in itself” (191). The intersection of telos and performance in action portrays phronesis as praxis.

Following this path, Beiner states that “phronesis is judgement that is embodied in action; it is judgment consummated in the efficacy of good praxis” (74). Restated, differently, “phronesis minus praxis equals judgment. Phronesis is the union of good judgement and the action which is the fitting embodiment of that judgment” (75). This underscores that phronesis always implies praxis and vice versa. To distinguish praxis from the actions informed by a scientific theory, an epistemic activity or practice as an application of a scientific theory, Schrag writes that “praxis as the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding” (Ramsey and Miller 21). Praxis is not driven by a scientific theory; for “theory is subsequent to that out of which it is abstracted; that is, to praxis” (Gadamer 1975, 21). Praxis operates as phronesis; and phronesis is not a method, but an intellectual virtue of correct reasoning obtainable in situations or contexts in which things can be otherwise, where deliberation is needed, and where no rule exists to guide action.

In this framework, Gadamer in denying that hermeneutics is a method driven practice grounds his philosophical hermeneutics on the concepts of praxis and phronesis in Aristotle’s practical philosophy. Bernstein affirms that “the outstanding theme in Gadamer’s philosophic hermeneutics is his fusion of hermeneutics and praxis, and the claim that understanding itself is a form of practical reasoning and practical knowledge—a form of phronesis” (174; Bineham 309). Thus, “all knowledge, in philosophical hermeneutics, is practical knowledge. The hermeneutic process of understanding, then,
always involves the rhetorical activities of phronesis and praxis” (Bineham 309). This implies that philosophical hermeneutics as praxis operates as phronesis, and not as a method. Phronesis “allows mastery of ethical predicaments without dependence upon a set of rules or codified principles to tell us when the particular is an instantiation of the universal (our conception of what is good in general), when it is an exception to ethical norms we already live by, and when it calls for revision of our conception of the good” (Beiner 73). Phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics serves in a pragmatic situation where no rule or theory or method is available to guide decision or judgement in human life and immediate action is required. It does not function in situations where things cannot be otherwise, or where deliberation is not needed.

Arnett writes that “in situations of routine, the world moves with normative assurance; during such times of familiarity, I am not a question unto myself, I am simply busied with the tasks and activities called forth by the day” (2020, 5). In other words, in situations of routine, we have the tendency to be thoughtless in our actions or practices. However, “there are moments, in which our human experience no longer projects linear unreflectiveness about tomorrow, and we sense that much is fundamentally at risk” (Arnett 2020, 5-6). Such moments that call for reflectiveness rather than unreflectiveness or routine, are often more prevalent in human experience, especially in the pastoral field. It is such moments, when things can be otherwise, when deliberation is necessary, that led Aristotle to the notion of phronesis; it also accounts for why Gadamer was against method in his philosophical hermeneutics. Conscious that in human life and experience, things can often be otherwise, Arnett writes that “lack of constancy leaves the interpreter to discover meaning in a different paradigmatic configuration; a shifting historical
moment demands recognition of a new existential canvas that requires active
participation” (6). Given that things are not always constant in human life, or that human
experience is often not dominated by routine, scientific methods that operate where
things cannot be otherwise may not serve human life and experience very well.

This was the highpoint of Gadamer’s argument in his philosophical hermeneutics
that scientific method does not factor in or take seriously the human experience in its
operations or procedure. Restated, scientific method does not reflect the experiences or
conditions of the observer; for this, Gadamer was against method. Arnett asks: “When all
around you seems to press contrarily against the normative, the routine, and that which
permits an unreflective walk-through life, what are the communicative coordinates that
actually matter to you?” (2020, 7). On the basis of Jacques Ellul’s critique of the West for
“doing things because they can be done, not because they should be done” (Ellul, 1964,
79–80; 97; 122–134); Arnett notes, “communicative coordinates function as ‘shoulds,’
and the ‘cans’ are intimately linked to what Ellul understood as techniques: routines,
systems, and procedures which all assume that a paradigmatic direction will go on
forever” (Ellul, 1964, 127; Arnett 2020, 7). Restated, “‘cans’ are techniques that keep us
from asking fundamental questions” (Arnett 2020, 7); “cans” are attentive to routine.

Communication is a lived or embodied experience; so communicative coordinates
are attentive to things or situations that can be otherwise, rather than to things/situations
that cannot be otherwise. Human life or existence is laden with situations that can be
otherwise and so, a site for communicative coordinates. For Arnett, “communicative
coordinates permit one, existentially, to construct a life akin to a house built on a sure
foundation—these coordinates will guide no matter what the external conditions may be”
Thus, in response to Arnett’s question on the communicative coordinates that matter to one in situations contrary to routine, this project considers Aristotle’s phronesis and Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tools of the communicative coordinates of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis that can existentially serve, and guide human life as well as the pastoral field suffused with probable and uncertain situations and moments contrary to routine and unreflectiveness. This relies on the awareness that communicative coordinates are informed by the fact that communication is “a field of study attentive to interruption, responsive to practices, and ever alert to responsible change” (Arnett 2020, 9). Communication, as a lived experience, is attentive to the variable concrete human condition in a particular historical context or moment; for meaning is temporal and tied to a moment/context.

In concert with Ellul and Arnett, Matthew Crawford corroborates that “we find ourselves situated in a world that is not our making, and this ‘situatedness’ is fundamental to what a human being is. . . three elements of this situatedness: our embodiment, our deeply social nature, and the fact that we live in a particular historical moment” (26). Human situatedness suggests that by virtue of human nature, things will always be otherwise; and since we live in a particular historical moment, change becomes constant in order to meet the demands of every historical moment. Arnett highlights that “a philosophy of communication begins with attentiveness to the historical moment and emergent questions that define a given moment. What makes a given question possible is the drama of human life” (2010). In the same vein, he adds that “we seldom attend to emerging questions in the midst of routine; we respond to some form of drama in the form of a rhetorical interruption that takes us out of everyday unreflective communicative
engagement and demands that we attend to a given question” (2010, 59). Conscious of the fact that “philosophy of communication is not method-centered” (2010, 61) because it attends to events in human life where things can be otherwise, this study thinks about phronesis and philosophical hermeneutics which both Aristotle and Gadamer do not consider as methods, as pragmatic tools of the communicative coordinates of rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis.

Here, rhetoric and philosophy are understood as the same rather than different endeavors. Although Lenore Langsdorf argues that “rhetoric and philosophy lean upon but do not collapse into one another” (15), she notes that they intersect in interpretation (2003, 176). Susan Mancino, likewise, Samuel Ijsseling, notes that “since the origins of rhetoric and philosophy in ancient Greece, the two disciplines have converged and diverged at various points and times throughout history” (15; 5). To understand this relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, Mancino states that “attentiveness to historical moments illuminates the dynamic relationship between philosophy and rhetoric with meaningful insight” (5). Mancino alludes to the relevance of history in understanding the nexus or relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. Ernesto Grassi also argues for the intrinsic and inseparable relationship between rhetoric and philosophy since they are ontological to man. In this relationship, Grassi notes that man embodies both logic and emotion which cannot be easily or sufficiently distinguished in human lived experience for both of them are inseparably co-present in every speech that can reach man as meaningful or communication. For Grassi, every meaningful speech comprises logical and emotional elements in order to be graspable to man whose ontological composition involves logic and emotion.
Schrag argues that in their original Greek understanding as noted by Aristotle, both rhetoric and philosophy are the same endeavor. He accuses modernity’s idea of rationality in terms of objectivity as responsible for the gap between rhetoric and philosophy as if they are different endeavors. For Schrag, “modernity’s effort to ground all knowledge on a criteriological concept of rationality, oriented towards unimpeachable truth conditions, left little room for the function of a praxis-oriented rationality that has always been the hallmark of rhetorical understanding” (vii). Holding onto the original Greek understanding rather than the modern understanding of this relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, Schrag argues that “indeed, to know and to communicate are not as neatly separable as some of the architects of modern philosophy had assumed” (viii). Stated differently, philosophy and rhetoric are not necessarily distinguishable because “the art of thinking, which philosophers by the mandate of their tradition have been called upon to develop, proceeds hand in glove with contextualization of thought in the polis, emerging from the rough and tumble of everyday social and political interactions” (Schrag x). Philosophy is always rhetorical, and rhetoric is always philosophical. On the basis of this inseparable relationship between rhetoric and philosophy as argued by these scholars, this dissertation views rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis as a singular or same activity or operation and seeks its pastoral implication.

Within the pastoral framework, Ruard Ganzevoort and Johan Roeland state that “praxis is understood as the domain of lived religion and focuses on what people do rather than on official institutionalized religious traditions. Praxis refers to fields of practices like care or community building and to the patterned configurations of action, experience, and meaning” (91). This dissertation seeks the implication of rhetoric and
philosophy of communication attentive to this role of praxis in religion or pastoral field. Towards this end, the project is cognizant of Schreiter’s view as cited by Frances Forde Plude that “there has been an important shift in perspective in theology in recent years. . . much more attention is now being paid to how. . . circumstances shape the response to the gospel (10). He adds that “(this) shift in perspective. . . first became evident in regions where Christianity was relatively new. . . in parts of Africa and Asia. There was a growing sense that the theologies being inherited from the older churches of the North Atlantic community did not fit well into these quite different cultural circumstances” (10). This reechoes the motivating factor and the focus of the Second Vatican Council which is attentiveness to praxis in the pastoral work in order to adapt the Gospel to the modern world through sensitivity to the signs of the times. In thinking about the communicative coordinates for evangelization that would make the Gospel fit into these contexts, this project thinks of phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tool for rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis. Restated, practical theology or pastoral work like practical philosophy has to embrace phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics.

Ganzevoort and Roeland write that “it is widely acknowledged that practical theology has ‘praxis’ as its object of study and reflection. . . We argue that the notion of praxis emphasizes one particular dimension of religion: the dimension of action or — somewhat broader — the ways in which religion is lived” (93). This is hinged on the fact that “the concepts of praxis and lived religion focus on what people do rather than on ‘official’ religion, its sacred sources, its institutes, and its doctrines” (93). Here, to restate, praxis or lived religion is not against official religion, its sacred sources, its institutes and its doctrines; it is rather attentive to how these are reflected in the concrete life of the
people in action. Similarly, communication as a lived experience or what people do is
attentive to praxis, for according to Schrag, praxis is always entwined with
communication, and action is the end point. This gives rise to Schrag’s term
“communicative praxis”. Communication is action, hence, Arnett and Arneson warn
against reifying communication in the abstract (1999, 27) like a theory or method driven
activity instead of a practical activity. Ganzevoort and Roeland affirm that “for Aristotle,
discussing the notion of praxis in the context of ethics, it referred to the domain of acting
and doing, as opposed to abstract, theoretical knowledge” (93). To distinguish praxis
from practice of a scientific theory, they note that “the notion of praxis, however,
includes more than practices alone. Hence praxis needs not to be reduced to practices.
Praxis should rather be considered as a field of practices with aims internal to that field
and with a variety of actors” (94). For Balaban, in praxis/or phronesis, the telos and the
action converge as one and complete. In this light, this dissertation considers praxis as
phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics and as essential in the work of evangelization, for it
does not operate on one model fits all contexts like scientific methods.

In summation, this dissertation considers the pastoral implication of rhetoric and
philosophy of communication praxis mindful of James Farrell’s position that “rhetoric is
ultimately meant to serve holiness and promote the Kingdom of God” (501). Given the
inseparability of rhetoric and philosophy, as this work argues, we understand philosophy
to be implied in Farrell’s position. For Thomas Groome as cited by Farrell, “a deep
Catholic conviction is that God’s revelation did not end with the Apostolic era and is not
limited to the Bible’s pages. Rather, by the presence of God’s Spirit, revelation continues
to unfold throughout human experience” (505). How we make sense and understand this
unfolding revelation in every historical moment is via rhetoric and philosophy of communication praxis with phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics as pragmatic tool in attending to the particularity of the context/historical moment in order to offer a fitting response to the pastoral questions of that historical moment or context.

Phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics attends to *Kairos*, as Paul did in the Areopagus, “focusing on discerning the particular moment that God provides him and offering a fitting response to it” (Maier 42). The Gospel can speak out of the press of every historical moment if pastoral work or evangelization embraces phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics in its communication than reify communication as the preserve of the professionals or experts. For Nouwen, “pastoral care means a careful and critical contemplation of the condition of man” (63). Again, “it is the ongoing unveiling of reality and the revelation of God’s light as well as man’s darkness. . . [it] can never be limited to the application of any skill or technique since ultimately it is the continuing search for God in the life of the people we want to serve” (63). Therefore, “if the pastoral approach does not go beyond the level of skill and techniques, the minister is tempted to become a manipulator of people” (Nouwen 63). Pastoral work or evangelization as praxis via phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics is beyond professionalism; it is for every Christian rather than just for the professionals or the experts; and phronesis/philosophical hermeneutics ensures that the sacred or the eternal truth of the Gospel is preserved and unchanged in the evangelization of every era.
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