



SCIREA Journal of Philosophy

ISSN: 2995-7788

<http://www.scirea.org/journal/Philosophy>

December 2, 2024

Volume 4, Issue 5, October 2024

<https://doi.org/10.54647/philosophy720105>

## Analysis of the Realization Path of Fraternity from the Perspective of Gadamer's Practical Philosophy

Weikang Zhu

School of philosophy, Anhui University, China

Email address: [1263044547@qq.com](mailto:1263044547@qq.com)

### Abstract

Gadamer's fraternity is closely related to the future development of mankind, not just the fraternity at the life level. He emphasizes that everyone exists in the community, even if he is not aware of the existence of the community, which requires rethinking the relationship between fraternity and unity on the basis of practical rationality, so as to truly form the universal moral norms of mankind.

**Key words:** gadamer; practical philosophy; friendly thoughts; path analysis

### 1. Introduction

As a topic, fraternity occupies an important position in western philosophy. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Gadamer, etc. have all studied fraternity from different angles. In the history of Western classical thought, friendship is a highly political thing. At the same time, fraternity is also one of the important sources of western modern political system. In the Christian era,

fraternity gradually changed from the relationship between "people" to the relationship between "people and God". However, fraternity was ignored and forgotten by modern western philosophy. As a representative of the development of Western hermeneutics, Gadamer not only founded philosophical hermeneutics, but also understood hermeneutics as a practical philosophy. We can trace back to Gadamer's time, war and strife, people lack the most basic trust and ineffective communication, and gradually fall into painful loneliness and self alienation. Therefore, Gadamer took fraternity as the research focus of his practical philosophy, and determined to restore the ancient Aristotle's fraternity ethics and rebuild the fraternity character.

## **2. The realization path of fraternity from the perspective of Gadamer's Practical Philosophy**

Gadamer's fraternity is different from the friendship we mentioned now. It includes all forms of human common life. Including kinship, business relations, social groups, etc. fraternity exists in all the common lives of mankind. Fraternity plays an extraordinary role in social interaction, so it is particularly important to explore the realization path of fraternity. In social life, human beings have a special nature of practice. Hegel once pointed out that human beings get rid of nature through labor, and human beings can realize self-consciousness through practice, so as to keep consistent with themselves and others, so as to achieve unity. Everyone is a unique individual and needs to be taken seriously. As Aristotle believed, we know ourselves in others, and others know themselves in us. Tolerance and mutual trust also exist in the communication between people, and they need to be realized through language, rather than falling into loneliness and pain. Only by overcoming self alienation can we truly realize friendship.

### **2.1 A comprehensive view of self and others and their practicality**

As a "mirror of self-knowledge", friends not only help us see the illusions about ourselves, but also help us have a comprehensive understanding of ourselves in our common life. The mirror of friends not only allows us to see our unique personality, but also some things that we can contact with others, that is, things that make us "consistent with ourselves and others" and ultimately achieve unity. At the same time, because everyone will protect themselves from the bottom of their heart (self love on the selfish level), we can observe things we can't detect anywhere else through the mirror of friends. Gadamer believes that what people need is

self-awareness and gratitude for learning from exemplary figures. First of all, we should have a clear understanding of ourselves. Secondly, on the basis of self-awareness, we should learn from excellent model figures, their ways of dealing with people and things we lack, so as to enrich our own excellent qualities. In Aristotle's view, in friendship, one person recognizes himself in others, and another person recognizes himself in us. That is to say, either through others to see what friends have in common, or through friends to see what they do not have in common. In our contacts with friends, it is easy to focus only on the unity between friends and their concern for each other and common ground, thus ignoring the differences and uniqueness between friends. A person's understanding of himself is often to see the uniqueness of his friends, that is, to learn from their good qualities, see their shortcomings and correct them in time, what attracts us to become friends is not the similarities, but the admirable qualities and differences. Others are like a mirror of self-awareness. A person knows himself in another person and sees an example in another person, so that he can more fully understand himself and others. Gadamer believes that the premise of fraternity is to know yourself and live in harmony with yourself. All of this stems from understanding yourself, but this understanding of yourself is only possible in the relationship with others, which is a mutually beneficial relationship between the common understanding of yourself and others. That is to say, fraternity makes people more personalized, more aware of their mistakes and shortcomings, and taking others as an example can quickly improve their ability and quality. Only by living and getting along with others, can they take others as a mirror, truly understand themselves and improve themselves. Aristotle believes that friends are indispensable in human self-understanding. Friends share their views and intentions with us through communication, and can also strengthen or correct them. Only by taking others as a mirror, looking at others in an all-round way and understanding yourself correctly can fraternity be realized. The "I-You" relationship is in the common life. It not only carries out self reflection, has a clear understanding of yourself and others, but also understands that individuals have important practical significance in the common life.

Gadamer believes that the special significance of human practice is life activities beyond the natural order. The human life instinct is different from the animal instinct we know. People can imagine things beyond their own life, which is manifested in respect and awe for the dead. From ancient times to the present, people have a feeling of respect and awe for the dead. They bury the objects of the dead together, hoping that the dead can enjoy these things in the world after death. In the Paleolithic period, there was a saying in China that "death is life". They

believe that after death, the soul is immortal and can bless the prosperity of the family. As Gadamer believed, it is a way to firmly leave the dead among the living, and it is a way to praise the existence of human beings, which leads to the practical significance of human beings. The basic quality of human practice first appeared labor. Hegel once pointed out that only when work made people get rid of the important role of nature could slaves have real self-consciousness. The slave discovered his self-consciousness through labor. He realized that only through ability and freedom can he truly realize his self-consciousness and reach an agreement with himself, so as to reach an agreement with the working world. This is the existence that the slave owner cannot feel when enjoying life. In Gadamer's view, ability creates unity. This phenomenon does not mean that one loves oneself or only himself, but that one can satisfy his own activity with self-consciousness even under social compulsion.

Although in today's society, there is no case that one class is oppressed and exploited by another class, social coercion still exists, and people will still feel that they are not free, which is the basis of self alienation. Even if we live in a relatively happy and rationalized society, we will still experience the existence of forced freedom. What I mean by coercion is consumption coercion and public opinion coercion. Under such coercion, people cannot realize individual creativity through labor. These are all bad experiences in the modern era of rationalization. With the rapid development of modern technology, it has greatly affected the way of human life. Advanced science and technology can make people's life more convenient, but at the same time, it also makes people gradually lose their reflection on themselves. In the era of rapid development of science and technology economy, people will gradually lose their original living habits and thinking ability. "In this regard, Gadamer strongly demands to restore a comprehensive and correct understanding of the original meaning of practice, theory and scientific concepts, and to re understand the correct relationship between practice, practice and science and technology." Gadamer believes that practice is related to others. At the same time, practical activities also determine the common interests. The good life that practical philosophy wants to establish for mankind is the expectation of a real community of unity and friendship. If people are in crisis for a long time, but do not know how to discover the existence of new unity, then the crisis will inevitably bring people devastating war. Practice is the premise and foundation of all human social activities. In order to realize fraternity, we should pay attention to the particularity of human life practice. Practice will re outline a beautiful blueprint of happiness, fraternity and unity for human life.

## **2.2 Unity occupies an important position in common life**

Unity plays an important role in the life of the community. Gadamer believes that unity has a dual meaning. People will claim to give up their interests and preferences for unity under voluntary or pressure. In the direction of certain policies, at certain times and for certain purposes, people will give up something for unity. Aristotle believed that the citizens of the city-state chose the same behavior in the face of common interests, which was called unity, although sometimes the interests of individuals and themselves would be damaged for the sake of common interests. If we are not willing to give up personal interests for the common purpose, we will not achieve real unity. People need to unite with others to realize the beautiful blueprint of a happy life. Due to the rapid development of the era of science and technology, people's living standards have improved, but at the same time, their thoughts have been imprisoned and restrained, and they lack the understanding of life. This requires people to have a deeper awareness of unity, and learn to find new unity to achieve our common goals, rather than being dominated by science and technology and innovation. If we want to realize true friendship, we must re recognize unity. Friendship is the basis for people to carry out mutual trust and conversation, and is the necessary condition for unity. Unity requires people to have the same feelings and general consensus on a certain thing or thing. It not only represents the need to be based on common interests, but also represents the need for human trust and understanding in common life. To achieve real trust and understanding, it also depends on whether people can carry out friendly communication and exchanges, and whether they can open their hearts to others and reveal themselves.

For Gadamer, unity is not a kind of identity, but is associated with practice. In his view, practice is a way of life, and people can rationally choose common moral norms, thus reaching a consensus and moral belief. However, in the unity of the community, there are differences between members' social lifestyles and their own interests, which leads to that each member has his own way to go, and then ignores the interests of the collective, and may even damage the interests of others and the collective, just to achieve his own goals. Aristotle's view of unity is political fraternity, because it relates to everyone's own interests. "Such solidarity only exists among fair people. Fair people are not only united with themselves, but also with each other." Aristotle believes that such unity exists between good people, but bad people do not, because good people pursue justice and interests, and they have a common pursuit. For example, everyone needs to obey the traffic rules, and there is no doubt that anyone who does not obey the traffic rules will be condemned. In public places,

some immoral behaviors, such as jumping in line or making noise, will be detected by people. Although everyone has different positions, there are still common behaviors. Gadamer believes that people should be aware of real unity, and then unity is possible. Unity plays an irreplaceable role in common life, and it also lays a good foundation for the development of friendship.

### **2.3 Tolerance and dialogue can effectively avoid conflict**

Generally speaking, uncommon people who can not tolerate dissent are intolerant. It can be seen that blindly believing that their views are correct while others are incorrect is a manifestation of intolerance. But this does not mean that tolerance is tolerance for all manifestations of others. We should note that tolerance is limited. We can recognize our own limitations and the superiority and uniqueness of others, but this does not mean that we should tolerate unjust and uncivilized manifestations. Gadamer stressed that we should pay attention to the limit of tolerance. Within the limit, we can be tolerant of others' opinions and lifestyles, but beyond this limit, there is no need to tolerate. Gadamer believed that the basic premise of all tolerance, that is, the self-evident rule of forming the belief in social life, is just what this society lacks internally. That is to say, in this era of science and rationality, but it is also an era of loss of trust and lack of tolerance. For example, due to regional differences and different lifestyles, some people preconceived that rural people are rude and unreasonable, which shows that they are unfriendly and intolerant. Due to the different life experiences of the elderly and young people, they do not trust each other, which affects their communication and understanding, and even affects their common life. Aristotle believed that good temper and sociability are the characteristics of friendliness and can produce friendship most. Among young people, they can quickly become friends with others, but the elderly can't. they don't want to make friends with people they don't like. These problems arise because of the lack of tolerance. Our society is developing at a rapid speed. There is a serious generation gap between young people and the elderly, or between young people and their parents and elders. For the elderly, travel and freedom are very distant things, but these are often what young people yearn for and strive to achieve. Due to the lack of understanding and support from the elderly, young people feel a great sense of bondage and freedom, and there is intolerance between them. But there is no doubt that they all love each other, which requires communication and understanding, that is, dialogue to play a role.

In Gadamer's view, we can express everything in words, and we also have the ability to understand everything. That is to say, language is not only the medium and matrix of our

common life, but also the common participation of individuals in others. Without the practice of language, there would be no dialogue. At the same time, language and understanding are inseparable, and even the movement of thinking can only be completed through language. As Aristotle said, man is a creature with language, and language can only exist in conversation. That is to say, language is the medium for the two sides of the dialogue to reach mutual understanding and reach consensus through mutual understanding. Real dialogue means to reach common views rather than arguing for their own views. In real dialogue, we should consider the views of others and treat their views objectively from the perspective of others. Dialogue is not to express one's own views blindly, nor to oppose others' opinions from one's own perspective, but that people can achieve consistent goals and results through dialogue. Just as in the war era, people reached the same goal through the talks between the enemy and ourselves, thus achieving peace. This is the charm of dialogue.

Gadamer believes that the mode of understanding is just like the dialogue that people use language. That is to say, only through dialogue can mutual understanding and friendship be achieved. Both sides of the dialogue are equal participants rather than dominant ones. They both express their views and opinions to each other during the dialogue. The success of the dialogue is a consensus reached by both sides and a collision of thinking. Socrates once proposed to "know yourself", that is, to achieve understanding through self reflection. He believed that a person with love was the embodiment of justice. A person who really had love knew what he wanted to do and how he should exist. Gadamer believes that understanding is a process of dialogue. He integrates Plato's and Aristotle's thoughts of fraternity into it from the perspective of hermeneutic dialogue, and believes that fraternity also exists in dialogue. Gadamer said in text and interpretation that the ability to understand is the basic quality of people, which enables people to reach the language and talk with each other. That is to say, understanding is the basic premise of dialogue. Only with good understanding ability can we talk better with people. He also said that "conversation and friendship stand shoulder to shoulder". In the process of dialogue, we learned what our experience world does not exist or lacks, and reached a commonality with our friends, that is, everyone found each other and found themselves in each other. It can be said that fraternity is the premise for the subject to understand the dialogue through self reflection. If young people and the elderly first reflect on themselves before the dialogue, put themselves in each other's shoes and understand each other, the conflict will be greatly reduced. Young people and the elderly will reach a consensus, tolerate and understand each other, so as to realize fraternity.

## **2.4 Only by eliminating alienation can the philosophical value of fraternity be realized**

In Gadamer's view, with the development of modern science and technology, people have greatly felt the gradual disappearance of trust and are experiencing painful loneliness and self alienation. Alienation is based on the initial trust. In the common life of two people, they both feel a growing sense of unease in the people they were close to. This alienation belongs to loneliness. "Whoever is lonely will greatly experience this disappeared trust.". Solitude and solitude are two different inner tendencies. Solitude is often manifested as a form of injury, while solitude may be an individual's active pursuit to keep himself in a quiet environment, so that he can better create or think, and give himself a breathing time in the rapidly developing modern society. Solitude is to seek a freedom of self-need, while solitude is an experience of non freedom. "The problem of human self alienation is a major social theoretical problem of modern civilization." in a modern civilized and rationalized society, people seem to have been free and no longer subjected to aggression and oppression by the powers, but they have lost their real freedom and suffered a new and strange compulsion, that is, the compulsion of public opinion and consumption. For a person in an era of alienation, he feels the oppression of all aspects, cannot integrate into the common life of the society, and has extreme distrust of himself and others, so he can only shrink himself in the shell and refuse to interact with others when encountering difficulties like a turtle. As Gadamer said, we should prevent people from turning from self alienation to a separate life, and no longer care about the social community. So how can humans avoid falling into self alienation in their common life?

Gadamer believed that "ability consciousness is the only form that can compete with all the coercion in our world without being threatened by it". Hegel believed that slaves had more ability consciousness than slave owners. They found their own value through labor, so it can be said that ability created unity. In the process of participating in work, an individual did not mean that he was controlled and forced by others, but that he sought his freedom through ability. In fact, it was a kind of unity to adapt himself to others or the collective through labor and get along well with each other, which was friendship with himself. In Plato's view, only the friendship with oneself can make the friendship with others possible, but self love does not mean only loving oneself, but keeping consistent with oneself. Only keeping consistent with oneself can we connect with others and achieve real unity. If he can not achieve friendship with himself, he will never feel happiness and happiness in modern society. This is the basis of self alienation. If he wants to achieve true friendship and realize the ideal life of mankind, he must be "consistent with himself and with others". Only by constantly



overcoming self alienation through his own efforts and constantly reflecting on the modern civilized society, can he build a community of destiny full of friendship and unity, and finally realize the philosophical value of friendship.

### **3. Conclusion**

In today's society, fraternity is no longer the only link to maintain the relationship between people. In order to get out of the plight of the contemporary moral norms, it is necessary for us to use Gadamer's research on fraternity to save the virtue that has been neglected, and find the original good state in the fraternity thought. Gadamer's fraternity thought has important guiding significance for us to correctly handle the relationship between individuals and other societies, and provides important theoretical guidance for establishing fraternity awareness, enhancing fraternity concept, coordinating interpersonal relationships, and building a community of shared future.

### **References**

- [1] Chen Zhiguo Philosophical fraternity: Aristotle, Heidegger and Gadamer [j] Journal of Fudan University (SOCIAL SCIENCE EDITION), 2015, 57 (02): 63-76
- [2] Zhang Nengwei Understanding and meaning interpretation of "tolerance" under Gadamer's practical philosophy [j] Social scientist, 2013, (07): 6-10
- [3] Gadamer Friendship and unity [j] Journal of Anhui Normal University (HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDITION), 2002 (05)
- [4] Zhang Nengwei Reflections on "friendship" in Gadamer's Practical Philosophy -- from "loneliness" as a symbol of self alienation to the reconstruction of "friendship" morality [j] Journal of Shandong University (PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES), 2016, (05): 111-120
- [5] Walhof D R. Friendship, otherness, and Gadamer's politics of solidarity[J]. Political theory, 2006, 34(5):569-593.
- [6] Fengzhengqiang On Gadamer's view of friendship [j] New Oriental, 2012, (02): 68-71
- [7] Heweiping Hermeneutics and Ethics -- the core of Gadamer's practical philosophy

- [j] Philosophical studies, 2000, (12): 60-67+77
- [8] Shuai Wei A comparison of Socrates' and Gadamer's Dialogic thoughts -- a dialogue starting from the good [j] Journal of Hubei University (PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES), 2015, 42 (01): 105-110
- [9] Wang Jun On the "good" in Gadamer's hermeneutic dialogue and its practical significance in contemporary education [j] Journal of Yangzhou University (higher education research edition), 2015, 19 (04): 11-14
- [10] Ban Xueying, Zhang Nengwei Gadamer's theory of "mixing" in the Philebus -- an analysis centered on the idea of good in Plato Aristotle's philosophy [j] Journal of Chizhou University, 2023, 37 (01): 71-74
- [11] Chang Chunyu, Wang Yanbo Enlightenment of Gadamer's philosophy of good to the construction of a harmonious society [j] Journal of Social Sciences of Shanxi Colleges and universities, 2008, 20 (10): 19-21
- [12] Huangxiaozhou The practical philosophical characteristics of Gadamer's didactic hermeneutics [j] Qiushi journal, 2012, 39 (05): 32-37
- [13] Snow white Gadamer's hermeneutic view of language and its modern significance [j] Guangxi Social Sciences, 2007 (09): 40-44
- [14] Su Zhenjia Rebuilding the life world -- on the contemporary significance of Gadamer's hermeneutics as practical philosophy [j] Wuling journal, 2021, 46 (06): 32-40+62
- [15] Smith G M . Friendship as a Political Concept: A Groundwork for Analysis[J]. Political Studies Review, 2018
- [16] Zena Hitz. Aristotle on Self-Knowledge and Friendship[J]. Philosophy's Imprint, 2011(11).
- [17] Makurova Alexandra. Gadamer on Friendship and Solidarity: The Increase in Being in Communal Human Life[J]. Russian Sociological Review, 2016,15(4).
- [18] Warnke G. Solidarity and tradition in Gadamer's hermeneutics[J]. History and Theory, 2012, 51(4):6-22.
- [19] Gaffney J. Solidarity in dark times: Arendt and Gadamer on the politics of appearance[J]. Philosophy Compass, 2018, 13.

[20]Nielsen, Cynthia R. Gadamer and Scholz on Solidarity: Disclosing, Avowing, and Performing Solidaristic Ties with Human and Natural Others[J]. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 2017, 48(3):1-17.