Phenomenological Interpretation of the Phronesis in Aristotle

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It is the aim of this paper to develop the phenomenology of phronesis (practical wisdom)[1] through a phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle's theory of phronesis by employing different kinds of phenomenological reductions. Phronesis has been an important topic in the history of philosophy as well as in contemporary philosophy. There have been a number of attempts within the phenomenological tradition to interpret Aristotle's theory of phronesis.[2] However, my attempt in this paper is different from previous attempts, since I employ various kinds of phenomenological reductions to interpret Aristotle's theory of phronesis, which is not the case with these other studies.

In section 1, I will show that phenomenological reduction is identical with a change of attitude and that we have to employ different kinds of phenomenological reductions in order to interpret Aristotle's theory of phronesis phenomenologically. In section 2, employing different kinds of phenomenological reductions, I will attempt to develop the phenomenological psychology of phronesis through a phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle's theory of phronesis. In section 3, employing different kinds of intersubjective reductions, I will clarify various kinds of intersubjective aspects of phronesis. Aristotle's theory of phronesis has many difficulties, and some of these could be resolved with insights gained through the discussion of the intersubjective aspects of phronesis. In section 4, adopting these insights, I will try to resolve two of the many difficulties of Aristotle's theory of phronesis. In section 5, I will conclude with two remarks concerning the future tasks of the phenomenology of phronesis.

1. Phenomenological reduction and the possibility of a phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle's theory of phronesis

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[1] In this paper, I will use "phronesis" and "practical wisdom" as interchangeable terms.

[2] For example, M. Heidegger, "Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation)," ed. H.-U. Lessing, *Dilthey Jahrbuch* 6 (1989), 235–274; M. Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992) and M. Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 1* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1986), 317ff.; P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 174ff., 190ff. With respect to Heidegger's interpretation of phronesis in Aristotle, see R. Bernasconi, "Heidegger's Destruction of Phronesis," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 28/1 (1990), 127–147.

Let me briefly clarify what phenomenological reduction is. Phenomenological reduction is a "change of attitude" (Einstellungsänderung),[3] namely, the change from one attitude into another. Since there are many different attitudes—such as the natural-scientific attitude, the aesthetic attitude, the religious attitude, the ethical attitude, the eidetic attitude, the phenomenological-psychological attitude, the transcendental-phenomenological attitude, to name a few—there are also many different kinds of phenomenological reductions. If a change is carried out from any attitude as the terminus a quo into a certain attitude as the terminus ad quem, the phenomenological reduction is named after the latter. For example, if a change is carried out from the natural-scientific attitude into the *phenomenological-psychological* attitude, the phenomenological reduction is called the *phenomenological-psychological* reduction.[4]

We can make a distinction between a comprehensive attitude and the partial attitudes that are parts of that comprehensive attitude. For example, we can make a distinction between the phenomenological-psychological attitude and such partial attitudes as the aesthetic attitude, the religious attitude, the ethical attitude, etc. Correspondingly, we can make a distinction between the comprehensive reduction as a reduction from any other attitude to that comprehensive attitude on the one hand and partial reductions as changes from one partial attitude within the comprehensive reduction into another partial attitude on the other hand. We have to carry out a comprehensive reduction first and then the partial reductions. For example, we have to carry out the phenomenological- psychological reduction first and then its partial reductions such as the aesthetic reduction, the religious reduction, the moral reduction, etc. After we carry out a partial reduction, we can carry out various kinds of sub-partial reduction. For example, after we carry out the aesthetic reduction as a partial reduction of the phenomenological-psychological reduction, we could further carry out the musical reduction, the poetic reduction, the architectural reduction, etc., as partial reductions within the aesthetic reduction. In this way the phenomenological reduction is carried out step by step, just as Husserl indicates when—dealing with the phenomenological reduction in *Ideas 1*—he refers to a "stepwise reduction":[5]

"As a method this operation [the phenomenological reduction] will be divided into

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[3] In this context, in order to designate the phenomenological reduction, Husserl adopts not only the expression "change of attitude" ("Einstellungsänderung"—Hua XXXIV, 203, 204; "Änderung der Einstellung"—Hua VIII, 104), but also other expressions such as "transition of attitude" ("Übergang der Einstellung"—Hua XXXIV, 41) and "replacement of attitude" ("Einstellungswechsel"—Hua XXXIV, 3; "Wechsel der Einstellung"—Hua VIII, 314). In this paper, Husserl's work published in *Husserliana* will be cited with the abbreviation Hua, the volume number, and the page number; where a published English translation is available, the English page number follows in square brackets.

[4] I have dealt with the issue of the phenomenological reduction as change of attitude in N.-I. Lee, "Phenomenological Reduction and the Future of Phenomenology" [in Korean], *Research in Philosophy and Phenomenology* 54 (2012), 89–121.

[5] I have dealt with this issue in a detailed manner in my paper on "Egological Reduction and Intersubjective Reduction," presented at the conference on "Phenomenology, Empathy, Intersubjectivity: New Approaches," Dublin, May 3–5, 2017.

different steps of 'excluding,' 'bracketing,' and thus our method will assume the characteristic of a stepwise reduction. For this reason, we shall, on most occasions, speak of *phenomenological reductions* (but also, with reference to their collective unity, we shall speak of *the* phenomenological reduction) [...]."

"Methodisch wird diese Operation sich in verschiedene Schritte der 'Ausschaltung,' 'Einklammerung' zerlegen und so wird unsere Methode den Charakter einer schrittweisen Reduktion annehmen. Um dessentwillen werden wir und sogar vorwiegend von *phänomenologischen Reduktionen* (bzw. auch einheitlich hinsichtlich ihrer Gesamtheit von *der* phänomenologischen Reduktion) sprechen […]" (Hua III/1, 69[66, trans. altered]).

In order to interpret Aristotle's theory of phronesis in the *Nicomachean Ethics*[6] phenomenologically, we have to employ various kinds of phenomenological reductions properly. The phenomenological reduction that we have to carry out first is the phenomenological-psychological reduction as the change from the natural-scientific attitude to the phenomenological-psychological attitude. Thereafter we have to carry out the ethical reduction as one of its partial reductions, one that makes it possible for us to focus on the ethical dimension as a whole. Then we have to carry out the reduction to phronesis as one of the partial reductions within the ethical reduction. This reduction could be called the phronetic reduction. Phronesis has many aspects, and in order to clarify each of them systematically, one has to carry out different kinds of reductions as sub-kinds of the phronetic reduction. Now I will try to clarify the structure of phronesis systematically by adopting different kinds of phenomenological reductions such as the phenomenological-psychological reduction, the ethical reduction, the eidetic reduction, the phronetic reduction, and finally, different kinds of intersubjective reductions as a means to focus on various kinds of intersubjective aspects of phronesis.

2. Phenomenological reduction and the phenomenological psychology of phronesis

In Book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle attempts to develop a theory of phronesis that aims to clarify its essential structure. He makes a distinction between character virtue (moral virtue) and intellectual virtue, and considers phronesis to be one of the intellectual virtues. In addition to phronesis, there are also other kinds of intellectual virtue such as scientific knowledge (episteme), intuitive reason (nous), philosophic wisdom (sophia), and art (techne). Comparing phronesis with the other intellectual virtues, he attempts to clarify its essential structure. And as long as it is

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[6] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962). Henceforth cited as NE.

the aim of his theory of phronesis to clarify its essential structure, it could be called an eidetic theory of phronesis. As such, it is different from the empirical theory of phronesis that could be developed in various directions by taking into account the various socio-historical contexts as the field where phronesis works.

From the perspective of Husserl's phenomenology, Aristotle's theory of phronesis as an eidetic theory could be considered to be a discipline of phenomenological psychology. It is the aim of the phenomenological psychology developed by Husserl to clarify the "essential forms" (Wesensformen—Hua IX, 259) or the essential structures of the various kinds of consciousness in the widest sense. Since there are manifold forms of consciousness, it is possible to develop manifold types of phenomenological psychology by clarifying the essential structure of each form of consciousness. One of these is the phenomenological psychology of phronesis. Phronesis is a kind of consciousness in the widest sense, and it is possible to develop an eidetic theory of phronesis that attempts to clarify its essential form or structure.

In order to develop phenomenological psychology as an eidetic theory of consciousness, one first has to carry out the phenomenological-psychological reduction as the change from the natural-scientific attitude to the phenomenological-psychological attitude. Since there are different partial attitudes within the phenomenological-psychological attitude, it is possible to carry out different kinds of phenomenological-psychological reductions as changes of attitude from one partial attitude of the phenomenological-psychological attitude to another. One of these is the ethical reduction, and this is precisely the reduction we have to carry out in order to develop the phenomenology of phronesis.

The ethical reduction as a partial reduction of the phenomenological-psychological reduction makes it possible for us to focus on phronesis as an empirical consciousness that takes place in a concrete socio-historical context. For this reason, the first theory of phronesis that could be developed by carrying out the ethical reduction takes the form of an empirical theory of phronesis. Since there are endlessly many socio-historical contexts in which phronesis takes place, there could be endlessly many types of phronesis, and correspondingly, there could be endlessly many types of empirical theories of phronesis.

However, in order to develop the phenomenological psychology of phronesis as an eidetic theory, the next step after carrying out the phenomenological-psychological reduction discussed above is to carry out the "eidetic reduction" that makes it possible for us to grasp the essence of phronesis. In a phenomenological context, the essence is the element common to a group of objects. For example, if "being a rational animal" is common to all human beings, it is the essence of the latter. Since an essence is the element common to a group of objects, then in order to grasp the essence of a group of objects, we have to be able to survey all of the possible objects that could fall under an essence. For this reason, the "free variation" that makes it possible for us to survey

all of the possible objects that fall under an essence is a necessary component of the eidetic reduction. The starting point of eidetic variation is the factual object(s), be they real or imagined. For example, the starting point of the free variation that is needed to grasp the essence of the human being could be a real human being or an imagined human being. It is by carrying out free variation that we can survey all of the possible objects that fall under an essence and grasp the latter. In *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl describes the process of eidetic reduction or "intuition of essence" (Wesensanschauung) as follows:

"The productive activity which consists in running through the multiplicity of variations, 2. The unitary linking in continuous coincidence, 3. The active identification which brings out the congruent over the differences."

"1. Erzeugendes Durchlaufen der Mannigfalitigkeit der Variationen, 2. Einheitliche Verknüpfung in fortschreitender Deckung, 3. Herausschauende active Identifizierung des Kongruierenden gegenüber den Differenzen."[7]

In order to grasp the essence of a group of objects, we have to employ the method of comparison together with the method of free variation discussed above. For example, in order to grasp the essence of the human being, we have to compare the essence of the human being as a species of animal with other essences such as that of dogs, that of cats, that of tigers, etc., as other species of animals. Developing his phenomenology as an eidetic science, Husserl implicitly employs the method of comparison as a methodical component of the eidetic reduction. For example, he attempts to clarify the various kinds of essences pertaining to consciousness—such as that of perception, that of memory, that of expectation, and that of imagination—by comparing each of them with the others.

Thus in order to grasp the essence of phronesis and develop the phenomenological psychology of phronesis as an eidetic theory we have to carry out the eidetic reduction by taking factual act(s) of phronesis as the starting point of free variation. Developing his theory of phronesis as an eidetic theory, Aristotle is implicitly carrying out the eidetic reduction after having carried out the ethical reduction discussed above. He begins his discussion by identifying the person who has the ability of phronesis: "Regarding practical wisdom we shall get the truth by considering who are the persons who we credit with it" (NE 1140a). Then he claims that it is thought to be "the mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself […]" (NE 1140a). Here "the mark of a man of practical wisdom" is the essence of the man of practical wisdom, even though it is

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[7] E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik* [1938], ed. L. Landgrebe (Hamburg: Claassen & Goverts, 1948, rpt. Felix Meiner, 1999), 410; *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic,* trans. J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 346–347.

only the vague and general content of an essence that should be concretized step by step. Thus by taking into account persons of practical wisdom as the starting point of free variation, Aristotle has implicitly carried out the eidetic reduction and tried to grasp the essence of the man of practical wisdom as well as that of practical wisdom itself. Let us grasp the essence of practical wisdom in a more concrete manner by repeatedly employing the eidetic reduction and the method of comparison as Aristotle implicitly did.

Among the five intellectual virtues, philosophic wisdom, intuitive reason, and scientific knowledge deal with eternal objects that do not change. Among these three, "the intuitive reason which is presupposed by demonstrations grasps the unchangeable and first terms" (NE 1143b), that is, the premise of the demonstration; scientific knowledge is "a state of capacity to demonstrate" (NE 1139b), that is, the knowledge of those things that could be deduced from the "premise" that intuitive reason grasps; and philosophic wisdom is "intuitive reason combined with scientific knowledge" (NE 1141a). In contrast to these three intellectual virtues, practical wisdom deals with the "variable" (NE 1140a).

It should be noted that not only practical wisdom, but also art deals with "things that are variable" (NE 1141a). For this reason, we have to grasp the essential trait that distinguishes practical wisdom from art. Art is concerned with making something and is called "a reasoned state of capacity to make," that is, "a state of capacity to make, involving a true course of reasoning" (NE 1140a). Contrary to art, practical wisdom is concerned with moral actions as "things human" (NE 1141b) and could be defined as "the reasoned state of capacity to act" (NE 1140a).

What practical wisdom as "the reasoned state of capacity to act" means concretely is the ability to deliberate. In order to gain a more detailed understanding of practical wisdom as the ability for deliberation, one must note the general structure of moral action. Moral action has three constitutive components: the moral agent, the end (the goal) of the action, and the means that could lead to the goal. The moral agent has to have the ability to know not only the end, but also the means of the moral action so that she can carry out a good moral action. According to Aristotle, it is "moral virtue" that has the ability to know the end as the goal (the aim or mark) of the moral action, whereas it is "practical wisdom" that has the ability to know the means that could lead to the goal. With respect to the different roles of moral virtue and practical wisdom in moral action, Aristotle writes as follows:

"Again, the work of a man is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as with moral virtue; for virtue makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means" (NE 1144a).

There have been many discussions about the difference between the role of moral

virtue and that of practical wisdom in moral action. As J. Moss reports,[8] there are many interpreters who claim that the distinction between the role of moral virtue as the ability to know the end and that of practical wisdom as the ability to know the means is not valid. Contrary to what they claim and as Moss claims correctly, however, Aristotle really does hold the view that it is indeed moral virtue that has the ability to know the end as the goal (the aim or mark) of the moral action, whereas it is practical wisdom that has the ability to know the means that could lead to the goal. There are many passages that clearly support this view, and one of them is the following, where Aristotle tells us that it is

"[…] plain too that the choice will not be right without practical wisdom any more than without virtue; for the one determines the end and the other makes us do the things that lead to the end" (NE 1145a).

Since the moral actor has the knowledge of the end of the moral action through moral virtue, she has to think about the various possible means that could lead to the end and has to choose one among them as the best. In order to make the best choice, the moral actor has to calculate, and the act of calculation as deliberation (bouleutike) is the main function of practical wisdom, as the following passage indicates:

"If, then, it is the characteristic of men of practical wisdom to have deliberated well, excellence in deliberation will be correctness with regard to what conduces to the end of which practical wisdom is the true apprehension" (NE 1142b).

Insofar as deliberation implies a good choice, it has the component of cleverness (deinotes). Thus there is a close connection between deliberation and cleverness, and this is the reason why we call "men of practical wisdom clever" (NE 1144a). It should be noted, however, that these attributes are not the same, but different. In order to grasp the difference between them, let us first clarify what cleverness is. Cleverness is the ability "to do the things that tend toward the mark we have set before ourselves, and to hit" (NE 1144a). Cleverness could lead to the morally good as well as the morally bad. With respect to the goal, it is totally neutral. It can lead to the good if it is guided by moral virtue. And it is precisely the cleverness that is guided by moral virtue and leads to the morally good that is called practical wisdom. In contrast to this, the cleverness that tends toward the bad is called "mere smartness" (NE 1144a). Thus practical wisdom turns out to have cleverness as one of its constitutive components and the goodness of the end as another constitutive component. Practical wisdom could not exist without being connected with moral virtue on the one hand and with cleverness on the other.

If we compare phronesis with "understanding" (sunesis), we can grasp another

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[8] J. Moss, "'Virtue Makes the Goal Right': Virtue and Phronesis in Aristotle's Ethics," *Phronesis* 56 (2011), 204–261.

essential trait of phronesis. There is a similarity between understanding and practical wisdom. Like phronesis, "understanding is neither about things that are always and unchangeable, nor about any and every one of the things that come into being, but about things which may become subjects of questioning and deliberating" (NE, 1143a). Understanding is concerned with the same objects as practical wisdom. This is clear if we take into account examples of understanding such as historical understanding or understanding the situation of a person living in a foreign country. However, practical wisdom is different from understanding: "For practical wisdom issues commands, since its end is what ought to be done or not to be done; but understanding only judges" (NE 1143a).

What, then, is the utility of practical wisdom? It can make a man just, noble, and good; in other words, it has the ability to make a man happy in a true sense. As Aristotle says, "Practical wisdom is the quality of mind concerned with things just and noble and good for man, but these are the things which it is the mark of a good man to do […]" (NE 1143b). As we have seen, practical wisdom issues a command, namely, the command that one should become good. A man should have practical wisdom "not for the sake of knowing moral truths but for the sake of becoming good" (NE 1143b). For this reason, "practical wisdom will be of no use to those who are good," since, already being good, they do not need any command from practical wisdom. And "it is of no use to those who have not virtue" (NE 1143b), since if they do not have any virtue at all, practical wisdom could make no effect on them. It should be noted that as already indicated, practical wisdom cannot work if it is not guided by virtue. Thus practical wisdom turns out to be useful only to those who are neither entirely good like god nor entirely bad like the devil. It is useful to normal people who are neither entirely good nor entirely bad.

As long as practical wisdom is useful to man, it is different from philosophic wisdom. It is true that philosophic wisdom is concerned with "things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine" (NE 1141b), but this does not imply that it is useful to man. Since philosophic wisdom is concerned with invariable things, it cannot be useful, but is "useless" (NE 1141b) to man living in the world of variable things. As Aristotle claims, "this is why we say Anaxagoras, Thales and men like them have philosophic but not practical wisdom, when we see them ignorant of what is to their own advantage" (NE 1141b).
Moreover, there are different types of practical wisdom. Since practical wisdom is the ability to deliberate, there is practical wisdom wherever there is a sentient being equipped with the ability to deliberate. And since the human being has the ability to deliberate, it has practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is not, however, something that is peculiar to human beings. Not only human beings, but also animals could be considered to have practical wisdom if they were to turn out to have the ability to deliberate, as a passage from *Nicomachean Ethics* suggests: "This is why we say that some even of the lower animals have practical wisdom, viz. those which are found to have a power of foresight with regard to their own life" (NE 1141a).

So far, we have tried to develop the phenomenological psychology of phronesis and have attempted to grasp some important aspects of the essence of phronesis. We have briefly clarified them, and it is one of the future tasks of the phenomenological psychology of phronesis to clarify each of them in a more detailed manner. In addition, there are some other aspects of the essence of phronesis that we have not addressed, and it is another future task of the phenomenological psychology of phronesis to clarify each of them in a detailed manner. One of them is the intersubjective aspect of phronesis, which will be discussed in the next section.

3. Intersubjective reduction and the intersubjective aspect of phronesis

I will begin the discussion of the intersubjective aspect of phronesis by pointing out that there are two types of phronesis. In this respect, one should recognize that there are two types of good that could be achieved through phronesis: namely, the good that is the good of the person (or the persons) exercising phronesis, and the good that is the good of the society (or the societies) to which the person (or the persons) exercising phronesis belongs. Correspondingly, there are two types of phronesis, namely, the phronesis (P1) aiming at the good of the person (or the persons) exercising phronesis, and the phronesis (P2) aiming at the good of the society (or the societies) to which the person (or the persons) exercising phronesis belongs.

The type of phronesis mainly discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is P1. When Aristotle maintains that "the man who knows and concerns himself with his own interests is thought to have practical wisdom" (NE 1142a), the practical wisdom he has in mind is that of the persons. In the *Nicomachean Ethics,* one can find a general tendency of Aristotle to identify phronesis with P1 as the phronesis that is concerned with "one's own good" (NE 1142a), "what is good for oneself" (NE 1141b), or "a man's own interest" (NE 1141a). There are passages in Book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that clearly seem to support this view. Typical examples are the following:

"[…] for it is to that which observes well the various matters *concerning itself* that one ascribes practical wisdom, and it is to this that one will entrust such matters. This is why we say that some even of the lower animals have practical wisdom, viz. those which are found to have a power of foresight *with regard to their own life*" (NE 1141a, emphasis mine).

"Practical wisdom also is identified especially with that form of it which is concerned *with a man himself—with the individual*; and this is known by the general name 'practical wisdom'" (NE 1141b, emphasis mine).

It should be noted, however, that Aristotle considers not only P1, but also P2 to be a legitimate concept of phronesis. This is clearly indicated in passages such as the

following:

"It is for this reason that we think Pericles and men like him have practical wisdom, viz. because they can see what is good for themselves and *what is good for men in general* " (NE 1140b, emphasis mine).

"*What is good for men in general*" in this citation refers to matters pertaining to society, and it is legislation and politics in particular that are concerned with "what is good for men in general." They too are objects of deliberation, and for this reason, we can speak of the various kinds of practical wisdom proper to them, such as legislative wisdom, political wisdom, deliberative wisdom, and juridical wisdom. Moreover, household matters—matters that takes place inside the house (oikos)—are also objects of deliberation, and we can therefore speak of "economic" wisdom as well. Even though practical wisdom is "identified especially with that form of it which is concerned with a man himself—with the individual; and this is known by the general name 'practical wisdom'" (NE 1141b), it is entirely legitimate to talk about practical wisdom concerned with legislation, politics, and the household. In this context, employing such concepts as "political wisdom," and "legislative wisdom," D. Ross translates the beginning of Chapter 8 of Book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* which deals with issues of household management, legislation, and politics in relation to the issue of phronesis, as follows:

"Political wisdom and practical wisdom are the same state of mind, but their essence is not the same. Of the wisdom concerned with the city, the practical wisdom which plays a controlling part is legislative wisdom, while that which is related to this as particulars to their universal is known by the general name 'political wisdom' […]" (NE 1141b).

The intersubjective aspect shows up differently in P1 and P2, but they are both essentially intersubjective facts. Aristotle does not deal with the intersubjective aspects of P1 and P1 in a detailed manner. He only addresses some of them and leaves many of them untouched. It is the task of the phenomenology of phronesis to clarify the various kinds of intersubjective aspects displayed by P1 and P2 and illuminate their intersubjective traits.

We accordingly have to employ different types of "intersubjective reduction" (Hua IX, 263[115]; Hua XIII, 76[91]) in order to clarify the intersubjective aspects of phronesis systematically. Husserl attempts to develop the intersubjective reduction as a method for systematically carrying out a phenomenology of intersubjectivity. He therefore attempts to develop the intersubjective reduction as a method that could supplement the "egological reduction" (Hua IX, 263[115]) as the method of egological phenomenology.[9] Originally he conceives of his phenomenology as an egological

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[9] I have dealt with the distinction between the egological reduction and the intersubjective reduction in

phenomenology aiming at the clarification of the sphere of egological subjectivity, and the egological reduction is the method for clarifying this sphere. Since the phenomenological onlooker can obtain access to most of the egological sphere through reflection, the egological reduction turns out to consist mainly in the method of reflection. However, as it becomes clear to Husserl that he has to develop intersubjective phenomenology as another part of his phenomenology, he attempts to develop the intersubjective reduction as the method of the phenomenology of intersubjectivity. The sphere of other subjectivities is an important topic of intersubjective phenomenology. Since the phenomenological onlooker can obtain access to the sphere of other subjectivities through the method of the "perception of the other" (Fremderfahrung), the method of the perception of the other turns out to be an important part of the intersubjective reduction.

In order to develop the phenomenology of intersubjectivity systematically, employing the method of the intersubjective reduction, we have to make a distinction between different fields of intersubjectivity and attempt to clarify each of them systematically. The same will also be true of the phenomenology of phronesis. As we shall see, P1 and P2 as two different types of phronesis display various kinds of intersubjective aspects. For this reason, in order to develop the phenomenology of phronesis systematically, we have to employ different types of intersubjective reductions that can enable us to discern these different kinds of intersubjective aspects in P1 and P2.

Now let me first clarify the intersubjective aspects of P1. P1 has the three kinds of intersubjective aspects.

First, even though P1 is concerned with "one's own good," in most cases, the way P1 works is by treating the others in a way that is noble, just, and good, i.e., P1 works through virtue. As already indicated, phronesis as the ability to deliberate is inseparably connected with virtue as the end toward which phronesis must aim through deliberation. It should be noted that most of the virtues discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*—virtues such as courage, liberality, good temper, friendliness, trustfulness, ready wit, and shame—are related to other persons. They could not be effective if there were no others. Of course, there are virtues such as temperance, pride, and ambition that could come into play without being related to others. These could not be considered to have an intersubjective aspect in the sense mentioned above. It should be noted, however, that even these virtues are related to other persons, since conceptually speaking, all of them could only have meaning in comparison with others. For this reason, all manifestations of P1 connected with virtues turn out to have an intersubjective aspect.

Second, P1 has an intersubjective aspect in another sense. With respect to the validity of P1 exercised by a moral agent (A), there are three different kinds of P1, namely, P1

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the paper mentioned above on "Egological Reduction and Intersubjective Reduction."

equipped with merely subjective validity (P1S); P1 equipped with intersubjective validity (P1I); and P1 equipped with objective validity (P1O). Thus if P1 is valid subjectively only for A, it is called P1S and is equipped with merely subjective validity. If P1 is valid not only for A, but also for a group of moral agents to which A belongs yet not for all possible rational moral agents, it is called P1I and is equipped with intersubjective validity. In other words, if any of the moral agents in a group of moral agents could think herself *into the position of A* and could find P1 valid, P1 is to be understood as equipped with intersubjective validity. Finally, if P is valid not only for A, but also for all possible moral agents, it is called P1O and is equipped with objective validity. Thus if any of the possible rational moral agents could think herself *into the position of A* and could find P1 valid, P1 is said to be equipped with objective validity.

P1I and P1O both have an intersubjective aspect, since they are exercised through communication with others. The other (or the others) is an essential component of P1I and P1O. In contrast, P1S does not have an intersubjective aspect in the sense discussed above, since it is exercised without communication with others. However, even P1S has an intersubjective aspect in another sense, since in exercising P1S, A is open to the evaluation of others, be it praise or blame. Needless to say, not only P1S, but also P1I and P1O have an intersubjective aspect in this sense, since in exercising P1 of any type, A is open to the evaluation of others.

Third, P1 has an intersubjective aspect in yet another sense. A moral agent (A) belongs to various kinds of social groups such as family, town, school, company, a religious community, a country, and finally, the world community. P1 cannot be exercised outside of society. This implies that P1 has an intersubjective aspect, since society is nothing other than the constitutive product of intersubjective communication among persons. In contrast to the other two kinds of intersubjective aspects of phronesis discussed above, the intersubjective aspect in question was indeed an important topic discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here Aristotle's primary concern is about the individual phronesis that aims to achieve one's own good as its primary goal. Clarifying the structure of individual phronesis, however, he admits the possibility that this kind of phronesis could work only in a society and has a social aspect, as follows:

"Those who think thus seek their own good, and consider that one ought to do so. From this opinion, then, has come the view that such men have practical wisdom; yet perhaps one's own good cannot exist without household management, nor without a form of government" (1142a).

In this passage, Aristotle admits that individual phronesis could work only within society. He considers the state to have a decisive role for the way phronesis works. However, human life in the state is the topic not of ethics, but of politics, and this is the reason why Aristotle addresses the issue of the state in the last sections of Book 10

of *Nicomachean Ethics* as the bridge that should lead to *Politics*. There he addresses the issue of legislation as one of the essential components of the state. With respect to the necessity of legislation coming into being, he points out that it "is not pleasant to most people, especially when they are young," "to live temperately and hardily" (NE 1179b). For this reason, it is necessary to constitute good laws and to bring up youths from birth under the laws so that they can become accustomed to them and live well in the state. In this context, he points out that "the law has compulsory power, while it is at the same time a rule proceeding from a sort of practical wisdom and reason" (NE 1180a).

Now let me clarify the intersubjective aspect of P2. It is quite clear that P2 has different kinds of intersubjective aspects. One could make a distinction between three different kinds of intersubjective aspects pertaining to P2. First, as long as P2 is directed to society as the constitutive product of intersubjective communication among subjects, it turns out to have an intersubjective aspect. Second, as long as the person has to communicate with others in order to be able to exercise P2, P2 turns out to have another intersubjective aspect. Third, the person can exercise P2 only in a society, and for this reason, P2 turns out to have one more intersubjective aspect.

Thus all the different kinds of phronesis turn out to have different kinds of intersubjective aspects. It is one of the essential traits of phronesis to have various kinds of intersubjective aspects. In fact, phronesis is a mixture of the different kinds of intersubjective aspects discussed above. In this context we could say, with P. Ricoeur, that phronesis is the ability "to live well with and for others in just institutions."[10] In order to be able to clarify phronesis as the ability "to live well with and for others in just institutions" systematically and in a detailed manner, we have to analyze the different kinds of intersubjective aspects of phronesis concretely, which will be done partly in section 4 with respect to the attempt to resolve two difficulties concerning the concept of phronesis in Aristotle.

4. Suggestions for resolving two difficulties concerning the concept of phronesis in Aristotle

There are many difficult issues concerning the concept of phronesis in Aristotle. Some of these could be resolved with the help of the discussions of the intersubjective aspect of phronesis carried out in section 3. Let me give two examples.

First, discussing the nature of phronesis, Aristotle makes a distinction between "natural virtue" and "virtue in the strict sense" (NE 1144b). Natural virtue is the virtue that we have from birth without education and rational thinking. In this respect, Aristotle claims that "from the moment of birth we are just or fitted for self-control or

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[10] P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 352.

brave or have the other moral qualities" (NE 1144b). However, natural virtue has the limitation that it is not equipped with reason and could be even harmful, as Aristotle writes:

"For both children and brutes have the natural dispositions to these qualities, but without reason these are evidently harmful. Only we seem to see this much, that, while one may be led astray by them, as a strong body which moves without sight may stumble badly because of its lack of sight [...]" (NE 1144b).

Natural virtue, then, is a virtue without reason and without sight. Since it does not have reason and sight, it cannot be connected with phronesis and guide the latter, since phronesis as the ability of deliberation cannot work without reason and sight. But there is another type of virtue that is essentially different from natural virtue—namely, virtue in the strict sense as virtue equipped with reason and sight. "If a man once acquires reason, that makes a difference in action; and his state, while still like what it was, will then be virtue in the strict sense" (NE 1144b). Since virtue in the strict sense is equipped with reason and sight, it could be connected with phronesis and guide the latter in deliberation. As Aristotle maintains, only virtue in the strict sense "involves practical wisdom" (NE 1144b).

Thus Aristotle makes a distinction between natural virtue, which does not involve phronesis, and virtue in the strict sense, which does involve phronesis. A typical example of the former is the virtue of "children and brutes" and that of the latter is the virtue of human beings equipped with reason. Children and brutes that have only natural virtue do not have phronesis.

However, there is a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle admits that natural virtue too involves phronesis. In this context, he tries to define what it is to which phronesis could be ascribed. According to him, "it is to that which observes well the various matters concerning itself that one ascribes practical wisdom, and it is to this that one will entrust such matters" (NE 1141a). It is undeniable that not only the human being, but also the animal "observes well the various matters concerning itself." "This is," as Aristotle claims, "why we say that some even of lower animals have practical wisdom, viz. those which are found to have a power of foresight with regard to their own life" (NE 1141a). It should be noted that lower animals do not have virtue in the strict sense, but only natural virtue, since they are not equipped with reason in a strict sense. Nevertheless, Aristotle does admit that not only virtue in the strict sense, but also natural virtue involves phronesis.

There is therefore an inconsistency in Aristotle's view concerning whether natural virtue does or does not involve phronesis. In my view, one should admit that natural virtue too involves phronesis, which could be clarified with recourse to the distinction between three different kinds of P1 discussed above, namely, the distinction between P1S (P1 with subjective validity), P1I (P1 with intersubjective validity), and P1O (P1

with objective validity). Let me clarify this point.

From the perspective of genetic phenomenology, the three different kinds of P1 discussed above are three different layers of the genesis of P1. Among them, the most original is P1S, and it can develop into P1I and then further into P1O. The process of the development from P1S into P1I and further into P1O is the process of the genesis of the latter two layers. P1S as the most original form of P1 is exercised without any dialogue with others, whereas the other two kinds of P1 are exercised with dialogue with others. It is through dialogue with others that P1S can develop into P1I and then further into P1O.

Moreover, if we illuminate P1S from the perspective of genetic phenomenology, it turns out to have different sub-kinds corresponding to different types of moral agents. For example, there are different sub-kinds such as P1S of the mature human moral agent with fully developed reason; P1S of the child with less fully developed reason; and P1S of the infant or the animal. It should be noted that the infant or the animal does indeed have P1S as long as it has the ability to deliberate in its own way. The lowest among the three different sub-kinds is P1S of the infant or the animal.

Thus from the perspective of genetic phenomenology, the infant or the animal could be considered to have P1S. It is obvious that the infant or the animal does not have virtue in the strict sense, but only natural virtue. Thus it turns out that not only virtue in the strict sense, but also natural virtue involves phronesis. With respect to the fact that natural virtue involves phronesis, it should be noted that it could not be called virtue if it were not equipped with reason as the power to deliberate and foresee, however weak this power might be. From the perspective of genetic phenomenology, then, there are different layers of reason that correspond to the different layers of virtue as well as of phronesis.

Second, there is another difficulty with Aristotle's theory of phronesis, one concerning its objective validity. It is a difficulty related to P1 as well as P2, since we can speak of the objective validity of P1 as well as P2.

As we have seen, even though Aristotle does not mention it, from the perspective of genetic phenomenology there are different layers of P1 such as P1S, P1I, and P1O. To live a happy life, one must to be able to exercise P1O, and it is one of the important tasks of the theory of phronesis to show how one could start from P1S and move to P1I and finally to P1O. In this respect, Aristotle emphasizes the decisive role of reason for phronesis as the ability to deliberate. It is reason that makes it possible for one to start from P1S and move to P1I and P1O. However, Aristotle does not clarify what reason concretely means in this context. It is communicative reason in a true sense[11] that enables the transition from P1S to P1I and P1O, since this transition is

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[11] Communicative reason is an important topic of J. Habermas's theory of communicative action and

not possible without dialogue with other moral agents. Thus it turns out that it is one of the important tasks of Aristotle's theory of phronesis to develop the theory of communicative reason as one of its constitutive parts.

Even though Aristotle does not address the issue of communicative reason, it is an essential part of his theory of phronesis. If we take into account the relationship between P1 and P2, we can realize the importance of the issue of communicative reason for Aristotle's theory of phronesis.

We have seen that P2 is the very condition of the possibility of P1, and this implies that the objective validity of P2 has to be secured so that the objective validity of P1 can be attained. There is a possibility that P2 seems to be equipped with objective validity from the start, but it turns out that P2 does not automatically have such validity. In this case, there is a danger that even though moral agents do their best to exercise P1O (P1 equipped with objective validity), they cannot exercise it at all. In an extreme case, they could even experience a collective deception. We witness this kind of danger not only in past history, but also in the present all over the world. Thus it turns out that it is another task of the phenomenology of phronesis to show the way to secure the objective validity of P2.

As the discussion of the intersubjective aspect of phronesis shows, it is communicative rationality that enables us to secure the objective validity of P2. It is only by way of different kinds of open dialogue that moral agents can secure P2 with objective validity. One of these is intra-cultural open dialogue between the moral agents that belong to a culture or a country. It is impossible to secure the objective validity of P2 without such intra-cultural open dialogue among moral agents. However, it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the possibility of securing the objective validity of P2. Intra-cultural dialogue is not totally free from the danger that the moral agents might experience collective deception. In order to cope with this kind of danger, intra-cultural open dialogue should be supplemented with intercultural open dialogue with other moral agents belonging to other cultures or countries. There are many important issues related to intercultural dialogue such as the issue of cosmopolitanism, that of cultural relativism, that of tolerance, etc.

5. Concluding remarks

Aristotle's theory of phronesis has an eternal value for human life, but it also has many difficulties. There are many unclear points, underdeveloped issues, and even inconsistencies. It is the fate of Aristotle's theory of phronesis as the first theory of phronesis in the Western history of philosophy to exhibit such difficulties. One should

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also of E. Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity. See J. Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main : Suhrkamp, 1981); Hua XV. I have dealt with this issue in N.-I. Lee, "The Crisis of Modern Society and Critical Rationality," in *Advancing Phenomenology: Essays in Honor of Lester Embree*, ed. T. Nenon and P. Blosser (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 235–250.

not consider his theory of phronesis to be a completed theory needing no revision. This is the reason why I have tried to transform it into a phenomenology of phronesis by interpreting it phenomenologically with the help of various kinds of phenomenological reductions. Let me conclude with two remarks.

First, the phenomenological interpretation that I have attempted up until now is only a starting point. It should be pursued further in many directions. For example, some of the issues I have discussed have to be dealt with in a more detailed manner, such as the relationship between virtue and phronesis. There are some other issues that I have not addressed at all—for example, the relationship between phronesis and "inquiry" (euboulia) (NE 1142a–1142b) or the relationship between phronesis and "judgment" (gnome) (NE 1143a–1143b). There are also many discussions in Asian philosophy such as Confucianism or Buddhism that are related to the issue of phronesis. If we take these into account in discussing phronesis, many aspects of the latter could certainly be illuminated. It is one of the future tasks of the phenomenology of phronesis to clarify some important aspects of phronesis by promoting a dialogue between East and West.

Second, in this paper, I have tried to interpret Aristotle's theory of phronesis as a phenomenological psychology of phronesis. It is possible, however, to interpret it as a transcendental phenomenology of phronesis, insofar as there is a parallelism between phenomenological psychology and transcendental phenomenology. Needless to say, in order to interpret it in this way, we have to carry out different kinds of transcendental-phenomenological reductions. It is true that the transcendental phenomenology of phronesis is a project quite alien to Aristotle insofar as the idea of transcendental phenomenology was unknown to him. However, if we develop a transcendental phenomenology of phronesis, many new aspects of phronesis could be revealed. It is possible to develop different types of transcendental phenomenology of phronesis corresponding to the different types of transcendental phenomenology.

One of these is the transcendental phenomenology of phronesis that one could develop by adopting the Heideggerian insight gained through the fundamental ontological interpretation of Aristotle's theory of phronesis. In this context, it should be noted that as I have discussed in detail elsewhere,[12] Heidegger's fundamental ontology can be considered to be one of the different kinds of transcendental phenomenology. As R. Bernasconi correctly points out, Heidegger considers four central concepts of his fundamental ontology to be identical with phronesis in Aristotle's ethics; they are "Umsicht or circumspection, Verstehen or understanding, Entschlossenheit or resoluteness and Gewissen or conscience."[13] Contrary to what

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[12] Nam-In Lee, *Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* [in Korean] (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2004).

[13] R. Bernasconi, "Heidegger's Destruction of Phronesis," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 28/1 (1990), 130.

Heidegger claims, however, these cannot be considered to be identical with phronesis in Aristotle's ethics, since none of them can be regarded as the ability to deliberate, which is the essential trait of phronesis; instead, they should be considered to be different kinds of transcendental conditions of the possibility that phronesis could be at work in a concrete situation. In this sense, I totally agree with Bernasconi, who maintains that Heidegger's account of phronesis "is in many respects quite alien to Aristotle's enterprise in the Ethics."[14] It is one of the future tasks of the phenomenology of phronesis to develop different kinds of transcendental phenomenology of phronesis, including one inspired by insights gained through the Heideggerian interpretation of phronesis in Aristotle.

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14 R. Bernasconi, "Heidegger's Destruction of Phronesis," 139.

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