

Chapter 6

Visualising Ethics Through Hypertext

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ABSTRACT

Ethics has always been a main domain of philosophical study. Hypertextual discursive expression has never been considered as the technology that can revolutionise the way we interpret ethical events and actions. This chapter intends to show that hypertextual discursive expression is not only useful, but also vital in any undertaking that seeks to reframe our ethical deliberations and judgements. The final objective is to convey the message that technology is becoming ever more essential in transforming philosophical thinking.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology is qualitative, focusing on the hermeneutical aspect, validity and effect of hypertextual writing in contrast with unilinear writing. The reason for choosing a qualitative method arises from 1) the fact that the work, which is proposing a new software that can redeem the individual from the confinement of judging actions as being totally ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ without considering the grey areas, is at its preliminary a stage and 2) the software has not, as yet, been fully implemented and tested. At this stage in this research it is best to first embark upon documentary analysis. The data is here divided into two subjects – the philosophical and the technological topics. The first data is directed towards the philosophy of interpretation and reference is here being made to Gadamer 2004; Linge 2008; and Grondin 1994. In the second part, the analysis of data shifts to the pragmatic/technological aspect, focusing mainly on the application of a software (Garcia, 2020) that would render ethical judgement more emancipative. The objective of the data analysis is not directly involved with the new software that is introduced here but contains, at the same, features that are either related to, or can be identified with, features of the software (Eyman, 2015; Bell, 2014; Macdonald 2018; Amadiou et. al., 2015). Reference is also made to data which could be distinct from the software proposed (AlAgha, 2012; Baetens &Truyen, 2013; Koehler, 2013; Marcante, 2011).

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter¹ aims to forge a pragmatic approach to interpreting and judging actions as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ through a visual description of hypertextual writing. Embracing such a practice will have a positive consequential effect over the prevailing and deeply rooted philosophical and jurisprudential traditions of hermeneutical understanding and ethics, potentially encouraging an innovative way of achieving social justice - a pressing issue in contemporary times. However, before elaborating on this visual description, a brief explain of the Gadamerian notion of philosophical hermeneutics with reference to his notion of ‘fusion of horizons will be given.’ The purpose of this overview is to identify fresh avenues of discussion and reflection. One of these compellingly new paths will propose re-thinking hermeneutical understanding of ethical deliberation and judgement within the framework of a specific type of hypertextual writing. The present aspiration is to fine-tune our perception and adopt a broader frame of mind when judging actions in the near future.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASES OF HYPERTEXT – ITS HERMENEUTICAL IMPLICATION

Contemporary studies of philosophical hermeneutics are predominantly centred on the Gadamerian conception, giving due importance to the dialogue that should take place between what has been written in the past and the present situation of the interpreter. This Gadamerian notion contributed greatly to understanding interpretation. This chapter shall move a step further by shifting attention to another discussion, the aim of which is to encourage the reader to actively consider a profound change in the approach to hermeneutic study. This shall be done by entertaining the possibility of understanding and reshaping future hermeneutics within a different form of discursive expression - hypertextual writing. The idea is not to start and end the discussion with hermeneutics but to enrich it even further by considering, for the most part, ethical deliberation and judgement. It is not the intention to approach this discussion in a manner that is fraught with presumption. The intention is, rather, to broach the subject in the form of a plea addressed to the reader of this work to come up with constructive thoughts on what might be the future of interpreting and judging actions as ‘right’ or ‘wrong.’ It is hoped that the reader, is thus encouraged to adopt such a positive frame of mind, and will also be inclined to contribute to the setting up a platform of discussions to create a new framework that can be better placed to deal with such an important subject as the future of judgement and interpretation across the globe. This chapter, crude as it may be, will lay some foundations.

In order to do this, it is pertinent to first reconsider the Gadamerian notion of hermeneutics itself, and thereby foreground the important contribution of this eminent thinker to the subject matter of this work. It shall here be demonstrated that the Gadamerian notion of hermeneutics is in crises but it shall not do so by departing from his understanding of the ‘fusion of horizons’ but by showing, rather, that this ‘fusion of horizons’ needs to be revisited and reconsidered under the wealth of possibility offered by a working knowledge of hypertextual writing. This chapter will, within the practicality of a computer application, rethink the Gadamerian notion of hermeneutics through the hypertextual framework. The need to revisit Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics arises for two main reasons. The first is considered to be intrinsic to Gadamer’s considerations of hermeneutics and the second is to be considered as extrinsic. The intrinsicality lies in what is call the *metaphysics of discourse*, a term which highlights the

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