Hermeneutics Approach On The Concept Of Sovereign Authority: A Critical Reading

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Abstract
The essay is an attempt to examine the significance of sovereign authority in philosophical hermeneutics. The intention of the study is to argue against the Enlightenment tradition and its critics that viewed authority as illegitimate and unreasonable. In so doing, the bi-dimensional notions of knowledge and acknowledgment are reflected in the hermeneutics reading. The notion of sovereign authority is rehabilated in the rationalizing project, and this will be based in both knowledge and acknowledgment. The article also challenges the Enlightenment critiques of authority and reveals the close connection between sovereign authority and reason.

Key Words: *Authority, Sovereignty, Reason, tradition*

The Enlightenment is the intellectual work of thinkers who started in the 17th century in Europe. It is the age where the superiority of reason is intelligible above all else. The study would focus, and unearth the two essential notions dominated the attention of the Enlightenment: authority and reason. The analysis employed in the study is the hermeneutics method, whereby the authorial intention, the reader's horizon, and the context are taken into account. The proponents of the Enlightenment argued, these notions are distinguished from each other. Subsequently, Gadamer reacted to the view, although he recognized the problem of authority in some cases—he argued it should not be thought of absolute opposition, but the distinction existed only in terms of degree. Gadamer postulates that the opposition between authority and reason is nonsensical, and not rationally justified. In Truth and Method, he rehabilitated authority, which was questioned and challenged in the Enlightenment tradition. He asserted, reason is essentially one of the constituent parts of authority. Gadamer uncompromisingly perceived the possibility to comprehending the interrelationships between authority and reason. In so doing, he demonstrated, the innovative technique derived almost from the hermeneutics method would re-establish authority back to its earlier reputation.

The Enlightenment distorted the dignity of authority by the use of reason, which is perhaps absurd. The work of Sir Francis Bacon would be fitting with the Enlightenment; this has given an impression on the intellectual pursuit of the period. Bacon accordingly insisted on the real distinction and further promoted the idea that authority is opposed to reason. The duo could not be reconciled no matter how. The Enlightenment suggested there is no authority higher than reason. This seems to become the definitive standard to determining knowledge as genuine.

In contrast with this belief, Gadamer asserted with a reference to the validity of "written" and "oral" traditions, this could not be checked and ascertained by reason alone. Gadamer brought into play the legitimacy of the scripture, for he says, in both the oral and "the written tradition of scripture"—the recipients intuitively

accepted and recognized its authority. This is not unreasonable. Gadamer contends against the epistemic criterion of the Enlightenment that insisted to "accept no authority [at all], and to decide everything before the judgment seat of reason" (Bundock, 2016).

The proponents of the Enlightenment argued reason is the only decisive factor to qualify authority as genuine, and this only occurred through the proper application of pre-existing methods. The repudiation of authority is based on not exercising reason within its ambit. The Enlightenment proposed that "methodologically disciplined use of reason can safeguard us from all error." This perhaps is discovered in the work of Descartes, for he insisted that method alone is a key component of any inquiry that leads to certain knowledge. The application of this method makes knowledge rational. The Enlightenment based the distinction between authority and reason on a reciprocal exclusive antithesis. This is certainly the narrow description attributed to reason. In fact, the genuine does not primarily rely on method alone. Unlike pure sciences, the human sciences would not follow the determinate method of pure sciences in the proper sense of the term. It is unfeasible to consider authority often irrational because of the lack of methods employed.

Despite the negative connotations attributed to authority. Gadamer rehabilitated the notion of authority differently in the textual interpretation. Although acknowledgment occupied an important role in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, however, Jürgen Habermas rejected the positive attribution of authority, and affirmed acknowledgment could never be a constituent part of the authority. Authority has rejected for it included acknowledgment within its framework. Gadamer argued, acknowledgment instituted in the works of Habermas is merely the "dogmatic acknowledgment." This type of acknowledgment does not have a place in Gadamer's hermeneutics explication. The hermeneutics project recognized only the well-founded acknowledgment that is appropriately tested. Gadamer states, the negative connotation attributed to authority is simply referred to the unreflective acknowledgment—this completely opposed from the reflective or the non-dogmatic acknowledgment.

Gadamer responded the Enlightenment exponents and Habermas by making a distinction between the two types of authority, namely, "claiming" and "having." On one hand, the authority under "claiming" is denoted the type of authority that does not permit the rationalizing test of the adherents. This is a truth-claimed authority that would possibly be rejected through reason. On the other hand, the notion "having" referred to the type of authority—this was something acknowledged. It is not unreasonable, for it based entirely on knowledge. This authority is legitimate since it is authorized and approved by the adherents. The distinction is relevant in an attempt to rehabilitate the significance of authority. Ingrid Scheibler demonstrated the importance of the adherents in order to determine whether the authority is legitimate or not. Furthermore, the word "having" implies the qualified authority that has earned by the institution. The dominant egoistic "claiming" is groundless and had no legitimacy at all in the test of reason.

Habermas defined the power of authority is *a priori* in essence. This may be true in a few cases where authority is established in an arbitrary judgment. The *a priori* authority is not equivalent with Gadamer's analysis of the notion. Gadamer repeatedly agreed and recognized that such power is definitely a "dogmatic power." If power is arbitrary achieved; nonetheless, the authority would fall in the trap of Berkeley empiricist solipsism—denied the role of the others. The type of authority that existed only to dominate and command the subjects is established only in the autocratic form of government.

The Enlightenment and his critics strived hard to undermine the concept of authority. In so doing, multiple techniques have been employed and borrowed from the political arena like the "hierarchical authority." In another passage, Gadamer writes, he "would grant that authority exercises an essential dogmatic power in innumerable forms of domination: From the ordering of education and the mandatory commands of the army and government to the hierarchy of power created by political forces or fanatics" (Gadamer, 1977). As a result, Gadamer questions, does power exercise by such authority stand legitimate? The answer would be unfeasible, this is the reason Gadamer insisted authority required a test, and the deprivation of that leads to illegitimacy. On that ground, individuals, groups, and institutions possessing the arbitrary power do not deserve to rule. Gadamer reinforced the significance of the adherent in the act of acknowledgment; this played a crucial role concerning authority. The authority also had to encourage the adherents to test its validity. The well-examined authority in effect elevated more power to authority—this occurred in "true obedience" of followers.

Gadamer stressed the importance of the role of authority, and it would be unjustified to reject entirely as irrational. As a result, Gadamer examined and discovered authority in the Western tradition has been categorically identified with blind obedience—this is untenable and offensive. This appeared mostly in the conservative analytical description, which led the authority to order, command, and even constrain the freedom of the adherents. In contrast to this, Gadamer presupposed a legitimate authority based on the recognition of the adherents. The denial of such freedom, authority does not stand in the hermeneutic analysis. The freedom of the adherents licensed individual, group, and institution to possess the right type of authority.

Moreover, the authority that acknowledged the importance of the adherents, licensed them the will whether to recognize or derecognize its position. Gadamer maintains, "There is no other principle of judgment, no criterion of concept [reason] and knowledge than that of its suitability to promote the feeling of freedom in the play of the cognitive faculties" (Hass, 2018). Furthermore, Gadamer proposed the necessity of building up the "logic of question and answer," this happened only when human freedom is acknowledged. The authority would place varied issues in an open realm, whereby the weaknesses and strengths of authority are realized. Once the adherents are free to judge the authority, the open-ended discussion will emerge. Undoubtedly, Gadamer's idea is based on ancient Greek philosophy which originated in the Socratic way of questionings. In an attempt to achieve a genuine authority, the questions raised by the adherents are important and may have a great effect. Gadamer argued that if the authority has been authentically verified, the adherents must acknowledge it appropriately.

Gadamer underscores the significance of knowledge and acknowledgment in the hermeneutics analysis of authority. This perhaps undermines the monistic intellectual procedures that stressed the significance of a single-dimensional approach. Gadamer argued authority essentially required to undertake the test of knowledge with regards to the position occupied. Knowledge is a dependent entity that does not originate in the closed horizon of authority alone. In fact, Knowledge is a realization in the act of acknowledgment of the adherents. This is not irrational, it simply means to observe, admit, recognize, and even acknowledge the superiority of others/adherents especially when the authority lacks awareness of particular information. Undoubtedly, knowledge of authority is limited within the particular domain invested. It is necessary to have an open-ended dialogue with the adherents to enhance the unknown epistemic truth. However, the rejection of such acknowledgment would make knowledge an independent unit—entirely illogical. Gadamer substantiates, "Authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason." It would be notable to

point out that Gadamer stresses authority rested "on [knowledge and] acknowledgment and hence on an act of reason itself which, aware of its limitations, trusts to the better insight of others" (Scheibler, 2000). Knowledge and acknowledgment are not irrational. David Vessey reinforced the view, he argued individual, group, and institution have genuine authority qualified through reason—whatever they say is genuinely acknowledge.

On the other hand, Charles Bingham distinguishes between the two types of authority: restrictive and productive. The authority relied mostly on institutional power, and hierarchical position to demonstrate its competency. This is a restrictive or authoritarian type of authority wholly rejected in Gadamerian hermeneutics. In contradiction to this, there is another form of authority, which is productive and authoritative that qualified the hermeneutics explication. Gadamer preferred authoritative rather than authoritarian type as an alternative to determining the genuine authority. Bingham also points out, "Authoritativeness is a quality depends upon learning and knowledge, upon texts and shared cultural understandings" (Bingham, 2009). Unlike authoritarianism, authoritativeness is a productive version of the true content of authority. As an illustration, "a teacher should be authoritative rather than authoritarian" in his relationship with students. Subsequently, Gadamer argued that authority is power and, simultaneously maintains this is based primarily on knowledge and acknowledgment. In contrast to this, the Enlightenment holds power exercised by authority is not reasonable. Gadamer amazed how the Enlightenment and critics would define reason? Are knowledge and acknowledgment irrational? To confine the authority to reason alone is unjustified. This would be the single-dimensional approach that could be validated only in the philosophical structure expressed in Spinoza's abstract monism.

The Gadamer's concept of authority is grounded in the bi-dimensional interpretive model. Once again, he demonstrated the presence of "True authority" in the hermeneutics analysis. It could be inferred that the appearance of this type of authority implied the presence of another type of authority, namely the "False authority." It would be possible for the Enlightenment's proponents and his critics to focus on this latter type of authority. This had led the critics to always repudiate authority, for them, authority means "false authority." Such authority suffered disqualification in the public domain due to a lack of genuineness.

Gadamer writes, "Authority can rule only because it is freely recognized and accepted. The obedience that belongs to true authority is neither blind nor slavish" (Scheibler, 2000). Gadamer revealed some of the materials concealed in "True authority." However, Habermas unnoticed and overlooked the bi-dimensional interpretative model. Undoubtedly, this has driven him to a far distance from Gadamer's conception of authority. Gadamer states, "True authority, rests on [knowledge and] acknowledgment, which involves the reflective acceptance of another person's superior judgment." The "true authority" admits the limitations, and exposed the significance of the "superior judgment." In fact, this could not be treated of nonsensical, but simply an appeal to the experts in a particular field of knowledge beyond the awareness of the authority. The phenomenon was closely related to Aristotle's judgment of 'the wise'—in Greek, (*SOPHOI*). In the judgment of the (*SOPHOI*), the authority would include adherents' viewpoint concerning knowledge of the "experts in the [field of] arts and crafts, including physicians and carpenters" (Walton, 2010).

The proponents of the Enlightenment believed authority grounded fundamentally in blind obedience. Gadamer counteracted the myth of the Enlightenment, when engaging in the quest for authority. He argued that only the "false authority" could be based on blind obedience. But the "true authority" is firmly rooted in genuine obedience. This derived from the critical testing ground that happened through the creativity of the adherents.

Gadamer contends the association of authority to "blind obedience" embedded in the superficial intellectual speculation of the Enlightenment. Traditionally, obedience is understood in connection with the unquestionable submitting to the command of authority. The Enlightenment defines by submission to authority means blind obedience. If this truly occurs, the adherents completely lost the freedom to decide, but to obey blindly to the command. Since antiquity, the attribution of the authority to blind obedience has existed in the rabbinic cultural tradition. Some of the rabbis—God's representatives of the Jews claimed to have a "superior authority," For they say, "you must act according to the decisions they [we] give you" and "If they show you that right is left and left is right, obey them" (Heger, 2010). Gadamer dismissed this unproven authority, and hermeneutically philosophized to annihilate from the sphere of human existence.

Similarly, the positive value of obedience has been discredited. Gadamer's opponents reacted to obedience, and strongly remarked the failure of his hermeneutics methodology. Gadamer, completely immersed in the Socratic-Platonic philosophical foundation, could not overlook principles, but to adopt in his theory of interpretation. In order to justify authority, he prioritized the necessity of the logic of questions and answers in his hermeneutics. The charge against Gadamer of promoting blind obedience in the explication is illogical and unscientific. He called upon knowledge and acknowledgment into play for a genuine authority. Gadamer writes "Authority… has nothing to do with blind obedience to commands" (Scheibler, 2000). He also discerned the importance of human freedom in relation to authority, and this perhaps connected with the work of Simone de Beauvoir titled "*The Ethics of Ambiguity*." She argued human freedom is the capacity to be in the world in which one can freely choose what one's likes and dislikes." Authority in this sense, endorsed human freedom and would deviate itself from the Enlightenment thinking of blind obedience.

Gadamer recognized only the authority which is conscious of its limitations is right, and this permits the (others) adherents to play a role in its existence. The recognition that the adherents (others) possessing a better knowledge, awareness and insight could be pragmatically seen in the parents, preceptors and specialists. In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Gadamer insisted on the difference between the 'right' and the 'wrong' types of authority. He argued, "Authority is not always wrong." Therefore, treating authority always incorrect and irrational, it makes no sense in the well-founded hermeneutics analysis.

The hermeneutical quest of Gadamer would not be misconstrued to mean dissolving one's own knowledge. This is absolutely wrong; he simply means to freely license others (adherents) to test the genuineness. Gadamer did not explicate authority on the basis of phenomenological construction of Husserl's intentionality to suspend the "self-knowledge" or authority. However, Gadamer demonstrated knowledge would enhance authority, and the significance of acknowledgment appeared in a relationship between teacher and student, such as saying—'Thank you, sir, for your valuable suggestions.' This acknowledgment had started in the historical past and still relevant in the contemporary existential experience. The knowledge in different fields is progressing, given the fact; human is a finite being incapable of possessing a comprehensive knowledge of everything.

In conclusion, the findings of the study revealed reason is the integral component of genuine authority. Therefore, the notion of authority could not be simply rejected in the unfounded judgment that the practice of authority lies beyond reason. Gadamer against the Enlightenment and his critics used reason to make authority applicable and acceptable to the public and particularly the adherents. Gadamer insisted upon the importance of knowledge and acknowledgment that is derived through reason. The use of reason permitted the public and the

adherents to fully comply with the genuine authority, and completely reject the other type of authority which is beyond the measurement of reason.

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