

HUMANS ON THE THRESHOLDS OF HISTORY:
PROTAGORAS, PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, AND HERDER

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Eyüp Engin Küçük, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
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ABSTRACT

Humans on the Thresholds of History:

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This thesis presents the transformation of the ideas on the nature of human beings throughout three fundamental thresholds of the history of philosophy by examining the three representative philosophers from these thresholds. In this regard, Protagoras for Ancient Greece, Pico della Mirandola for the Renaissance, and Johann Gottfried von Herder for the Enlightenment have been chosen. In the thesis, I will examine their ideas on the nature of human beings in the context of historical and philosophical conditions. The purpose of this analysis is to show that, firstly, the development of their ideas and methods, and secondly, their similarities and differences. After this examination, the ideas and methods of these philosophers will be compared and contrasted. The purpose of the thesis is that, as this examination and comparison proves, that the effort of developing an alternative approach regarding the nature of human beings against the prevailing positions at the times of thresholds requires defending the indeterminacy of the human nature and prioritizing human experience (real ground) to metaphysical argumentations (logical ground). In conclusion, I hope that this study will contribute to philosophy literature both with its content and its method of reading the breaking points of the history through a comparative analysis of philosophers that are not generally discussed in the literature.

ÖZET

Tarihin Eşik Noktalarında İnsanlar:

Protagoras, Pico della Mirandola ve Herder

Bu tez felsefe tarihinin üç temel eşik noktasından üç temsili filozofu inceleyerek tarih boyunca insan doğası üzerine fikirlerin dönüşümünü sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Antik Yunan için Protagoras, Rönesans için Pico della Mirandola ve Aydınlanma için Johann Gottfried von Herder seçildi. Tezde, bu filozofların insan doğası hakkındaki fikirlerini tarihsel ve felsefi koşullar bağlamında irdeleyeceğim. Bu analizin amacı, ilk olarak fikirlerin ve yöntemlerin gelişimini, ikinci olarak da benzerliklerini ve farklarını göstermektir. İncelemeden sonra, bu filozofların fikirleri ve metodları karşılaştırılacaktır. Tezin amacı, bu inceleme ve karşılaştırmanın gösterdiği üzere, tarihin eşik noktalarında hakim felsefi pozisyonlara karşı insan doğasına dair alternatif bir yaklaşım geliştirme çabasının insan doğasının belirsizliğini savunmayı ve pratik insan tecrübesini (gerçeklik zemini) metafizik argümantasyona (mantıksal zemin) öncelemeyi gerektirdiğini göstermektir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın hem tarihin kırılma noktalarını literatürde genel olarak tartışılmayan filozoflar üzerinden karşılaştırmalı analiz yoluyla okuma metodu ile hem de içeriği ile literature katkı sağlayacağını umuyorum.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The definition of being human has been a controversial and central issue in the history of philosophy. Anthropological arguments regarding the creation, nature, and distinctive capacities of human beings have had a definitive role for epistemology, ontology, ethics, politics, and religion. In this regard, one of the plausible ways to read the transformation of paradigms might be examining approaches to the nature of human beings in the history of philosophy. The main concern of the thesis will be along the lines of this perspective. In the thesis, the anthropological arguments of Protagoras, Pico della Mirandola, and Johann Gottfried von Herder will be compared, contrasted, and examined. The first reason for choosing these philosophers is that they are representative figures of three essential thresholds in the history of western philosophy: Protagoras for the discussion between Sophists and Plato at the threshold of the philosophy of human beings following the philosophy of nature and cosmos in Ancient Greece; Pico della Mirandola for the discussion of reason and faith between humanist philosophers and the church in the medieval period at the threshold of modernity; and Herder for the discussion of reason in the late Enlightenment period in German philosophy as well as the emergence of Romanticism at the threshold of the Enlightenment. The second reason is that although they lived on the different thresholds in the history of philosophy, their anthropological arguments show noticeable theoretical and textual similarities. What they have in common can be summarized in two statements: firstly, they all think that human beings were not created as fully equipped to survive in the world; and that they have some skills, but do not have any determined nature. For this reason, their position in the world will be the result of their own efforts. Secondly, they

believe that the true understanding of human beings requires the prioritization of the practical human experience, and for this reason, they follow similar methods. One can see these mentioned similarities in their texts through similar (sometimes nearly identical) sentences or statements. The critical point is that despite the similarities of their arguments, these three philosophers seem to stand in different philosophical positions which are generally discernible at the first glance. While Protagoras, as a Sophist, defends his ideas through a myth against Socrates' rational argumentations, Pico della Mirandola tries to prove the essentiality of reason in relation to faith against the church fathers through a story which is very similar to Protagoras' myth. On the other side, Herder, who is known as a leading member of the "Sturm und Drang" movement against those who defend the pure authority of reason, develops his theory of language and history based on a similar anthropological argument with that of Protagoras and Mirandola. In other words, these apparent similarities of seemingly unrelated philosophers make such a project interesting and original in terms of reading the transformation of paradigms in the history of philosophy.

The purpose of this mentioned comparison including three philosophers from three thresholds of the history of philosophy based on their anthropological argument is to show three essential points: (1) despite the natural difference of paradigms in different thresholds of history, the philosophical condition that they had in their period was similar. Their effort aimed to find an alternative perspective against the dominant positions in two ends as described above. (2) This common purpose moves them to propound similar arguments by using similar methods. (3) This fact shows that, in terms of history of philosophy, some philosophical approaches retain their validity and importance regardless of the seemingly radical differences of the time and; the slight differences between these philosophers might give the identity of their

thresholds. In this regard, the purpose of the thesis is to present the fact that advocating the indeterminacy of human nature and prioritizing the practical human experience constitute the basis of philosophical perspective to develop an alternative approach for the nature of human beings against the prevailing positions at the times of the examined thresholds.

This project will be realized through the analyses of the arguments of three philosophers on the nature of human beings. For this purpose, there will be three consecutive chapters presenting separately the ideas of Protagoras, Mirandola, and Herder around the issue of the nature of human beings. The purpose of these analyses is to present, firstly, the examination of the main texts on the nature of human beings by these philosophers in the context of their general philosophy. The second purpose is to explicate the discussion between these philosophers and the mentioned dominant perspectives. By doing these, their philosophical and methodical similarities and differences among one another and their contemporaries will be clear. In these chapters, there will be also a limited amount of comparison between the opinions of these philosophers on some specific issues. However, it will not be an extensive comparison since such an extensive comparison in these chapters would be complicated and confusing rather than explicative. After these three chapters, there will be a comparison and the presentation of the main results of the analysis in the conclusion chapter. The conclusion chapter will also show whether we could reach the declared statements in the introduction. For envisioning what will be done in the thesis, it would be beneficial to present a brief summary of the mentioned arguments.

In the discussion between Protagoras and Socrates on the teachability of virtue, Protagoras tells a myth explaining how humans get their natural abilities.

Prometheus stole fire from gods and gave it to the human race since Epimetheus forgot to equip humans to sustain their life in nature (321d). Humans, thanks to Prometheus, were able to obtain food from nature, make shoes, and build houses. However, they were weak and destroyed by wild beasts since they lacked political art, and were not able to live in cities. Zeus decided to give justice and a sense of shame to all humans to prevent the extinction of the race (322d). By means of Zeus' gift, they could communicate with each other, listen to advice, and use their rationality. Most importantly, they became able to live together in organized cities. This myth, besides focusing on the teachability of virtue, also presents the basic framework of Protagoras' understanding of the nature of human beings. What Protagoras tries to defend against Socrates is that reason is a capability for learning and gaining abilities, but it does not dictate certain measures for determining the value of all human actions. The condition of human beings as indeterminate and open to cultivation indicates the endless process of becoming human and the plurality of values.

Pico Della Mirandola, in his speech *On the Dignity of Man*, puts forward a similar story regarding the creation of man. According to his narrative, after the animation of the whole world, the creation of minds and animal, God wished to bring a creature into existence who could contemplate His beauty and greatness. After all things were completed, "He lastly considered creating man" (Pico della Mirandola, 1998, p. 4). God gives Adam no fixed seat in the world as opposed to other creatures whose destination in the world is already determined at birth. Man has the potentiality to become what he wants to be, as placed into the center of the world, either lower than the brutes or on a higher plane like divine natures. Throughout his speech, Pico tries to reveal the fact that, in line with this narrative at the beginning,

all ways of contemplation on the truth have the same root with the truth given in religion since all deeds of human beings are possible by means of reason. In Pico, the idea of the centrality of man in the world occupies a central place for defending the autonomy and freedom of human beings. With this ground, Pico defends the independence of human beings from the hierarchy of cosmos and any given character or condition. In this regard, Pico's consideration of the relation between reason and the centrality of man presents a fruitful ground in order to consider the transformation of the position of man in the world.

In his *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, Herder focuses on the issue of human beings' ability for inventing language. The fundamental hypothesis is that human beings, like animals, have to invent a language in order to survive in nature (Herder, 2002e, p. 66). While, for animals, moaning and howling, in other words the language of sensation, was sufficient to communicate and sustain their existence, this type of communicating was not enough for human beings since the natural abilities of human beings are not adequate for having a fully developed communication. Therefore, human beings were in need of inventing a language special for their species. This argument regarding language is based on Herder's anthropological assumptions and in line with his general philosophical program. It is clearly seen that, in *Treatise on the Origin of Language* and *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity*, Herder (2002e) considers man as a being who develops his own abilities and features during history as a result of his struggle since he/she does not have a determined and limited circle (Kreis) as animals are destined to have (p. 79). The development of civilizations and humanity is only possible by his/her effort as required by the nature of human beings and the experience of humankind in the world. The metaphysical and psychological-physiological bases of this argument

can be found in the *Essay on Being* and *Cognition and Sensation*. Herder's rejection of reading human nature based on metaphysical abstractions and from a theoretical distance without engaging in the reality of human experience is directly related to his idea of the indeterminate nature of human beings.

These short summaries are sufficient to have an idea of the positions of these philosophers. Before ending this part, stating some possible weaknesses of the thesis which might come to the reader's mind would be helpful. The analysis of the ideas of these three philosophers is at the center of the state. As described above, their philosophies are examined in terms of their ideas on the nature of human beings. For this purpose, some texts and some issues are not included in these analyses. In Protagoras, the focus is on the dialogue between him and Socrates and the focus of the dialogues is his great speech. Including other texts or fragments would be a diversion from the main topic. In the case of Pico, his most famous text, *900 Theses*, is not included. It is important for his general philosophy but not directly related to his ideas on the nature of human beings. The focus passage is the story of genesis in *On the Dignity of Man*. *Heptaplus* is also examined because Pico details his ideas on the position of human beings compared to other creatures and in the cosmos in this text. Herder's analysis took a much broader space than Protagoras and Pico since the argumentation in the whole text in *Treatise*, is at the center of his analysis, rather than a short story of genesis as in Protagoras and Pico. Additionally, for a clear understanding of his ideas on the nature of human beings, it was necessary to approach from a broader perspective. Also, Herder has more texts than Protagoras and Pico or we are able to reach more texts of Herder than others in the literature. For focusing on the issue of human nature, Herder's texts on art, politics, and world history are not examined in the thesis. If all the ideas of these philosophers were to

be analyzed, it would be beyond the purpose and capacity of the thesis. In this regard, stating these facts at the beginning is also helpful to determine the scope of the thesis.

Additionally, it must be stated that the claim of the thesis is to present a fact in the history of philosophy. There is no intention to present the method and ideas of these three philosophers as the only philosophically plausible or justified way to understand the nature of human beings. The purpose, again, is to show a reality in the course of the history of philosophy. Moreover, the thresholds and philosophers in the thesis are not simply a matter of scholarly taste. This choice is done for presenting an exemplary case because of the mentioned features of the times and philosophers. One can choose different times of thresholds and philosophers to examine the same issue. In this regard, the thesis does not offer a historical categorization or an absolute dating for the history.

In conclusion, by this thesis, I hope to achieve some further goals in terms of the philosophy literature. I want to present an alternative method to read transformations in the history of philosophy based on the alternative readings of relatively less recognized philosophers rather than canonic figures or categorized movements of thoughts. I believe that this thesis will show the fact that despite the seemingly radical changes in the course of history, similar conditions bring forth similar ideas and the substantiality of some problems resists these radical changes. In this regard, such an analysis would show the similarity of our current condition, which seems to us as unique and special to our time, with the rest of history. Through this kind of reading, we can also see the characteristic features of different thresholds, and we can have a clearer idea about the changes in the course of history.

In this sense, I hope that this thesis will be a contribution to the literature because of examining these three philosophers in this structure.



CHAPTER 2

PROTAGORAS

2.1 Introduction

In Plato's *Protagoras*, the great sophist Protagoras and Socrates discuss the teachability of virtues. While Protagoras claims that virtue is teachable as he is a teacher of virtues, Socrates does not think that virtues are teachable. In the dialogue, Socrates bases his argument on the actual practice in the polis (public life) and very well-known examples of private lives in the society like a coward son of a courageous man. In the Assembly of the city, when there is a discussion on an issue requiring special expertise like construction or craftsmanship, nobody is allowed to talk about these issues except those who are experts on them. However, when the deliberation is on the city management, everybody is given the right to speak regardless of whether they are rich, poor, carpenter, shoemaker, well-born, or low-born (319b-e). The argument based on private lives is about transmitting the virtues of the wisest and best in the city to others and even to their sons (320a). After presenting his arguments against the teachability of virtues, Socrates asks for an answer from Protagoras to explain the actual experiences of public and private life supported by Socrates' arguments.

Protagoras agrees to answer and asks Socrates and other audiences whether they want to hear a story or an argument. They leave the choice to Protagoras and he prefers to tell a story, and begins to present a version of the Prometheus myth in order to support his argument (320c). It is another discussion about whether this myth really supports Protagoras' argument. The point related to our investigation is the anthropological arguments presented through this myth.

To summarize, in the myth human beings lacked the necessary equipment at the end of the genesis of all beings. As a result of Epimetheus's forgetfulness, humans were not equipped as other creatures ready to survive in nature. For this reason, Prometheus felt the need to steal fire and give it to humans to compensate for the lack. Thanks to this gift, humans were able to acquire wisdom for practical arts to survive in nature. Even though they were able to build houses, make clothes and shoes, they were still weaker against the wild animals. Since they did not have the art of politics, they could not live together and organize a city. At that point, Zeus intervened and sent justice and a sense of shame to all humans. By this gift, humans could live together in organized cities without wronging each other (320d-322d).

It is the general outline of the myth. Protagoras especially uses the last part of the myth to make Socrates' example based on the practice of city affairs reasonable (323d). For proving the teachability of virtue, Protagoras puts forward the implementation of punishments in life since its usage means people believe that they can teach others what virtue is by punishing their wrong-doings (324b-d). After Protagoras presents his main arguments, Socrates begins to run a discussion in the dialectical method and tries to determine the nature of the relation between different virtues, i.e., whether they are similar to or replaceable with each other or whether they just resemble each other. However, Protagoras replies Socrates' question in length and Protagoras' long answers cause another discussion on the method of the dialogue. In the end, they decide to follow a short question-answer method; and Protagoras asks a question on a poem directed to defeat Socrates rather than to the main topic of the dialogue (339a). Until the end of the dialogue, the main discussion is shaped by the Socrates' insistence on the identical relation between different virtues. Socrates' main effort is to show that five essential virtues (wisdom,

temperance, courage, justice, and piety) are one and the same thing and all of them can be subsumed under the category of knowledge (349b, 361b). In this regard, Socrates concludes even though he defends that virtue is not teachable and Protagoras defends the opposite at the beginning, they shift to opposite positions at the end since if all virtues are the same and virtue is knowledge, they must be teachable. The dialogue ends with Socrates' quick evaluation and Protagoras does not say anything about this evaluation of Socrates at the end.

In the dialogue, in general, it can be said that the tension between Protagoras and Socrates is because of the difference in perspectives more than ideas. In other words, Protagoras does not find reasonable and appropriate the effort of determining the exact categorization and classification of virtues pursued by Socrates. For instance, in the discussion as to whether the relation between different virtues is like the parts of a face or the parts of gold, Socrates insists on deciding whether we can say justice is piety and piety is justice. However, Protagoras answers Socrates by saying that "it's not so absolutely clear a case to me, Socrates, as to make me grant that justice is pious, and piety just. It seems a distinction is in order here. But what's the difference? If you want, we'll let justice be pious and piety just" (331c). This answer of Protagoras clearly shows that Protagoras' approach to the problem is totally different from that of Socrates. The main focus of our investigation, the myth, clearly presents the difference of Protagoras' perspective regarding the nature and abilities of human beings. For this reason, the effort will be to interpret the myth. While doing this, the interpretations of Martha Nussbaum and Hans Blumenberg will be presented as two essential approaches to the myth. Before presenting their interpretations, there will be a summary of two versions of Prometheus myth,

Hesiod's and Aeschylus', to provide a background regarding the myth in the dialogue.

2.2 Two versions of the myth

The myth of Prometheus is one of the oldest stories of Ancient Greek. There are two different versions, at least to our knowledge, of the myth: the first and the older one is in Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*; and the other one is the Aeschylus' play called *Prometheus Bound*. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the scene begins with the punishment of Prometheus by Zeus and Heracles' release of Prometheus at the end (Hesiod, 2006, 521-533). After that, Hesiod presents the first misdeed of Prometheus against Zeus: the deceit of the ox sacrifice. Prometheus sacrifices an ox and divides it into two pieces. In the first one, there is the meat and the innards hidden under the ox's stomach. In the second piece, there are the ox's white bones hidden deceptively "with gleaming fat". Zeus gets angry with this deceptive game of Prometheus and decided to keep fire from mortal human beings. However, Prometheus commits another crime against Zeus by stealing the fire. As a response to Prometheus' second crime, Zeus creates a "beautiful evil thing exulted in the adornment of the mighty father's bright-eyed daughter," which is the source of "the race of female women", "a great woe for mortals" (Hesiod, 2006, 535-590). At this point, the story about Prometheus ends in *Theogony*. This evil is named Pandora in *Works and Days* (Hesiod, 2006, 81). Afterwards, Zeus sends Pandora to Epimetheus, Epimetheus forgets the advice of his brother Prometheus about not accepting a gift from Zeus, and accepts the gift of Pandora. Evil, diseases, and toils are released from the box, and only anticipation (or hope) stays in the box. From that day on, mortal humans faced the badness and evil that they had never seen before (Hesiod, 2006, 80-105).

Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* is originally part of a trilogy. However, the other two plays of the trilogy are missing. Most probably, these three plays were successive stories as can be observed in Aeschylus' style and the tradition of Athens. Also, Roberts (2012) puts forward that there is an ancient commentary saying that "Prometheus was freed 'in the next play', and we have good evidence for the existence of a plausible sequel, *Prometheus Unbound*" (p. xvii). This idea also follows Hesiod's version. In *Prometheus Bound*, the scene opened with the chaining of Prometheus by the reluctant Hephaestus and the Power; and there is no detail about the theft of fire. Roberts (2012) thinks that this crime might be in the first play and the final reconciliation between Prometheus and Zeus might be in the last play. As we can see, in Hesiod's version, it clearly indicates the forgiveness of Zeus for Prometheus after the help of Heracles and Plato's *Protagoras* in which Zeus sends his gifts for the existence of human beings (p. xvii). The two major differences of Aeschylus's version from that of Hesiod's are 1) there is nothing about the deceit of ox sacrifice and 2) Zeus' profile, as wrathful, unjust, and impulsive, is far away from his image in Hesiod's version as a just and temperate god. In *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus has strong confidence that Zeus will eventually come to see him and talk to him in order to learn the threats against his throne (Aeschylus, 2012, 190-195). Prometheus' crime is thematically the same, namely saving the human race against Zeus, but practically different in Hesiod's version. While in Hesiod the acts of Prometheus, the deceit of ox sacrifice and the theft of fire are presented as solely resulting from the will of cunning Zeus, in Aeschylus, Prometheus had to act and commit this crime in order to save the forgotten human race willed to be annihilated (Aeschylus, 2012, 252-258). However, Chorus is not convinced that Prometheus would be charged with this punishment only because of this crime; and they think

that there must be more. Prometheus answers this positively and tells of his crimes: stopping mortals from envisioning their death, bringing blind hopes to settle in their hearts, and giving them fire (Aeschylus, 2012, 272-277). Later on, Prometheus gives the detail of his gifts to human beings: the ability to hear and see, the building of shelters, anticipating the change of seasons, numbers and writing, animal husbandry, medicine, and the know-how of presenting sacrifices to gods (Aeschylus, 2012, 462-510). The rest of the myth is mainly about the prophecy of Prometheus regarding the future son of Zeus who will topple Zeus from the throne. This background about the myth will be useful while comparing and discussing the difference of Protagoras' version from these two and in the analysis of the myth itself.

2.3 Reflections on the dialogue and the myth

There are different ways to interpret the discussion between Protagoras and Socrates. In the literature, there are two fundamental approaches: the first one examines the dialogue in terms of the seemingly main topic of the dialogue, namely the teachability of virtue, and the discussion on the nature of virtues themselves. The second gets into a deeper point which focuses on the different anthropological arguments of Protagoras and Socrates regarding the nature of human beings, and evaluates the discussion on virtues as a result of this difference. In this regard, the heart of the discussion in the dialogue becomes the relation between the myth, the teachability of virtues, and the anthropological argument presented through the myth. In this part, the examples of these two approaches will be presented while the analysis of the dialogue and the myth were made.

Before going into the analysis, it is important to notice that, in the literature, there can be found some scholars, like Gagarin (1969), who sees similarity rather

than difference between Protagoras and Socrates as they both agree on the point that the teachability of virtues is an essential matter and there is a need to determine the science which governs our choices (p. 134). It is indeed a common point between them, and it is what makes the discussion possible (otherwise they would not be able to talk on a topic). However, this kind of commonality can be found in all dialogues of Socrates with Sophists. For instance, if Socrates and Meno did not agree on the importance to find out the source of our knowledge, there would be no dialogue or discussion between them.

The myth is told as an answer to Socrates' two main questions: the actual functioning of the Assembly in the city (public life argument) and noble men's inability to transmit their virtues to their sons or others (private life argument). In the myth, Protagoras makes a clear distinction between *techne* and *arete*. While different *technai* are given to some groups of people and not all of them by Titan Prometheus, *aidos* and *dike*, which represent political virtue, are given to all humans by Zeus. This distinction shows that social and technical abilities are different in principle and hence their way of learning must be different. More importantly, Protagoras' presentation of receiving all these abilities gives a hint of his idea of human nature. For Protagoras, the fact that Zeus gives *aidos* and *dike* to all people does not mean virtues are innate abilities or unconsciously learned social norms (Kerferd, 1953, p. 43). What is given by Zeus is a potentiality to receive, learn, and act in accordance with virtues and this human condition explicitly requires a learning process. The necessity of education is also obviously seen in Zeus' judgment at the end of the myth ordering the death of those who were unable to participate in *aidos* and *dike* (Manuwald, 2013, p. 175; Kerferd, 1953, p. 43). It is the point where we can see the fundamental difference between Protagoras' and Socrates' approaches. For Socrates,

all human beings have a share in virtues. This is proof that virtues are not teachable since people already have them. What we see at the end of the dialogue is that virtues can be teachable as long as they are identified as knowledge. The reason for defending this approach is that, for Socrates, if humans are already given virtues, it means that they already have the instrument to measure the value of their actions. However, for Protagoras, having a share in virtues does not entail an exact science to determine the right actions. Virtue is a matter of degree, and can be shaped and improved by education. This human condition is a potentiality through which human beings are able to educate themselves and become a better person and citizen. It indicates an unending process of life as he describes the requirements to live a virtuous in life: “Their sons start going to school at the earliest age and quit at the latest age. And when they quit school, the city, in turn, compels them to learn the laws and to model their lives on them” (326d). Also, teaching virtue is an action that everybody does as much as he or she can since everybody has a share in virtue at a different level. Therefore, Protagoras finds Socrates’ idea regarding the teachability of virtue offensive because he neglects the effort of each and every human being: “As it is, Socrates, you affect delicate sensibilities, because everyone here is a teacher of virtue, to the best of his ability, and you can’t see a single one” (327e). In Protagoras’ mind, it is impossible to solve this problem once and for all and it is not plausible to try to find the exact measurements to determine virtuous actions. The only thing which is possible in his mind is to improve oneself in learning and teaching virtue in the course of whole life.

A similar argument is presented in *Theaetetus*. In the dialogue, Socrates examines Protagoras’ motto that “man is the measure of what is and what is not”. Socrates claims that it is not possible to defend wisdom in this theory because it

defends the ultimate relativity in which every man is the authority and no one can claim to be superior in wisdom. In this sense, there is no way to assess the truth or falsity of a judgment. Socrates says that, for Protagoras, this interpretation of the theory would be misjudgment. Protagoras would say that “I certainly do not deny the existence of both wisdom and a wise man: far from it” (166d). Protagoras understands wisdom in terms of pursuing a better state rather than putting forward an absolute principle. What he does is “to change a worse state into a better state” (167a). In this regard, one’s position might be “better” but it cannot be “truer” (167b). Hence, his theory does not defend an absolute relativity in moral judgments but suggests preferring better ideas in terms of the sustainability and order of the society. This defense also signifies the difference of their perspective. For Protagoras, since there is no way to posit an absolute criterion for the truth, what we need to do is to pursue a better state of the soul.

To understand the role of the myth, it is necessary to analyze it in detail and the modifications of Protagoras on the original story of Prometheus. In the two versions of the Prometheus myth, in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, the plot of the story is built on the fight between Prometheus and Zeus. In *Theogony*, Prometheus is punished because of the deceit of ox sacrifice and the theft of fire (Hesiod, 2006, 541-585). In Hesiod’s version, the rebellion of Prometheus against Zeus is obvious and Hesiod is on the side of Zeus. In this manner, Zeus’ withdrawing fire from humans and Prometheus’ theft to give them back the fire are instrumental in the fight of a titan and a god. In *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus’ love for “an ostensibly wild herd of helpless being” comes to prominence because, according to Ferrarin (2000), “Prometheus sees in them more than their present appearance: the possible development, the future, of a different condition” (p. 298).

However, the main plot is again built based on the tension between Prometheus and Zeus. The fundamental difference of Protagoras' story is that it is not a god-centered story that instrumentalizes the existence of human beings. Protagoras only says that "Prometheus was charged with theft", regarding the situation after the event (322a). In other words, we do not see such a tension between Prometheus and Zeus as we see in other versions. Additionally, Zeus is not hostile to humans and even cares about the sustainability of the existence of humans which is totally the opposite situation in the other versions. Ferrarin (2000) states this point ironically by saying that "one is even left wondering why Prometheus had to steal fire and the arts from the gods for the sake of humans in the first place" (p. 300). Ferrarin and Blumenberg have common points regarding the fact that the perspective in the myth is not theological but anthropological in Protagoras' version. Ferrarin (2000) supports this argument by presenting the fact that there is no answer to these questions in the myth: "why gods should want to create mortals; whether the natural elements predate the gods; why there should be an appointed time to serve as deadline to the gods themselves, and so on" (p. 305). The fact that there is no answer to these questions and Protagoras makes no effort to clarify them shows that gods are not in the center of the dialogue or any theological explanation.

The next point that Ferrarin originally detects is about the assignment of Prometheus and Epimetheus for the distribution of powers. Interestingly, Prometheus would normally foresee that, following his name which literally means fore-thought and fore-sight, Epimetheus would do something wrong in the process. However, "Epimetheus begged Prometheus for the privilege of assigning the abilities himself" and Prometheus agreed (320d). This event, for Ferrarin (2000), indicates another point regarding the nature and the origin of human beings: "Persuasion, then, is at the

very origin of humanity” (p. 306). It is another clue that Protagoras focuses on presenting his idea of human nature rather than answering Socrates’ question (Ferrarin, 2000, p. 318). Additionally, Ferrarin (2000) interprets the passage saying that “But Epimetheus was not very wise, and he absentmindedly used up all the powers and abilities on the nonreasoning animals” in terms of indicating that humans have reason instead of instincts as the governing ability. If this is true, he says, “Protagoras makes unwitting use of what Hegel would call determinate negation” which designate the fact that “humans have a not-yet, not a nothing: they have not actualized what is definitely present in them as potentiality” and “for if reason takes the place of instincts, humans have a plastic nature capable of infinitely many forms” (p. 308-309). This idea is also compatible with the claim that the share of *aidos* and *dike* in humans are not equal and different (Kerferd, 1953, p. 43). It opens a realm for instruction and practice.

In the course of the myth, there is a fundamental question regarding the difference between the gifts of Prometheus and Zeus. The gifts of Prometheus bring to human beings the power of fighting against the hostility of nature to humans. Although they were able to build houses, read the stars, and articulate speech and words, they did not live in cities. By the gift of Zeus, justice and sense of shame, they became able to organize cities thanks to the gift of political art. Some social phenomena are indeed mentioned before Zeus’ gift. However, the distinction is not a clear-cut distinction between technical and social abilities but rather between technical and political abilities. In this regard, as opposed to Manuwald’s (2013) claim defending the artificiality of the distinction between *demiurgike* (δημιουργική) and *political techne* (πολιτική τέχνη), the basic social-communicative phenomena are subsumed under demiurgic techne since they are not sufficient to provide an ordered

system until they are combined with political *techné* (p. 172). The validity of this distinction can also be seen in Zeus's concern regarding the insufficiency of Prometheus' gifts for the sustainability of the race. In this regard, demiurgic *techné* is necessary but not sufficient until they are ordered and systematized through political *techné*. In other words, human beings can establish basic relations (like relations between animals) without having a political order. This level of relation might be sufficient for the realization of fundamental biological needs of human beings. However, the difference or the superiority of human beings as a species in terms of survival comes with the political abilities of living together in organized cities. Therefore, the distinction between demiurgic and political *techné* is not artificial but essential.

After presenting some reflections and analysis on the dialogue and the myth, it would be better to present Nussbaum's and Blumenberg's ideas in order to clarify the difference between two fundamental approaches to the problem.

2.4 Nussbaum on Protagoras

Martha Nussbaum, in her book *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, examines *Protagoras* in terms of the tension between *tuche* and *techné* in Athenian philosophy. Nussbaum (2001) defines *tuche* as luck or simply what just happens and *techné* as human art or science (p. 89). For Nussbaum (2001), the opposition between Protagoras and Socrates is clear: While Socrates thinks that the unexpected outcomes of *tuche* can be averted by the science of measurement, Protagoras is not eager to be totally bonded by the science of measurement for the assessment of all virtues and actions in life (p. 89). In this regard, Nussbaum (2001) thinks that, for Socrates, all positive features like courage,

beauty, and goodness can be subsumed under the concept of virtue and all virtues, even the beauty of soul and body, are commensurable (p. 92). In this sense, there is an agreement between Protagoras and Socrates that we need science for conducting our practical choices (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 94).

The first point that Nussbaum focuses on in the myth told by Protagoras is the part of the forgetfulness of Epimetheus. After the distribution of powers by Epimetheus, Prometheus notices that “Epimetheus was not very wise, and he absentmindedly used up all the powers and abilities on the nonreasoning animals” (321c). It shows that, for Nussbaum (2001), there is no coherent way of talking about a man without indicating rationality even before the distribution of powers (p. 101). In this sense, rationality cannot be regarded as an instrument given to human beings for the realization of its constituted nature and natural ends. For Nussbaum, the gift of Zeus must be also thought in this way. The gift of justice and the ability to live in cities is not something that only helps human beings to preserve an already constituted nature and ends. In other words, the gift of Zeus is a part which makes this creature a human being (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 102). Therefore, we cannot separate our nature either from the gift of Prometheus or that of Zeus, after they are given to us. It is true that, in the dialogue, Zeus gives his gift to provide the survival of human beings. It means that this creature can also be called as human beings before Zeus’ gift. However, right after the gift is given to human beings, Zeus establishes a law that “Death to him who cannot partake of shame and justice, for he is a pestilence to the city” (322d). This law clearly shows that even though this creature might be called a human being before Zeus’ gift, it cannot survive as a human being without living in accordance with this gift. In other words, it becomes a part of human nature (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 103). Consequently, these gifts given by

Prometheus and Zeus are the decisive elements of human nature for Nussbaum.

Human beings are not in nature like at the beginning of the genesis anymore. Even though this creature was called humankind (*anthropon genos*) at the beginning while it was naked, desperate, and without any power, it cannot be the same being after the art of fire and the art of politics.

What is given to human beings through the gift of Prometheus and Zeus can be seen as instruments, which provide the survival of human beings by enabling them to control the contingencies in life. In this regard, it is not surprising that Protagoras and Socrates discuss the science of practical art (*techne*) in terms of the commensurability of virtues in the rest of the dialogue. It is also the point that Nussbaum focuses on and shows the difference between Protagoras's and Socrates's account of *techne*. Socrates's effort is to prove that all virtues can be subsumed under the same category in terms of containing pleasure as an end and in this way, they are measurable and commensurable. In the beginning, Protagoras does not accept this point of view since, for him, different virtues cannot be evaluated by a singular measurement. They differ from each other because of their distinctive meanings and their change of meanings under different circumstances. However, this pluralistic point of view is not plausible for Socrates since it opens a space for contingencies. Although Protagoras claims to teach that *techne* increases control over *tuche*, "the internality and plurality of its ends and the absence of any quantitative measure seem to leave his art lacking in precision and therefore in potential for decisive progress" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 105). It is not sufficient progress for Socrates. Nussbaum (2001) claims that Socrates, from a hedonist point of view, asserts pleasure as the criterion of the science of measurement in order to present a determinate science (p. 111).

2.5 Blumenberg on Protagoras

Hans Blumenberg (1988), in his book *Work on Myth*, approaches the Prometheus myth in terms of its relation to the Sophists' anthropological and cultural assumptions (p. 328). The assumption behind the usage of Prometheus's myth by a Sophist is to designate the repeat of the same process by an educator. In other words, the myth of Prometheus provides an anthropological framework that enables the sophistic agenda. In this sense, it becomes clear why Socrates wants to determine a specific criterion for all virtues, while Protagoras stands in the position favoring "no conception of ends but only an arsenal of means" (Blumenberg, 1988, p. 330). For Sophists, human beings are not understood like in the Platonic kind as having innate ideas and realizing them in nature. According to Blumenberg (1988), if man were understood as an appearance of an idea, the Prometheus myth would lose its importance (p. 331). In the framework of Sophists, humans are the maker of their culture and history. Therefore, there is not any reference to innate concepts or ideas but rather the plastic nature of human beings, which is open to realization of every possibility and being directed towards the means. Blumenberg (1988) explains the usage of the figure of Prometheus by Protagoras by reminding that Prometheus keeps the knowledge of Zeus' fall until the time it will have a real effect (p. 330). The power of the truth is related to its proper usage.

Blumenberg examines the myth in *Protagoras* in the light of this prior analysis. The first point that he examines is about the condition of human beings after the forgetfulness of Epimetheus. Because of Epimetheus's failure of furnishing human beings with proper abilities, human beings becomes *akosmeton genos* (a disorderly race). For Blumenberg (1988), this naming of the human race indicates

two meanings: “the inadequate equipment and the offense against the quality of the world as cosmos (an order)” (p. 332.). The next problem is that even after the establishment of a balance between all living creatures, it is not sufficient for a human being to stay alive only with the gift of *techne* given by Prometheus. The ultimate balance is provided by Zeus through the gift of *aidos* (honor) and *dike* (a sense of justice). Blumenberg (1988) interprets this event as a clue that the prior state of human beings was “something contrary to reason” (p. 333). Blumenberg’s interpretation of the myth shows that he evaluates the first state of human beings right after the genesis as an inappropriate condition to exist as a rational being in an orderly cosmos. Even the gift of Prometheus was not enough for human beings to earn a place in the cosmos. What human beings need is the art of being a *polites* (citizen) since this art has precedence over all survival arts for Protagoras (Blumenberg, 1988, p. 333).

However, for Blumenberg (1988), the reference of the myth to Zeus’ gift contains an unintentional denial of “Sophism’s mythical reference figure to capacity to acquire this art for men and to convey it to them” since the art of politics is god-given and received through divine donation not education (p. 333). Through this point, Blumenberg (1988) reaches the conclusion that the art of being a citizen is not a continuum or supplement of the art of fire since they come from different levels of divinity and as Socrates says “what cannot be stolen cannot be bought either” (p. 334). However, Protagoras presents his thesis on the teachability of virtue not through the myth but the actual functioning of the polis as performing punishments as a way to make people learn to obey the laws in the city. The only premise Protagoras reaches based on the myth is that virtues are shared by all people as opposed to practical arts. For Blumenberg, this situation designates the difference

between Prometheus' and Zeus' gift. The gift of fire might be an instrument with which human beings can develop art to survive against the physical constraints of the world. However, the gift of Zeus is direct and clear and there is no room to speculate on this gift.

2.6 A comparison of Nussbaum and Blumenberg

The basic difference between Nussbaum's and Blumenberg's interpretations is that while Nussbaum reads the myth in the light of the discussion of *techne* and *tuche*, Blumenberg approaches it concerning the tension between different anthropological arguments. Nussbaum sees the gifts of Prometheus and Zeus as transforming powers for human beings into nature which provide control over the contingencies of life. In this regard, her interpretations are basically shaped by the discussion on the teachability of virtue and the effort to find an exact science of measurement. However, for Blumenberg (1988), the myth of Prometheus, regardless of different versions, includes cultural and anthropological implications (p. 307). That is why he examines Protagoras's version from this aspect. In my opinion, it is also the reason for the disagreements between Protagoras and Socrates on the science of measurement and its hegemony over all virtues. In other words, the point that Blumenberg focuses on is the reason and explanation of the point focused on by Nussbaum; namely, the difference of perspectives between Protagoras and Socrates on *tuche* and *techne*. The framework that Protagoras stands in would not accept or find meaningful the subordination of all virtues under one principle. If there were a key formula that shows the right decision in every particular circumstance, there would be no need for any kind of education. Thinking and evaluating virtues in this way is not applicable in Protagoras's anthropological framework.

For Protagoras, in the light of the myth told by him, the nature of human beings is determined by the gifts of Prometheus and Zeus. In other words, through these gifts, human beings become creatures who are able to shape nature for their needs and live in cities to stay alive together. Human beings earn the demiurgic power through the gift of Prometheus and political nature through the gift of Zeus. These fundamental abilities provide the balance of power for human beings among other creatures. It is the frame of human nature for Protagoras. As opposed to the Platonic theory, he does not think that human beings are an appearance of an Idea or a realization of a form. These powers are not in the service of already given innate concepts or ideals but rather they are for survival in the world when used in proper manners. That is why, I think, Protagoras does not say anywhere in the dialogue that he is able to make people the *best* citizen. Instead of it, his basic claim is to teach people to be a *better* citizen. His claim is not to lead people to a determined end but to teach them to use the means in the right way. In this regard, even though the analysis of Nussbaum sheds light on many points in the dialogue, the difference of anthropological assumptions of Protagoras and Socrates seems to miss a point. Nevertheless, Nussbaum does not miss the appearances of this fundamental difference in anthropological arguments. The re-written conclusion of Protagoras' myth by Nussbaum based on Socrates' approach evidently reveals this difference. In this conclusion, even the gifts of Zeus are not sufficient and humans do still not have control over *tuche*. Apollo, because of the same worry of Zeus, sends "the art or science of deliberative measurement, together with the single metric end or good, which is pleasure" through "his resourceful messenger Socrates" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 118). In this manner, Nussbaum (2001) rightly ascertains that the discussion in the dialogue demonstrates the open-ended problem of choosing either to reduce the ends

and values of all virtues to a single element determined by the science of measurement to have exact control over *tuche* or leave life to contingencies to keep the plurality of values (p. 120). However, this difference between the ethical positions of Protagoras and Socrates is the result of their different approaches to human nature and human rationality. Their evaluation of *techne* and *tuche* differs because of this fundamental point. In this regard, the discussion on the teachability of virtues and the change of positions towards the end of the dialogue becomes secondary and in a way, a result of the main problem. Therefore, reading the myth in dialogue as an underlying assumption for the claims of Protagoras rather than proof for the teachability of virtues seems plausible.

CHAPTER 3

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

3.1 Introduction

Pico della Mirandola is an original intellectual and philosophical figure for examining the times of Humanism and Renaissance. He differs from his contemporaries and from the intellectual mainstream of his time in many aspects. These aspects are fundamental reasons for choosing Pico della Mirandola and his text, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, which is called the manifesto of the Renaissance, in this study. Firstly, Pico della Mirandola has extensive knowledge not only of scholastic philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, and Neo-Platonists but also of Jewish and Islamic philosophy and Cabbala. This fact can be clearly seen in his *900 Theses* which is a composition of both the fundamental thesis of Ancient, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim philosophers and his own ideas on their theses. Secondly, even though he is considered a humanist in some interpretations, he was certainly not an ordinary humanist who despises the scholastic philosophers and aims directly to turn back to ancients. For Pico, it is necessary to examine their thoughts and ideas in order to grasp the truth and insights of them as we see in his answer to Ermolao Barbara's strong disdaining of the scholastic philosophers (Kristeller, 1965, p. 58). Thirdly, he spent the productive times of his life in Florence as a pupil and friend of Marsilio Ficino who is the founder of Platonic Academy. Being opposed to the strong Platonism of Marsilio Ficino in Florence, it is not proper to count Pico as a Platonist. Also, he was not an Aristotelian in a strict sense, but his purpose was to provide a concordance of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies which was also aimed for a long time in the history of philosophy. At the beginning of *Heptaphus*, before going into a

the discussion regarding the relationship between one and being, Pico (1998b) clearly states that “those who think that Aristotle disagrees with Plato disagree with me” (p. 37). In this regard, the main aim of his endeavor was referred to as the pursuit of reaching *pax philosophica* and he was called by his friends *Princeps Concordiae*, the prince of harmony (Kristeller, 1965, p. 62).

The turning point of Pico’s life is probably the publication of the *900 Theses* or *Conclusiones* in Rome on 7 December 1486 (as cited in Farmer, 2003, p. 183). The disputation of the book was supposed to take place on 6 January 1487 in a meeting with the church fathers and Pico guaranteed the travel expenses of any philosopher and theologian who wished to attend the discussion. However, the commission appointed by Pope Innocent VII condemned the book and Pico’s *Apologia* written to defend the theses as heretical. It was universally prohibited by the Church on August 5 of 1487. Pico fled to France from Rome in order to escape from arrest, but in January 1488 he was caught and briefly imprisoned. After the request and efforts of King Charles VIII, he was permitted to return to Florence in June (Dougherty, 2002, p. 220; Allen, 2007, p. 82). For these reasons, the *Oration*, which was written as an opening for the planned disputation, was not published in that time and not even in Pico’s lifetime. Besides these historical reasons, Pico might have thought it unnecessary to publish the *Oration*, since the second part of the *Oration* is transferred to the *Apologia* and the *Apologia* could not change his image in the eyes of the authorities (Bori, 2012, p. 66). The *Oration* was published posthumously with an edited collection of Pico’s works by his nephew, Gianfrancesco Mirandola. After this publication, the *Oration*, especially its first part had become the most famous texts of Pico della Mirandola and some of the editions were published with the widely known title “On the Dignity of Man” (Kristeller,

1948, p. 212). Ironically, some parts of the *Oration* were used in homilies by at least four of the first six popes of the sixteenth century (Dougherty, 2007, p. 147). It is the general outline of the historical story of the *Oration*. The next step is to scrutinize the text itself to find out its role as a philosophical revolution regarding human nature.

3.2 On the Dignity of Man

There are two main interpretations regarding the structure of the text in the literature. Paul Oskar Kristeller (1956) divides the text into two main sections. In the first part there is an attempt to justify the study of philosophy and Pico does that by re-interpreting the dignity of man. Kristeller (1965) also claims that the title “Oration on the Dignity of Man” belongs to the first part of the text (p. 66). The second part is dedicated to the notion of unity, namely the historical-philosophical problem regarding “the variety and contrast between different philosophers and philosophical schools” (Kristeller, 1956, p. 219). Dougherty (2007) has a fivefold division which also begins with “the discussion of human nature” (p. 132). In terms of our discussion, the related passage is this first part, namely the part in which Pico presents a story of creation as we see in Protagoras’ case. It is also not only a story for creation but a new way of looking at the nature and the place of human beings in the cosmos.

Pico (2012) begins his oration by stating two quotations from two ancient texts indicating the wonderfulness and greatness of human beings in the world of beings (p. 233). The reason for stating these ancient arguments regarding the greatness of human beings is both to show that he shares this idea but does not find satisfactory explanations in them regarding this idea (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 234). For Pico, the old reasons that counted for the greatness of man, namely being

an “intermediary between creatures, a companion of higher beings, interpreter of nature”, are not sufficient to explain the privilege of man. Pico claims that he finds the right reason for the privilege of man as being worthy of all admiration and he begins to tell his story of creation for the exposition of this reason: God filled up the supercelestial world with intelligences, animated the celestial world with eternal souls, and the lower world with animals. After the work was finished, God desired to have a being “to ponder the meaning of such a magnificent achievement, to love its beauty, and to marvel at its vastness” and “He lastly thought to bring forth man” (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 237-238). However, every place was filled with other creatures in the house of God; everything was in order; and seemingly there was no place for man. The Master Creator solved this problem since failing does not befit His dignity. The problem was solved by allowing man to have a “share in common whatever belonged to every other being”. “This creature of indeterminate image” who is placed in the middle of the world is addressed by God as follows:

We have given you, Adam, no fixed seat or form of your own, no talent peculiar to you alone. This we have done so that whatever seat, whatever form, whatever talent you may judge desirable, these same may you have and possess according to your desire and judgment. Once defined, the nature of all other beings is constrained within the laws We have prescribed for them. But you, constrained by no limits, may determine your nature for yourself, according to your own free will, in whose hands We have placed you. We have set you at the center of the world so that from there you may more easily gaze upon whatever it contains. We have made you neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that you may, as the free and extraordinary shaper of yourself, fashion yourself in whatever form you prefer. It will be in your power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Alternatively, you shall have the power, in accordance with the judgment of your soul, to be reborn into the higher orders, those that are divine. (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 240-241)

Pico’s story of the creation and the place of man in the cosmos explicitly differs in many aspects from both the tradition of philosophy and Christianity. These points will be discussed at length after completing the presentation and preliminary

analysis of the text. Pico (2012) perceives the human condition as “the supreme liberality of God the Father, and supreme and wonderful happiness for man” (p. 242). In the following passages, Pico puts forward parallel statements regarding the nature of human beings. Man is able to become a plant, a brute animal, a heavenly being, an angel, and one with God according to the seeds which he cultivates (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 243). Moreover, for Pico, this chameleon nature of man is the reason for admiration. In other words, the ability to always assimilate itself to the surroundings is a merit. As seen in the rest of the text, the multiformity and mutability of human being from brutes to divine beings is the distinctive feature of human being and deserves a privileged position. Pico (2012) briefly supports his argument on human nature from ancient sources like Jews, Greeks, and Persians: “Asclepius the Athenian said that man was represented in the secret rites by Proteus because of his changing and metamorphous nature” and “the metamorphoses renowned among the Jews and the Pythagoreans” (p. 245). One of the most important passages after presenting these ancient supports is the practical example of the possible forms of man in life. Pico (2012) sees someone who is "a slave to his belly" as a plant and who is "enslaved by his senses" as a brute animal, not as a man (p. 247). Besides this, "a philosopher discerning things with right reason" is not an earthly creature but a divine and "a pure contemplator, oblivious to his body and absorbed in the recesses of his mind, [He] is neither an earthly nor a heavenly creature but a more eminent spirit" (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 248). This is the passage through which Pico presents the possibilities of realizing the potentiality of human beings in different forms.

Pico also draws attention to the necessity of having the greatest care to use this potentiality in the right way. This potentiality must be used to "fly off the

otherworldly court that is near to the most eminent Divinity" (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 251). In this regard, Pico tries to show how to use this potentiality through the lives of seraphim, cherubim, and thrones: "The seraph burns with the fire of love; the cherub shines with the splendour of intelligence; the throne stands in the steadfastness of judgment" (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 253). Therefore, the proper consideration of inferior things will bring us steadfastness, the contemplation of Creator, and His creation of the cherubic light and burning for Creator alone the likeness of cherubim. For Pico (2012), the position that man must pursue and take as an example the life of cherubs since the proper usage of intellect would prepare us for both "the heights of love" and "the duties of active life" (p. 257). The life of cherubs might be possible through the proper learning and exercise of moral science, dialectics, and natural philosophy as understood from the examples given by Pico. These are the paths that will open the steps of the ladder of God and provide the inner peace of soul (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 263-269). In the end, man has the chance to be one with God, or in Pico's words, will have forgotten his home and even self. For Pico (2012), "this is the death (if one must call that plenitude of life death), whose contemplation is, according to the sages, the study of philosophy" (p. 271). Hence, the study of philosophy and liberal arts whose merit also shown by the ancients prepares us for "the path to the future celestial glory" (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 273). The next step after the study of philosophy is "the most sacred theology" which shows "the mysteries of nature" and brings us to "the abundance of God's house" and "animating us with a twofold frenzy" (Mirandola, 2012, p. 277). Therefore, the four steps to reach God's house are moral philosophy, dialectics, natural philosophy, and theology as Pico shows them while interpreting a story of Zoroaster (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 287). The rest of the *Oration* is devoted to

the defense of philosophy against those who condemned philosophy as worthless and irrelevant to reach these ends stated by Pico. For this reason, it is sufficient to analyze this much in the scope of this study.

Since the *Oration* begins with a story of creation and explains the nature of human beings based on this story, it is necessary to examine Pico's *Heptaplus* in which he interprets the Genesis. This examination will provide some hints regarding his ideas of human nature in parallel with the *Oration*.

3.3 Heptaplus

At the beginning of the "Second Proem", Pico (1998a) narrates the traditional understanding of three worlds: ultramundane or intelligible, celestial, and sublunary worlds (p. 75). After presenting the classical features of these three worlds, he presents the relation of inclusion between these worlds. "Whatever is in any of the worlds is at the same time contained in each" says Pico (1998a) and explains the nature of this relation by the example of heat: "In our world there is the elemental quality of heat, in the heavens there is a heating power, and in angelic minds there is the idea of heat" (p. 77). Until that point, he does not depart from the traditional understanding of the world. Thereafter, Pico (1998a) presents man as the fourth world in which "are found all those things that are in the rest" (p. 79). Also, he states that the interpretation of Genesis will be done according to every four worlds separately.

Without getting into the details of his interpretation of Genesis, it would be sufficient to state that Pico both uses Platonic and Aristotelian elements in his interpretation. For instance, he interprets the formation of the world through Platonists' instrumental and ideal cause, he defines heaven as an active cause and the

earth as the passive cause (Pico, 1998a, p. 86). Additionally, he interprets the darkness as the matter extended boundlessly indicating the first principle of the neo-Platonists, namely privation, and the spirit of the Lord as the efficient cause which are mentioned in the passage saying that “And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made” (Pico della Mirandola, 1998a, p. 87-88). It is important to notice this fact (the usage of Platonic-Platonist and Aristotelian-Peripatetic elements) in order to see that Pico della Mirandola was not a thinker who despises or ignores the philosophical and religious tradition.

He mainly presents his ideas on the nature of man in *Heptaplus* under and after the “Fourth Exposition: That is, of the Human World: of the Nature of Man”. Pico (1998a) follows the traditional idea regarding the tripartite structure of man consisting of a body, a rational soul, and a spirit as an intermediate power or light between the first two (p. 118-119). Then, he adds two additional parts to the rational soul. The intermediate sensual part is twofold one of which is under reason and one of which above reason. Pico (1998a) calls them as supercelestial and subcelestial waters in our heaven (reason) (p. 120). These ideas are encountered in the tradition and Pico uses them to reveal the secret meaning of Genesis. In "Chapter Six", Pico (1998a) repeats the same argument in the *Oration*, namely that man is the last creation of God, placed in the center of the world, and formed in the image of God (p. 134). The peculiarity of man making him worthy for this reward of being formed in the image of God is his fundamental nature of including “the substances of all natures and the fullness of the whole universe”. Only God other than a man “assembles and unites the perfection of the true substance of things” (Pico della Mirandola, 1998a, p. 135). Surely, man does this in a different way than God, but

man is the only creature of God who shares this fundamental feature with Him. It is the right way to understand the creation in the image of God. Following this, Pico presents the difference between God and man in terms of the mentioned feature of inclusion through similar arguments in the *Oration* like sharing the abilities and features of plants, animals, brutes, and angels. The essential point is Pico understands that “to be created in the image of God” is the sign of having the potentiality of multiformity and mutability. There is no doubt that God is immutable. The difference between man and God is that God has all these dispositions in Himself but he is completed and does not need any change. However, man is not a completed or determined being, and has to find his way through the manifold of these dispositions. This way of interpreting "the image of God" will be a substantial element to grasp Pico's departure from tradition.

3.4 The mutability of man

The preliminary analysis of the *Oration* and *Heptaplus* gives the fundamental premises of Pico's idea on human nature. The first essential premise in the story of creation is that man is created as the last being in the cosmos and does not have any specific or determined nature. Pico presents a spectrum from the possibility of becoming a beast to a divine being. This spectrum is not something new but a prevailing metaphor in the history of philosophy. For instance, as Dougherty (2002) pointed out, this usage can be seen from Aristotle to Boethius or as Truglia (2010) shows, in Gazzali (p. 234 / p. 153). The important point is that there is no natural place for human beings in the cosmos. Being a human is not a pre-given by God, but it is something pursued and earned by the constant effort of humans themselves. The condition of man is paradoxically not having a determinate condition (Garin, 2008,

p. 325). In this regard, it is not a rhetorical nuance when Pico says “what you see is not man” while mentioning those who chose to be a plant, brute animal, a divine and heavenly creature in the mentioned passage above. To be a human being is not something we can exactly point out but something we can see and recognize through different possible forms of becoming human. It is the doctrine of Pico which makes the path to ascend and descend open for human beings. This issue is directly related to the human being’s position in the center of the world. Human beings are put into the center of the world by God to be able to “gaze upon whatever it (world) contains” (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 241). The reflections of this centrality are broader but at this point, it means being able to move in any direction in the cosmos.

Since this movement is not determined by any fixed or pre-given nature or essence, what we see in Pico is that it is possible through the will of human beings. Pico's emphasis on human nature of moving upward and downward and exemplifying it by the lives of seraphs, cherubs, and thrones indicates that each individual is able to decide the way in which he/she will follow. As Dougherty (2002) claims, human identity is a fundamentally moral issue for Pico; and Pico presents a moral ontology as metaphysically constitutive for human beings (p. 229-231). The decision of becoming a brute animal or a heavenly body is not pre-determined. Pico clearly defends the autonomy of reason and rejects any effect of heavenly bodies on humans’ lives and decisions. For instance, in his text on astrology, he criticizes the classical idea that heavenly bodies have effects on the life of people. His attack is based on the idea that humans are spirits and stars are bodies. A lower form of being cannot be dominant over a higher form of being (Kristeller, 1965, p. 68). From this point, Cassirer (1942) claims that Pico's thought structure has a strict distinction between "the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom" (p.

342). For each realm, there are different rules and laws. In this regard, while the physical realm works according to necessity, the spiritual realm rests on freedom. Also, for Pico, the primacy of freedom precedes the primacy of spirits. This distinction provides a space for freedom for human beings. Neither heavenly bodies nor any pre-given nature can have an ultimate effect on the choices of humans. Surely, all choices are not equally dignified. Pico strongly defends the idea of freedom but also presents the right ways to realize this freedom as seen in his admiration of the life of cherubs and becoming one with God as the ultimate and highest purpose. Eventually, Pico's analysis of astrology is a good example to grasp how his "moral ontology" affects his ideas on metaphysics.

As seen in the story of creation, man is put in the center of the world by God. However, this position is not fixed or guaranteed. Bestowing this centrality to human beings indicates a demand of God from human beings to be constantly active and pursue the higher positions (Cassirer, 1942, p. 324). For Pico, there is no guarantee of position in the order and knowing the truth. This is an ongoing process in which each individual is supposed to realize his/her potentialities and keep his/her choices on the right track. Humans must seek and earn their privileged position. In this sense, human beings are accounted as totally free from any dependence, and what he/she earns and loses totally depends on his/her own actions. When the classical concepts of original sin, fall, and grace in Christianity are taken into consideration, Pico presents a bold claim which in a way surpasses the effect of this doctrine on the life of humans. For Pico, sinning demonstrates humans' capacity of freedom of choice and it cannot be stamped on the soul of humans forever. Also, the salvation would not come through obeying the fate and waiting for the grace of God but by fighting and pursuing it throughout one's lifetime (Cassirer, 1942, p. 329). Additionally, this

salvation cannot be for a community but can be bestowed in accordance with the actions of each individual.

Interpreting the nature of human beings in this way naturally brings forth some conclusions regarding the relation of human beings to the cosmos and God. Pico explains man's not having any specific nature through his condition of being a surplus creature in the cosmos. Human beings are created as the last entities; and at the time of their creation, cosmos was already filled with naturally determined bodies. If we think the fact that Pico tells this story of creation to present the right reason for admiring human beings and that he finds this reason in its mutability and multiformity, there must be a direct link between its changeable nature and its superfluity. According to Blumenberg (1987), Pico draws the dignity of man from the man's surplus status (p. 25). For Pico, the dignity or worth of man as a free being (or whatever it is and becomes) does not need any validation from the order of the universe. There is no direct link, as we used to see in the tradition, between the nature and position of human beings and the cosmos. In this regard, Pico rightly claims that the stars were created to shine in the sky and to illuminate the earth. The serviceability to human beings is not the ultimate purpose of celestial bodies (Blumenberg, 1987, p. 37). Also, as mentioned in Pico's critics against astrology, there is no "concealed communication" between astronomical objects and man. In other words, there is no relation between the existence and purpose of nature and natural bodies and human beings anymore. Blumenberg (1987) states that the rejection of the pre-imprinted subservience of nature to human beings leads to seeing man as being capable of "match for nature" and "all the way to the idea of overpowering and commanding it" (p. 36). Hence, there is a suspension of the role of cosmology in favor of the man's self-consciousness. The idealization of being in the

center of the world and removing cosmology from its place in this way brings forth seeing the world as in the service of man for his "self-definition" (Blumenberg, 1987, p. 486).

In the case of God, there is a similar shift in the approach. Pico's idea of becoming one with God is not something new. However, the different side of his approach might be seen in his interpretation of the image of God in *Heptaplus*. The central position of human beings in the cosmos also affects his relationship with God and the nature of being in the image of God. As mentioned above, Pico understands being created in the image of God as indicating human beings' ability to include features of all creatures. This is the common element between man and God with a fundamental difference. While "God contains all things in Himself as their origin, man contains all things in himself as their center" (Pico della Mirandola, 1998a, p. 135). Pico explains this feature of containing all things as containing the possibilities of all forms of life. Hence, there is a reference to the chameleon nature of man while interpreting the image of God. It is a new way of interpreting *Imago Dei* which, for instance, totally differs from Augustine's interpretation. Augustine (1991), in *Confessions*, interprets *Imago Dei* concerning the will of God. To be created in the image of God provides man with the ability "to renew his mind" and through the renewal, man "contemplates and understands the truth of God" and it is a matter of either turning away from God or not (p. 725). There is not any reference, in Pico's interpretation, to the renewal of the soul or the structure of the human soul but rather directly to the mutability of nature which is also open to be a brute as to be divine.

3.5 Pico, tradition, and modernity

As we see in the prior analysis, the ideas of Pico cannot be classified under the classical categories of scholastic philosophy, Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Christianity. There is no doubt that what Pico brings forth regarding the nature of the human beings, their place in the cosmos, and its relation to nature bears unorthodox ideas. On the other hand, his texts are full of traditional elements and ideas. Due to this contradictory situation in his works and the story of his life, it is necessary to inquire about Pico's relation to tradition and modernity.

There are numerous works trying to reveal the ancient sources of Pico della Mirandola. In these works, one may see the foregrounding of ancient philosophers, Platonists, Peripatetics, Cabala, Muslim and Christian philosophers. This discussion does not belong to this study. However, to clarify Pico's approach toward tradition, it is necessary to bear in mind that Pico's philosophy is oriented by the idea of universal truth. As also seen in his *900 Theses*, Pico believes that all these thinkers have a share in the truth (Kristeller, 1965, p. 60). In this sense, Pico cannot be considered as a copyist or a thinker who gathers old ideas, combines, and presents them as something new. The merit of Pico is that he internalizes the accumulation of tradition and transforms and re-interprets them in the light of his own philosophical agenda (Cassirer, 1942b, p. 137). As mentioned at the beginning, Pico's attitude was never to despise the tradition and underestimate ancient thinkers. This approach is also compatible with Pico's basic principle of pursuing truth in an unending process. Every attempt in the history of philosophy and religion is a moment towards reaching this truth. In terms of the form and content of his works, it would not be plausible to claim that Pico totally departs from the values of scholastic philosophy and Christianity. According to Cassirer (1942), "no man admired more sincerely the

tradition of the Fathers and tried to hold it more faithfully than he” (p. 325).

Additionally, according to Dougherty (2007), the Roman disputation, which ends up by the condemnation of heresy, was an “imitation of three well-established academic models (the medieval university tradition of the *quaestiones disputatae*, the tradition of collecting and commenting on *sententiae*, and the practice of Aristotelian-style dialectical interpretation)” of scholasticism (p. 115). Besides this, the core of Pico’s philosophy has a fundamental difference from traditional understanding.

This fundamental point is the indeterminate nature of human beings. It is obvious that there is no limiting and determining the essence of human beings for Pico. Human beings are free of any determination and it is the main difference of humans from other beings, determined by their fixed nature. In this regard, Pico departs from the traditional doctrine in which a thing is determined by its inner principle or essence; and this essence makes it what it is but not some other thing. For Pico, there is no such limitation for human beings. Moreover, since human beings do not have any fixed position, it is out of not only the universal hierarchy of beings but also the three worlds. Humans are free to occupy any place in order from the lowest thing to the highest. In this regard, this difference can be stated as the fundamental point by which Pico departs from the traditional understanding of nature and essence. As Kristeller (1965) stated, these ideas of Pico have “a modern ring”, but he does not think that they were meant “to be as modern as they sound” (p. 67).

It is not easy to categorize Pico’s philosophy in terms of its relation to tradition and modernity. Pico’s thought still follows the traditional theologico-metaphysical framework. The idealization of the life of contemplation, the need for following the necessary steps to reach a higher form of life, the admiration of being one with God, the idea of concordance, celebrating the ideas and honors of Church

Fathers: these are the main themes that one encounters in the content of Pico's philosophy. These themes are in no way modern and still in the framework of tradition. Therefore, it would not be proper to claim that Pico represents a clear-cut break between tradition and modernity (if there is any). On the other hand, there are scholars who perceive Pico's philosophy, especially the *Oration*, as an early form of Sartrean existentialism and the Nietzschean idea of will (Dougherty, 2002, p. 221). I am not sure if Pico's modern ring can be carried so far. Nonetheless, they have certainly the right point. It has been stated that the fundamental premise of Pico's philosophy is the indeterminate nature of human beings; and the reason for the mentioned modern sound of Pico's philosophy results from this idea. Freeing human beings from any limitation and determination has the potentiality to lead so-called modern consequences even if we do not see them in Pico's philosophy. Celebrating the indeterminate nature of human beings and the position in the center of the world bring forth some unintended (or intended) consequences.

First of all, there is no doubt that Pico presents a new idea of individuality. The formation of one's own life is totally dependent on his/her own decisions and will. In principle, there is no sovereign authority over the decisions of an individual. Even if Pico supports Christian principles for orienting life goals, the beginning point for realizing this potentiality (the mutability of human beings) is open to be directed to other points other than the ideal of Christianity since the legitimization of decisions can be provided only by the convictions of intellect. As Cassirer (1942) pointed out, "Pico's idea of freedom not only makes possible but demands a new form of individualism" through which an individual has the right to pursue his/her search for truth and does this not only as a right but as a duty (p. 327-328). This freedom is provided by God, but the requirements of the gift must be realized via the

rational capacity of human beings without depending on any authority. In terms of the Christian tradition, according to which the truth is provided for believers by the religious authority and people do not have any duty for an individual intellectual search for truth (it might not also be proper to mention the idea of the individual in this sense), Pico's idea of freedom stands as a breakthrough. Even though Pico defends the value of magic or mystic sources like the Cabbala in his philosophy, this form of individualism has the potentiality to surpass the effects of traditional bounds of his texts in favor of its modern inclinations. In other words, the purpose of reaching the truth, as defined and accepted in the discourse of tradition through a new form of individualism, is based on the indeterminacy and freedom of human nature. This might lead to another way of conceiving the truth; namely, as sourced from this kind of individualism.

The second point which might be posited as the difference from tradition in Pico's philosophy is human beings' position in the center of the world. As discussed above, the position of human beings in the story of creation is directly related to the "surplus" situation of human beings in the order of creation. Since man does not have any fixed place and determined nature in the order of creation, God placed him in the center of the world. Thanks to this position, man would be able to gaze upon the world. The centrality of the earth and the centrality of human beings in this world is an idea that can be widely encountered in the Christian tradition. However, in the story of Pico, there is no teleological relation between man and cosmos. Cosmos is not organized for the sake of man, as we see in Pico's analysis on astrology. Heavenly bodies are not sovereign over the fate of humans. Their movement does not have the power to affect people's decisions in their lives. While Pico keeps the centrality of human beings, he changes the nature of the relationship between human

beings and the cosmos. In this regard, it is worth noticing that Pico mentions the placing of man by God while mentioning his ability to decide and shape his own nature. Therefore, the central position of human beings in the world and the mutability of his nature go hand in hand. When the fact that the mutability of human nature requires human freedom is taken into consideration, this central position of human being becomes the fundamental condition through which a human being freely interacts with the cosmos without obeying any authority. As Blumenberg pointed out, this “moral ontology” prioritizing the privileged position of human beings might cause us to approach the world as serving the self-definition of human beings. In this regard, it is not an overstatement that Pico's philosophy opens the road for the process of overcoming nature.

On the other hand, the idea of indeterminacy is the exact point through which the difference of Pico from Protagoras can be seen. As discussed in the first chapter, in the myth told by Protagoras, Zeus gives a sense of shame and justice to human beings since the gift of Prometheus was sufficient to survive in nature but not for living together in cities. These two gifts are at the same time two limiting points for the will of human beings. Without these limitations of shame and justice, humans are doomed to stay in a kind of state of nature in which there is no civilized life but only a life of survival. In this regard, shame represents the limitation of one's senses and regulates the relation of humans. Justice, on the other hand, is about the right distribution and defines the border of political order. Every human being has a share in the two virtues; so, their will is limited and ordered in a certain way. However, for Pico, there is no such limitation provided by virtues or God-given gifts. Human beings have only the gift of reason. This gift does not recognize any limitation in terms of human nature and action: "But you, constrained by no limits, may determine

your nature for yourself, according to your own free will" (Pico della Mirandola, 2012, p. 240). In Protagoras, "the naked bare" condition of human beings is a problem both for the survival of the species and the order and limitation of its nature. For Pico, the obvious absence of determination does not create a problem regarding the limitation and order of the essence. On the contrary, it is an opportunity for unlimited free will. While for Protagoras certain virtues and dispositions (the gift of Prometheus and Zeus) are necessary for the determination of human essence, for Pico, the absence and indeterminacy become the essence of human nature.

Furthermore, the indeterminate nature of human beings brings forth an understanding of the free will which is also incompatible with the scholastic tradition. As briefly mentioned in the passage of Heptaplus about "the image of God", Pico's understanding of the free will prevailed thanks to being created in the image of God, which substantially differs from that of Augustine and the mainstream of Christian scholasticism. For Augustine, for instance, a human being has a free will, but this free will is not independent of the will of God, His order, and the fundamental concepts of original sin, fall, and grace which are strong determinants for human nature in Christianity. Augustine (2010) rejects those who deny the role of "grace" on humans for free will (p. 141). However, Pico does not accept any theological limitation on the operation of free will. He strongly bolsters the usage of the will in accordance with the will of God, but it is not a theological limitation, only a moral one. For Pico, humans are totally free to act in the way they want to pursue. In this aspect, Pico also differs from the understanding of scholasticism regarding the nature of human will. In terms of these two points about Protagoras and Augustine (or the general idea of scholasticism), what Pico presents as the nature of human beings is radically groundbreaking.

Consequently, Pico della Mirandola's thought presents a new framework regarding the nature of human beings. The principles of ancient and scholastic thought are, in a way, left behind and Pico opens up a new realm on which human beings are not limited by any higher power. This side of Pico's philosophy certainly bears a modern tendency. However, as seen in the general outline of his philosophy, he did not aim to trivialize the classical thought. On the contrary, for him, the real meaning of the accumulation of tradition gives the idea of indeterminate nature. Mainly, for this reason, Pico della Mirandola stands in a fundamental threshold of the history of philosophy.

CHAPTER 4

JOHANN GOTTFRIED VON HERDER

4.1 Introduction

The discussion of the period of Enlightenment can be summarized as the discussion on the role and limits of reason. In German philosophy, in the late 18th century, this discussion was shaped around the philosophy of Kant. Kant's *Critique Project* was a breaking point in this discussion. Kant's main concern was to approach the classical metaphysical problems in a new way in accordance with the principles of modern science. Before Kant, also some other philosophers, like Leibniz, were aware of the problem that it was not philosophically legitimate to use old methods in an era dominated by the success of the new scientific methods. The motivation behind Kant's critique project was the essentiality of this problem and the failure of the philosophers before him in his eyes. From the second half of the 18th century to the beginnings of the 19th century there were several camps of philosophers who defended different approaches, at first, to this problem and, afterward, against the Kantian project: some philosophers (Romantics like Johann Georg Hamann) were totally against the Kantian project; namely, by positing the human reason as the sole authority and limiting the field of knowledge only with the realm of possible experience; some of them (Berliner Aufklärer like Moses Mendelssohn) wanted to keep the value of Enlightenment but not in the way Kant did. While the former group could go so far as to defend irrationality and the revitalization of the Christian world of the Middle Ages, the latter group tried to overcome the boundaries drawn by Kant which keeps the basic issues of classical metaphysics like God, freedom, and the immortality of soul out of the realm of theoretical reason. This discussion was

essential regarding the nature of human beings since opinions on the nature of human reason are directly linked to the idea of human nature. In other words, the whole effort was to find out the condition and definition of the human beings in the Enlightenment.

To understand both this discussion revolving around the idea of human nature and reason and in the history of philosophy in general, Johann Gottfried von Herder's philosophy is a good example in two senses: firstly, he was in contact with all the mentioned groups. He was Kant's student, a favorite ally in the eyes of Hamann, and an official priest of Weimar at the same time. Secondly, his philosophy is an illustrative example of the effort of presenting an alternative way to understand human nature against the mentioned prevailing positions in one of the essential thresholds of the history of philosophy. For these reasons, after Protagoras and Pico della Mirandola, Herder will be the third example exploring alternative ideas on human nature in times of radical changes.

As opposed to Protagoras and Pico della Mirandola chapters, the examination will not be based on a story of creation. Herder presents his ideas on the genesis of human beings and even of nations in his text, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, in a very detailed way. However, his ideas on the nature of human being, what makes this creature different from others, and what is his position in the line of these abilities are more clearly presented in his prize essay, *Treatise on the Origin of Language*. Herder bases the invention of language on the nature of human beings. Therefore, this will be the main text of the examination. On the other hand, some arguments in Herder's three other texts, *Essay on Being*, *On the Cognition and the Sensation of Human Soul*, and *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of*

Humanity will be examined and presented to explicate Herder's ideas on the nature of human beings.

4.2 Treatise on the Origin of Language

Herder wrote the *Treatise on the Origin of Language* in 1774 as an answer to the questions posited by the Berlin Academy. The question was, as stated at the beginning of the text by Herder, "Were human beings, left to their natural abilities, able to invent language for themselves?" Herder won a prize with this essay.

However, the historical and philosophical importance of this essay does not only result from earning the prize. Through this essay, Herder presents his own philosophical position which departs from the prevailing positions regarding the origin of human language, and in relation to that, human nature and reason. In this essay, as it will be shown through the analysis, Herder both rejects the God-given origin of human language and reason and the independence of human reason from environmental factors like culture, language, religion, and society. These two rejections might be seen as Herder's *epistemological break* from his two mentors since while the former position was a rejection for Hamann, the latter one was for Kant. In this regard, Herder will face criticism by Hamann and Kant because of his ideas in this essay.

Herder (2002e) begins the essay with the sentence "Already as an animal, the human being has the language" (p. 65). For Herder, human beings as animals already have a kind of language, which can be named the language of sensation, before the so-called artificial language. Humans express their joy, pain, passion, or misery in exclamations and that is why the oldest languages are full of exclamations (Herder, 2002e, p. 69). Therefore, the roots of any articulated and grammatically structured

human language are the first exclamations of nature. This is the source of Herder's naturalism; namely, constructing the way of understanding the invention of human language through the natural course of life. In this sense, in order to find the source of human language, one needs to investigate the difference between animals and human beings. If we can find this difference or the middle terms as Herder calls it, then we not only answer the question of the essay but also understand why only human being have language.

The fundamental difference is about the sureness and strength of instincts. This is directly related to the size of the circle (*Kreis*) of efficacy: "The human being is far inferior to the animals in strength and sureness of instinct" and "the sensitivity, abilities, and drives to the art of the animals increase in strength and intensity in inverse proportion to the size and diversity of their circle of efficacy" (Herder, 2002e, p. 78-79). Since animals are far superior in instincts and have a far smaller circle of efficacy compared to humans, their need for communication is satisfied by their instincts. They do not need to invent or develop an artificial language besides the language of nature. However, firstly, human beings lack this kind of powerful instincts, and secondly, the circle of human beings is much more diversified and dispersed. There is no possibility to limit human beings with one single art or world as bees and spiders. Herder finds the source of the fundamental difference of human beings from animals, as Protagoras and Pico did, in their lack of natural powers. He also claims that if we find the cause of these shortcomings we can find "the necessary genetic basis for the arising of a language for this new kind of creatures" (Herder, 2002e, p. 82)¹. The first outcome of these shortcomings is freedom. Since

¹ Herder (2002e) says that "Gaps and shortcomings cannot, however, be the character of his species" (p. 81). The original German of the sentence is that "Lücken und Mängel können doch nicht der Charakter seiner Gattung sein" (Herder, 2015, p. 143). Later, Arnold Gehlen defines human being as "Mängelwesen" (deficient being) in his book *Man: His Nature and Place in the World* (1988).

human beings have no single ability, a determined instinctive duty, and, in the light of these, not a single world, their space of existence is open to freedom: Human beings have larger prospect, no single work, subject to no improvement, free space to practice multiple things, to improve themselves constantly (Herder, 2002e, p. 82).

The next step for Herder is to find the way or the faculty of the soul that makes this freedom operative in the formation of language. In this regard, Herder briefly gets into the discussion regarding the distinction between the faculties of the human soul. He is totally against the attitude of classifying the faculties of the soul by different names like understanding, imagination, reason and attributing different duties to each of them. For him, these are all “metaphysical abstractions” which occur as a result of our weakness to think of them in unity (Herder, 2002e, p. 83). Instead of these divisions, Herder (2002e) calls “the whole disposition of human nature” as “awareness” (*Besonnenheit*) (p. 84). The source of Herder’s opposition to this classification is linked with his effort to overcome the Cartesian duality of soul and body. This effort requires understanding the causality in a different way from the Newtonian tradition and in line with the biological findings of his own time. For this reason, Herder will use the concept of *force* as a new way of thinking of the relation between mind and body and the nature of the power of the human soul. This issue will be handled separately to clarify Herder’s ideas regarding language and human nature.

Herder posits the awareness as the ultimate difference of humans from animals and as the source of inventing a language. At this moment, Herder discusses the relation between reason and awareness. This discussion seems like a

Herder’s philosophy had an huge effect on his conceptualization. *Mängelwesen* is translated as deficient being. By following Gehlen, translating *Mangel* as “deficient” instead of “shortcoming” might be a better choice for indicating the existential status of the mentioned lack of human being compared to other animated creatures.

contradiction since he just rejected any division between the faculties. However, a deeper reading would show that Herder does not see reason as an independent faculty of the human mind but the unity of all human forces which is the source of self-awareness:

If, that is to say, reason is no compartmentalized, separately effective force but an orientation of all forces that is distinctive to his species, then the human being must have it in the first condition in which he is a human being. This awareness must reveal itself in the first thought of the child, just as in the case of the insect (it had to be evident) that it was an insect (Herder, 2002e, p. 85).

The real source of human rationality is the reason. Awareness is the fundamental mode of action of reason which directs the attention of reason to itself and the world. This issue has a special place for Herder since he was aware of the ongoing discussion between the relation between reason and language. It is necessary to grasp Herder's position regarding the invention of language before going into the details of awareness and reason. Herder criticized three fundamental opinions. The first one was Süssmilch's idea of God-given language. This idea was implausible for Herder because of two main reasons: first, if something is given by God, it has to be perfect and does not need to be modified in time. Secondly, what Süssmilch does is simply beg the question. Süssmilch's basic claim was that language cannot be invented by humans because the invention of language requires the use of reason and also reason cannot be used without language. Therefore, language must be God-given. For Herder, this jump to conclusion is not justified since saying "if no reason was possible for the human being without language" means that "the invention of the latter is as natural, as old, as original, as characteristic for the human being as the use of the former" (Herder, 2002e, p. 91). In other words, for Herder, separating

language and reason as two distinct categories and then discussing their temporal priority to each other would be a logical fallacy. The second opposition is directed to Condillac's thought experiment, "two children in a desert" (Herder, 2002e, p. 75). These two children do not know any usage of signs and have any knowledge of one. They are also in reciprocal intercourse and they became able to understand the reference of the cries of sensations to thoughts. In time, they can associate these signs with thoughts, improve their memory, represent prior signs on necessary occasions, and use their imagination. In the end, they use these cries of sensations as a model for constructing a language. Herder's first criticism is about presenting a completely unnatural scenario for understanding the natural course of human language. He also repeatedly says that he does not understand any of these claims since Condillac presupposes, from the beginning, what he tries to prove. In Herder's (2002e) expression, "words arouse because words existed before they existed" (p. 76). For Herder, pursuing the knowledge of the origin of language cannot be done through observing and determining the correlations between utterances, signs, and behaviors from the eyes of an observer. It can be done by defining the "the conditions of subjective understanding", or in other words, focusing on "the constitutive feature" (Taylor, 1995, p. 82, 89). Herder, without getting into detail, criticizes Rousseau's ideas on the origin of language since he also defends the rise of human language directly from the cry of sensations as Condillac did. Herder (2002e) summarizes his opinion regarding Condillac and Rousseau as follows: "Condillac and Rousseau inevitably erred concerning the origin of language because they were so famously and variously mistaken about this difference – since the former made animal into human beings, and the latter made human beings into animals" (p. 77). The idea lying behind Herder's rejection of Rousseau is Rousseau's theory of reason

as inactive potentiality (DeSouza, 2012, p. 227). Herder does not think that something in nature might be inactive in one state and suddenly active in another state. The difference might be in degree, but it does not lead to denying the existence of the prior state. These critiques of Herder clearly prove that his method cannot be categorized either as naturalism or as spiritualism. He is closer to explaining the invention of language in line with naturalism. However, this must not equate the experience of human beings with animals and assume a leap from animal cries to linguistic signs.

For Herder, a “human being must have the reason in the first condition in which he is a human being” (p. 85). This capacity of reason gives human beings its fundamental nature which means not to be limited by a single circle, not assigned for a specific job, and not determined as animals. For this reason, as mentioned above, human beings operate freely and are able to choose their action in this free space. This operation, the realization of this freedom, the actualization of the possibilities of reason are carried by the action of awareness. Then, “the human being with this awareness (reflection) operating freely for the first time, invented language” (Herder, 2002e, p. 87). The process of inventing language might be presented in a line of succession from reason to freedom, then awareness, as it is done here. However, it must not lead to understanding them in a temporal relation. Herder’s essential difference from Condillac, Rousseau, and Süssmilch is that he does not categorically differentiate the capacities of the human soul. Instead of this, he understands them as an extension of the same force. Since this force is present from the first moment of human life and shows itself both in body and soul, it is meaningless to discuss, for instance, a moment when reason is present, but the language is not or vice versa.

The next step is to explain the nature of this reflection and language. Human beings, simply, reflect on the flood of images and sensations by paying attention to a single point and being conscious of this single and distinctive attention. This specific attention and apperception give us a distinct concept and as Herder calls it, “it is the first judgment of the soul” (Herder, 2002e, p. 87-88). We pay attention to a specific point because a *characteristic mark* distinctly imposes itself upon us in this flood. Then, “this first characteristic mark of taking-awareness was a word of the soul! With it human language is invented!” (Herder, 2002e, p. 88). Herder exemplifies this theory through the bleating of a sheep. When a sheep passes before our eyes, its bleating makes an effect over our soul and directs our attention to it. When we see a sheep again, we recognize it as “the bleating one” according to Herder. The example is short and clear. However, the important part of the example is the point that Herder shows the difference between the reflection of animals and humans. While a wolf or a lion directs its attention to the lamb because of its hunger, and a ram directs its attention for reproductive purposes, human attention is not under the effect of natural needs and necessities. The source of animal attention is their instincts. Human beings’ attention is not purposive and under the effect of natural needs. The soul of human beings directs its attention simply because of the effect of the existence of a thing. It might be its sound, color, or shape. Herder focuses on the bleating since for him the ability of hearing has a special place for human sensation. Herder’s comparison is crucial in terms of showing the difference of animals’ and humans’ reception of the things around themselves and the reason humans have language, while animals do not even need to have one.

Herder, at the same time, already answered to the Süssmilch’s claim, which is deeply supported also by Hamann. Since reaching an idea depends on the ability to

direct attention to a specific point and grasp its characteristic mark, reason was necessary to grasp God's word as a word. In general, a reception of something in the world can be possible only by the ability to direct and lock attention to a specific point. Therefore, this ability must be innate: "Parents never teach their children language without the children constantly themselves inventing as well; parents only draw their children's attention" (Herder, 2002e, p. 92). After that, Herder presents five theses regarding the features of human language. These theses generally express the relation between sensation and language. The source of attention towards the world is the flood of sensation. By focusing on a specific point in the realm of sensation, human beings become able to grasp a characteristic mark of something. Hence, all languages must be sensuous in origin. In this regard, abstraction or grammar rules in languages are not present in the first moment, but reached or structured afterward. However, the important thing is Herder's natural laws rather than the theses since these theses are summaries of the results reached until this point. The first natural law is as follows: "The human being is freely thinking, active being, whose forces operate forth progressively. Therefore let him be a creature of language" (Herder, 2002e, p. 127). Right after positing this natural law, Herder describes the natural condition of human beings as naked and miserable. They are alone, lonely, without any guidance of instincts, and not directed with a determined circle of efficacy. On the other hand, he says that

But as vividly as this picture may be pointed out, it is not the picture of the human being – it is only a single side of his surface, and even that stands in a false light. If understanding and awareness (*Besonnenheit*) is the natural gift of his kind, this had to express itself immediately when the weaker sensuality and all the poverty of his lacks expressed itself. The instinctless, miserable creature which came from nature's hands so abandoned was also from the first moment on the freely active, rational creature which was destined to help itself, and inevitably had the ability to do so. All his shortcomings and needs as an animal were pressing reasons to prove himself with all his forces as a human being – just as these human forces were not, say, merely weak

compensation for the greater animal perfections denied to him, as our modern philosophy, the great patroness of animals!, claims, but were, without comparison or actual balancing of one against another, his nature. His center of gravity, the main direction of his soul's efficacies, fell as much on this understanding, on human awareness (*Besonnenheit*), as with the bee it falls immediately on sucking and building. (Herder, 2002e, p. 128)

This passage is very strategic to understanding the method of Herder and his ideas on the human condition. Firstly, it is true that, in comparison with animals and in terms of instincts, humans are in a disadvantageous position. That is why, at first glance, the human condition can be described as naked and miserable. A lack of any determination brings forth a crisis in which humans are left to this miserable condition. On the other hand, however, reading the nature of human beings from this perspective would lead to missing the essential points. Herder insistently defends that this miserable and instinctless creature has awareness from the first moment of life. Lack of any determination, from another point of view, provides an infinite space for human beings in which they can act freely thanks to awareness and reason. In other words, human beings are rational creatures destined to help themselves. Humans have to find their path in the world through the free operation of awareness rather than following a determined way. Herder calls this ability a natural gift. It is not clear what he means by nature. Whether he uses the phrase of natural gift in order to avoid the gift of God or Zeus's gift as in Protagoras is a matter of speculation. One of the certain inclinations of the term natural gift is that this ability is innate and active from the first moment of life to the end but in different degrees. Herder makes a conceptual distinction for explicating this issue and mentions this in the following passages: "But let one not forget that immediately from the very first moment on it is no animal but a human being, to be sure not yet a creature which takes awareness (*von Besinnung*) but one which already has awareness (*von Besonnenheit*) that

awakens into the universe” (Herder, 2002e, 128). For Herder, contrary to the normal linguistic usage, *Besonnenheit* is the pre-condition for *Besinnung*. In any way, this conceptualization is essential to understanding Herder’s point of view. This ability of awareness is something innate in human beings and develops over time. In this regard, for Herder, the formation of a faculty of mind is subject to natural growth and it is subject to change. In other words, reason, regardless of how it is named or compartmentalized, cannot be understood as totally unbounded and independent from the natural course of life. In other texts and in some parts of this text, Herder also mentions the effect of history, culture, tradition, and religion on the formation (*Bildung*) of human reason and language. Additionally, this ability should not be understood as compensation to human beings for their disadvantageous position. Human beings have human awareness (*Besonnenheit*); and humans could not be other than this. This condition of human beings is not a result of balancing the natural order. In the stories of creation, as we see in Protagoras and Pico, human beings were created after the creation of all animate and inanimate beings. Both Protagoras and Pico evaluated the endowment of reason to the human being as a compensation for a creature which cannot survive among the determined and completed creatures by the strength of their instincts. For them, the gift of reason was an opportunity to find the place for human beings in the completed order of the universe. However, for Herder, (even though he follows a similar order of creation in explaining the genesis in his world history) the ability of reason given to human beings cannot be understood in this way. It is not mere compensation for a creature that is desperate to find a place in the universe. In other words, the ability of reason is neither an afterthought nor a simple solution. In accordance with nature, human

beings cannot be other than that; and reason is not for making a room for the human being in the universe.

The other mission of awareness is the collection of ideas and it is directly related to the idea of uncompleted nature of human beings. A human being comes into the world as the most ignorant and helpless creature, but in time, he/she would be much more superior to animals because awareness has the ability to collect the ideas or follow the succession of ideas. In this way, human beings can have a connection between past and present experiences and reflect upon the future.

Therefore, “the essential feature of our life is never enjoyment but always progression, and we have never been human beings until we had lived out our lives. By contrast, the bee was a bee when it built its first cell” (Herder, 2002e, p. 131). In this sense, language can be understood as a process of collecting, storing, and properly assessing the experience. Human beings learn what to eat, what to stay away from, what to use, and so on by encountering the things in the world, understanding their characteristic marks, classifying, and naming them. In this way, the more experiences humans collect, the richer their language becomes.

The second, third, and fourth natural laws are about the naturalness of the invention and formation of language and its close relation with the nature of human reason. The second law says that “the human being is in his destiny a creature of the herd, of society. Hence the progressive formation of a language becomes natural, essential, necessary for him” (Herder, 2002e, p. 139). Herder justifies the idea of communality as Protagoras did, namely by indicating that humans cannot sustain their existence by living individually. Because of their weak instincts, they need to live together. He gives an example from the life of an infant. An infant needs the help of his parents and society in order to survive as opposed to animal infants which

can find their way in nature soon after their birth. For Herder, the beginning of this socialization is the family. Family is the first step where a human being begins to learn the language, not only receive the language from his/her parents but also learn to invent it by learning to use his/her awareness. The bond between the members of the family is because of the bound of language since learning a language means learning to survive in life. Additionally, since words and thoughts are identical for Herder and the effect of the family will be present over a child in his/her whole life, “this, therefore, becomes familial manner of thinking and hence familial language” (Herder, 2002e, p. 142). This idea directly leads to the third natural law: “Just as the whole human species could not possibly remain a single herd, likewise it could not retain a single language either. So there arises a formation of different national languages” (Herder, 2002e, p. 147). The second and third natural laws are the source of Herder’s idea of *Volk* (folk). For Herder, the more natural it is for two different people or two different families to have different habits or social traits, the more natural it is for them to have different dialects. That is why there are different languages and different dialects in the same languages.

In order to understand the connection between the three laws, it is necessary to read them as a whole. Herder perceives the invention and formation of language as natural progress. Human beings must invent the language in order to sustain its existence as human beings due to their distinguished ability is to take-awareness and recognize the things in the world by catching their characteristic marks. Therefore, for Herder, thought experiments or hypothetical stories, as Condillac and Rousseau proposed, are meaningless. The invention of human language must be understood in the natural human condition. As we see and experience, human beings begin his life in a family and sustain it in society. In this manner, the language of an individual has

a national and societal character as it also has a familial one. Therefore, it is natural to see differences in languages of different regions. Since their relation with water, food, any source of nature and also with deities, moral ideas, any issue regarding human life vary in countless ways, their language or, in other words, what they see as the characteristic marks of things must vary. Herder calls these surrounding conditions as climate (*Klima*) (Herder, 2002e, p. 148). In the body of the text, there are several examples for explicating how the awareness and attention of different societies differ from each other according to their *Klima*. For instance, an Arab who does not have anything else moving around expect a camel would have special attention for it. This idea is essential in terms of understanding Herder's method. Herder wants to explain the origin of language, and in other texts, moral and political ideas, in relation to the historical and natural condition of a specific society. Hence, Herder is in opposition to two ideas: first, the universalization of any principle and second, reading or understanding any issue from a theoretical distance without engaging in the historical and natural conditions. That is why, for instance, Herder explains the origin of the difference in the languages of neighboring tribes by the reciprocal and familial hatred rather than "Rousseauian forest man" or "Hobbesian wolf" (Herder, 2002e, p. 151). Since the language of my tribe has the characteristic mark of my tribe, it has to differ from the language of others. However, as the fourth natural law suggested, this division is also the source of unity: "Just as in all probability the human species (*Geschlecht*) constitutes a single progressive whole with a single origin in a single great household economy, likewise all languages too, and with them the whole chain of civilization (*Bildung*)" (Herder, 2002e, p. 154). Herder's idea in this law might be called as the wave effect. Each human being continues to think and act throughout his/her whole life, educates his/her children,

and is educated by his/her parents. This entails the transmission of experiences from past to future. On the other hand, each action has an effect on the whole kind:

Each (action or thought) always produces a large or small wave: each changes the condition of the individual soul, and hence the totality of these conditions; always has an effect on others, changes something in as well- the first thought of the first human soul is connected with the last thought in the last human soul. (Herder, 2002e, p. 155)

This point is essential to understanding Herder's stand regarding determinism. At first glance, it seems that the idea of climate, the effect of surrounding conditions on the actions and thoughts of people is a strong determinative factor. However the actions and thoughts of humans also have the power to affect the whole. In other words, for Herder, there is a reciprocal relationship between the part and the whole. Therefore, it would not be reasonable to classify Herder's idea under the title of determinism. At this point in the text, Herder tries to indicate also the difference between the existential condition of animals and humans. Any kind of animal comes to the world with the necessary equipment and ability which makes its survival possible in the world. A bee does not learn to produce honey from its predecessors. It is not an ability earned through instruction. For human beings, on the other hand, learning a language is possible by the faculty of reason, the instruction of their predecessors, and inheriting the developments on language before themselves and working on them. Bees produces honey in the same thousands of years ago or there would be no change in the hunting of an antelope for a lion in future. However, the story of human beings is subject to change – it might be toward worse or better – and based on the inheritance, teachings, and experiences of their predecessors since “the first father of the first tribe”: “In this way, we are all his sons, from him begin species, instruction, language. He began the process of invention; we have all invented, formed, and deformed in his wake” (Herder, 2002e,

p. 156). Therefore, in this regard, there is endless continuity and connection between the experiences of the whole species. As the characteristic mark of the human being, language becomes “a treasure room of human thoughts to which each person contributed something in his own way! An epitome of the efficacy of human souls.” (Herder, 2002e, p. 156).

In the rest of the text, Herder gives more details regarding the formation and progression of language with respect to the family, nation, and the whole human species. For now, these prior analyses are sufficient for our purposes. These issues will be addressed also about Herder’s other texts since it is necessary to examine these texts (stated at the beginning) in order to grasp the scope of his theory and his approach to the nature of human beings.

4.3 Essay on Being

This essay is known as the first philosophical text of Herder. It is short and full of metaphorical expressions. In the text, Herder presents his ideas regarding the current metaphysical attitude of his time which finds its source in Baumgarten and Crusius and its current expression in Kant’s pre-critical philosophy (Heinz, 2018, p. 119). It begins with dedication and praise to Herder’s revered teacher Kant without giving his name explicitly. At that time, around 1763-64, Herder still kept this admiration for Kant, even though he criticized him in the body of the essay regarding the proof for the existence of God in *The Only Possible Ground of Proof for a Demonstration of Existence of God* (1763). In the first paragraph, Herder presented his positions and that of Kant by saying that

Your voice shall be more certain and truer than the voice of the public, the unknown idol which everyone names, which is constantly answering empty echoes and hearing nothing. – But if I think superficially – and – indeed, I can

feel it, I am Epimetheus: instead of Prometheus's people. (Herder, 2018, p. 55)

Before going into a discussion of the issues in the text, it is necessary to consider these passages in terms of our discussion since the first issue examined in this thesis was related to the myth of Prometheus. As seen, Herder identifies himself with Epimetheus and Kant with Prometheus. This analogy is about the literal meanings of hindsight (Ἐπιμηθεύς) and foresight (Προμηθεύς). Herder sees himself as hind-sighted in the face of his teacher. This approach of Herder might be another clue that he shares similar concerns with Kant concerning the Enlightenment.

Prometheus' purpose was to bring the hidden ability of *techne* and give them the chance to survive. The purpose of Kant's philosophy might be seen in the same manner. Kant tried to determine the limits of human knowledge and equip people with the right weapons to pursue this knowledge. Herder shared a similar concern for the instruction and education of human beings, but, as we see the philosophical quarrel between Kant and Herder after Kant's critique project, not in the way Kant did.²

Under the heading of "Prolegomena", Herder begins by stating the famous argument of empiricism that "all our concepts are sensory and there are no innate or revealed truths" (Herder, 2018, p. 57). Herder (2018) claims that the hypothetical argumentations based on experience, as in the case of empiricism, are not convincing and posits the question of the text: "whether our concepts could be anything but sensory, whether there is no other way to the inner sense than through the narrow

² In 1802, Herder wrote his version of *Prometheus Unbound* for making the original myth to more humanly. For him, punishing a Titan who is the savior of humankind in this way is a feature of "the harsh mythology of the Greeks" and it should be re-edited "in a mild and human way" (Blumenberg, 1988, p. 389). Herder does not read the myth in terms of theological concerns as Protagoras did. What Prometheus did was necessary for the cultivation of man and, for this reason, it was embraced by Zeus at the end.

passages of the external senses” (p. 58). Herder’s fundamental dichotomy is between the empiricist and idealist position. The empiricist position takes the existence of the external objects granted and works on this metaphysical assumption. Since this assumption is not metaphysically justified, idealists are right in rejecting this assumption as the ground of knowledge to the same extent. Herder is convinced neither with the empiricist assumption of positing only the existence of external objects nor the idealist assumption of taking only thinking beings as real, e.g., in the case of solipsism. Therefore, Herder decides to follow another way to answer the question, namely through the analysis of psychological faculties of the human mind. For this purpose, he begins with the distinction between “subjects of representations with and without external sense” (Heinz, 2018, p. 120). In this regard, as we see in his criticism against both empiricism and idealism, Herder does not think that proving any causal relation between external sense and internal sense is possible. In the case of animals, external sense can work without internal sense, namely without the consciousness of the sensing subject. In the case of humans, we can say that, as the fundamental difference from animals, there is an awareness of the self but it does not lead to the existence of external objects: “I now have inner sense; do I thus also have external impressions?” (Herder, 2018, p. 58). For idealists, the source of all external impressions is the internal senses of the self. This would be an “egoistic world of thought”, as Herder stated, which “can only say I to itself” in a divine manner by being “free of all sensory impressions and any given concepts” (p. 59). In other words, the egoistic world of thought is only possible for God since He does not have any outer sense or external impressions by nature (Baum, 2018, p. 79). Also, because of the fact that, for Herder, it is not possible to conceive this kind of productivity of inner sense in the case of human beings, arriving at the distinct

representations must be mediated by the external sense. In this way, the idea of human beings given both inner and outer sense is posited (Heinz, 2018, p. 121). Not only perceiving external objects but also being aware of the subject perceiving these external objects is the fundamental difference of human beings. This difference between divine and finite consciousness is also the key to explaining how humans arrive at basic concepts. Human beings do not have the capacity to immediately arrive in distinct concepts. We begin with representations from outer sense. Then we abstract and reflect upon them in inner sense (DeSouza, 2018, p. 142). In this regard, Herder's subjective philosophy is a reconciliation of empiricism and idealism based on the sensuality of human beings. In other words, for Herder, the real order has priority over the logical order. This point is important to understand Herder's general method of philosophy. One processes his sensory manifold through abstraction and reflection in order to reach distinct representations. Hence, when one tries to extract the sensory data from a concept, he will reach a point where it is not possible to go any further and what remains will be an analyzable concept. "Thus sensory and unanalyzable are synonyms" (Herder, 2018, p. 60). Heinz (2018) summarizes what Herder did until that point as follows:

With these preliminary tenets on epistemology Herder has created the foundation for his conception of subjective philosophy. The fundamental idea consists of transferring the rationalistic notion of an objective order of concepts, which are brought forth and known by a non-sensory, purely rational subject of knowledge, to the sensory subject of knowledge, the human being. (Herder, 2018, p. 122)

Through this method, Herder both overcomes the realist perspective assuming an independent existence of the external world of objects and the idealist position perceiving the subject as the unbounded source of the existence of external objects. The idea of unanalyzability is not something totally new. It can be found in Crusius

and Kant. Crusius already presented the idea of the unanalyzability of concepts in real and logical levels (DeSouza, 2018, p. 135).

At the end of the section, Herder posits the concept of Being as the most sensory--in this manner the most unanalyzable--concept as the fundamental ground (Herder, 2018, p. 61). In the first chapter, the section after the “Prolegomena”, Herder begins to examine the concept of Being. He follows the twofold distinction of pre-critical Kant, namely the real and logical Being. Under the real being, he makes a distinction of ideal and existential Being. While the ideal Being represents the givenness in inner sense, existential Being represents the outer sense. As mentioned above, for Herder, the real Being has a priority over the logical Being. In this regard, Herder defines logical Being as “the copy of it (real Being)” (Herder, 2018, p. 61). Herder, by following Kant and Crusius, thinks that the law of contradiction and identity for determining the logical relation of representations is not sufficient to understand the real relations (Heinz, 2018, p. 123). Herder rejects the philosophical discourse based on the idea that if the logical concept of Being does not have any clearance and cannot be analyzed, the real Being must be also uncertain because of this unanalyzability. For Herder, this idea might be valid for philosophers but not for the ordinary man. In other words, unanalyzability does not mean uncertainty

In “Section II” the priority of real over logical Being is the basic theme and Herder tries to give an explanation of why the effect of real, in this sense the given, is present and powerful in understanding the nature of Being. According to Baum (2018), Herder follows Crusius’ idea that “the concept of Being (actuality) is prior to the concept of possibility, and that a real possibility is earlier than logical possibility” (p. 83). For the explanation of this fact, Herder puts forward the idea of force. It is clear for Herder that the sensory manifold creates an astonishment in sensory human

being. Since humans encounter these effects of real ground, “one considered the cause, and the unknown aspect of the cause was called force” (Herder, 2018, p. 66).

Herder obviously follows the Humean idea which regards causality as an arbitrary explanation of the relation between events. The definition of the concept of force also supports this line of thought:

The relationship between both was called possibility, and the absence of a relationship real impossibility. – Since force is thus a relationship between real grounds and their effects, and possibility a relationship of force to effects, if the Being of the effect is to be explained on the basis of possibility, this explanation will have to lie in the concept of force. (Herder, 2018, p. 66)

The concept of force is presented as an explanation of the relations in the real ground. Herder uses the concept of force, at least for the moment, in order to show that the real possibility is the ground of logical possibility and the real possibility is derived from the concept of force. Later on, Herder will elucidate the concept of force in detail in *On Cognition and Sensation* (1766). At this point, Herder tries to draw attention to the fact that these are all for the explanation of the concept of Being. However, they all assume the concept of Being as their ground and it is exactly what makes them possible to come into existence as concepts. As they come close to the concept of Being, they lose their power of explanation but get certainty. In this manner, logical relations might present a variety of proof and explanations, but these are only arbitrary abstractions of the human mind which would not be possible without the real ground and experience. That is why assuming that logical possibility is identical to real possibility is a misguided idea of philosophers (Herder, 2018, p. 67). Therefore, Herder suggests following Crusius and leaves Being as unanalyzable and fundamental ground: “real Being is the first absolute concept” (Herder, 2018, p. 67).

In the “Section II” and “Concluding Remark” sections, Herder presents a summary and brief elucidations of his ideas in the text. The first sentences of the “Section II” might be presented as the summary of the main arguments of the text: “Being unprovable – No existence of God provable. No idealist to be refuted – All propositions of existence, the greatest part of human knowledge not to be proved – Oh, everything uncertain, no not uncertain, also not uncertain in proof: but certain and not at all to be proved” (Herder, 2018, p. 70). There is no need to say more about these sentences since the whole text is the explication of them. In the “Concluding Remark” parts, Herder does something different from redelivering the main arguments of the essay. He moves forward to some further points which can be assessed as a continuation of the main arguments. Herder states that all sensory concepts are partially unanalyzable as the concept of Being. The concept of Being is the most unanalyzable concept because it is the ground of all sensory concepts (Herder, 2018, p. 72). In the process of resolution of a concept, one dissects all analyzable parts and gets deeper. What remains at the end is an unanalyzable core that makes the concept that specific thing. In this manner, there are some concepts closer to the concept of Being in terms of unanalyzability. Herder puts three fundamental concepts alongside the concept of being: *ubi* (where), *quando* (when), and *per* (force) (Herder, 2018, p. 72). They correspond to spatial, temporal, and causal aspects of Being. The level of unanalyzability of a subject differentiates in direct proportion to its participation or inclusion of these unanalyzable concepts. For God, for instance, since there is nothing given externally and it has only His Being, He stands as one of the most unanalyzable concepts. In the case of human being, Herder emphasizes the heterogeneity of the self as divided into ideal and existential Being. These two concepts are unanalyzable concepts in their own right and do not

allow an explanation through each other. That is why Herder thinks that Descartes' idea that "I think, therefore I am" or Crusius' idea that "I am conscious of myself, therefore I am" are not legitimate transitions. They move from the ideal Being to existential Being by positing the former as the proof of the latter's existence.

However, for Herder, they cannot be proof of each other -as in the case of real and logical Being- since both of them are grounded in the concept of Being which is itself unanalyzable. Therefore, claiming the ultimate analysis and proof of existence (existential Being) is based on a concept (ideal Being) which is itself unanalyzable and has the most unanalyzable concept (the concept of Being) as its fundamental ground. The rejection of this method gives a certain idea regarding the Herder's approach to the nature of the I. Human beings or the self is not something which can be determined based on the principles and rules of the logical Being. The whatness of a real Being must be sought in the actuality of real ground. Additionally, Herder's approach focusing on the priority of real ground over logical ground and the fallacy of transitions from one to other shows that he is against the tradition of objective philosophy by following the teachings of Crusius and Kant (DeSouza, 2018, 147).

These are Herder's fundamental premises and they explain the background of Herder's methodology in the *Treatise on the Origin of Language*. After the analysis of the *Essay on Being*, it can be said that, in my opinion, Herder follows the same path from the *Essay on Being* to the *Treatise*. The priority of the real being is the fundamental reason for Herder's opposition to explaining the origin of language based on hypothetical thought experiments. In the *Treatise*, Herder insisted on following the natural course of human life for explaining its nature. Metaphysical abstractions or tackling the issue in the realm of logical being would lead to rejecting the certainty of real being since the hypothesis formed in the logical level might not

be clear and certain as reality. The existential condition of human being might be interpreted from a theoretical distance without engaging in the natural processes if we follow this method of abstraction. For this reason, language is the best example for Herder to reveal the nature of human beings since it perfectly shows the natural progression of human beings. Herder's distinctive naturalism cleansed from the problematic premises of idealism and empiricism in this text opens the path going to the *Treatise*.

4.4 On Cognition and Sensation

On Cognition and Sensation is another prize essay written by Herder in 1775 and published again in 1778 as a revised version. The first version published in 1775 is a short excerpt which can be seen as an introduction to the extended second edition. However, it includes important points regarding Herder's position against rationalist philosophy (Forster, 2002, p. 178). For this reason, we begin the analysis of the text with the first edition and continue with the second one.

As Herder formulated, Berlin Academy propounds a question on the relation between the two fundamental faculties of human beings: cognition and sensation, their effects on each other, and the priority of one of them, if there is such thing (Herder, 2002a, p. 185). Before formulating the question, Herder presents some preliminary analysis for indicating his position about the discussion. For Herder (2002a), there is a mutual relation and dependence between cognition and sensation: "We have cognition only through sensation, our sensation is always accompanied with a sort of cognition" (p. 178). Cognition depends on the manifold presented by the sensation. Without any given data, there would be nothing to cognize. On the other hand, if there was not any cognizing ability of the mind, the data given by

sensation would be a meaningless plurality. Sensing an object brings forth the sensation of one's condition at the same time. In other words, the cognition of one's own condition must accompany sensation (Herder, 2002a, p. 180). As there is a unity in the activities of cognition and sensation, there are also disharmonies, discrepancies, and hiatus. The sensation does not always get into perfect harmony with cognition and vice versa. Some sensations are not clear for our mind and we do not cognize all sensations in a clear and distinct way. We feel it in our heart and feel its power but cannot raise it to the level of clear cognition. This situation indicates an "immeasurable gulf" between cognition and sensation: "Two modes of our existence that seem to be hemispheres and antipodes, that only touch a common earth with their feet; two poles one of which attracts what the other repels" (Herder, 2002a, p. 181). What we need to do is to approach these faculties in their individuality. Natural science can function properly by examining these two modes of existence in their specificity. What Herder suggests is not an ultimate separation of faculties or parts of human beings, but to analyze them by keeping their individuality without intermingling them. It is clear from the examples Herder gives to show the mistakes that resulted from this confusion in the history of philosophy.

He begins with Descartes. Descartes firstly presents an ultimate separation of mind and body. In Herder's words, "He hung up the soul in the pineal gland and made it think" (Herder, 2002a, p. 181). Then, he attempts to move from the thinking mind to the body but he cannot do that since there is no chance of mediation between mind and body after this absolute separation. Thus, Descartes had to bring forth God into the system in order to move "the thinking madam soul". The second example is Spinoza who is the theologian of Cartesianism for Herder. In the case of Spinoza, all individuality disappears in God which is the only source of motion. The thinking

principle, the moving God swallows all diversity of abilities and molds them in its existence. The last example is Leibniz. Leibniz's fundamental argument that the soul cannot move the body--God is neither--but the body has the principle of movement in itself which is determined by the pre-established harmony is an explicit example of the transgression of one faculty to other without any legitimate base and explanation. As we see, Herder still keeps his idea in the *Essay on Being*. He does not accept any kind of proof that uses the ideal Being as the source of existential Being or vice versa. The move from one to the other is not philosophically explainable as detailed in the prior chapter. These criticisms are essential not only to understand Herder's metaphysical position but to grasp Herder's method for answering the question of the text. The purpose is to find a way to understand the nature of these faculties as apart and together. In other words, it is necessary to find the bonds between these different faculties. In this way, it would be possible to overcome the Cartesian dialectic and present an alternative way to criticize the idealist and empiricist positions regarding the priority of thought and sensation.

The text is composed of two essays. The first one is where Herder explains the nature of irritability, sensation, and cognition. The second one is about the relation of the forces of sensation and cognition with the character of human beings such as genius. In this regard, the second essay is not in the scope of our topic, and for this reason, we will focus on the first one. At the beginning of the first essay, Herder posits the methodology of his study. In the mind of Herder, as we see in the *Essay on Being*, it is not possible to know the things in themselves. The matter of knowledge is limited with the scope of the representations reached through the co-operation of inner and outer sense. In this manner, Herder (2002b) says that concepts like "mass, impact, fall, motion, rest, force" are used by humans in the light of their

similarity with everyday experience without knowing their inner condition (p. 187). The research or discourse on any topic must carry the image of human beings: “The sensing human being feels his way into everything, feels everything out of himself, and imprints it with his image, his impress” (Herder, 2002b, p. 188). Therefore, the method must be the method of analogy while discussing the issue of cognition and sensation since human beings do not and cannot have any higher form of knowledge. As the method indicates, the effects have a priority for the understanding of fundamental concepts which we assume as the source of effects.

The first part of the first essay is about the principle of irritation. In the first sentence, Herder (2002a) claims that “we probably cannot accompany sensation in its origination further down to the strange phenomenon that Haller has called ‘irritation’” (p. 189). As we will see, irritation will be posited as the basic principle of any movement of the human soul and body, and human beings will be understood as one living organism having different levels of organizations moved by the force of irritation. For this reason, it is necessary to look at the origination of this concept by Albert von Haller. According to Buchenau (2017), Herder was very well aware and interested in the discussion between the two famous physiologists of the 1750s, Albert von Haller and Julien Offray de La Mettrie (p. 73). The discussion was not only about physiology but religious and psychological reflections too and Herder was on the side of Haller as he stated this position in *On Cognition and Sensation*: “In my modest opinion, no psychology is possible which is not in each step determinate physiology. Haller’s physiological work raised to psychology” (Herder, 2002b, p. 196). In the time of Haller, the discipline of medicine has an importance in the understanding of the well-being of human beings not only in terms of physiology but also in terms of the philosophical reflections of physiological facts. According to

Haller's French translator Tissot, Haller was effective in the field of physiology as Newton in physics (Buchenau, 2017, p. 76). In 1752, Haller presented his new division of the human body: "while irritability is a property of muscle (of what he calls the muscular fiber and muscular organs such as the heart), sensibility is a quality of the nerve (the nervous fiber and organs), and elasticity is the quality of the fiber that reacts to pressure" (Buchenau, 2017, p. 77). In this system, the impact area of the soul is limited to the nervous system. For this reason, the soul does not have the power to move the body. The movement of the soul and body result from different powers without getting into any direct or causal relation. This system is opposed to the Aristotelian idea of the soul as the animating power of the body. Additionally, there is no hierarchy in the parts of human beings, and for this reason, their relation is not determined. Based on this point, for La Matrie, it is possible to defend the idea that the source of the supposed voluntary actions of a human being might be the muscular reflex movements. This idea threatens the immateriality and freedom of the soul (Buchenau, 2017, p. 80). Because of this theoretical gap, or so to speak danger, Herder moves back to the Aristotelian idea of the soul through the physiology of Haller. Herder, as we will see in the chapter on irritability, mainly defends the same physiological principles with Haller. However, he surpasses the boundaries between different parts of human beings posited by Haller, and provides an "original identity" or a "genealogical link" between different functions of the soul and body. In this manner, all these different principles originate from one single force (Buchenau, 2017, p. 84). To elaborate on how Herder uses the concept of irritability in his philosophy, it is necessary to examine the first chapter of the first essay.

Herder defines irritation as “the inexhaustible fount and abyss” which enlivens every little fiber of the whole I (Herder, 2002b, p. 190). After that, he gives examples of the different processes of movements in the body for different emotions such as anger, love, and pain. Since irritation is a fundamental force, it is an inexplainable concept, and must be presupposed. The bound between soul and sensation provided by irritation “cannot be further explained, but must be believed because it exists, because it reveals itself in a hundred thousand phenomena” (Herder, 2002b, p. 192). The inexplicability of the origin of this force and the relation between different parts of human beings provided by it does not necessitate negation of its existence and its effect on body and soul. In this regard, irritability is not only a property causing the movements of the muscular system as we see in Haller, but it is the basic principle of the simple and the most complex systems of living organisms. Additionally, for Herder, it is meaningless to set arbitrary boundaries between soul and body and deny the effect of one single force over the whole individual human being based on this division. This kind of separation would lead to a search for absurd solutions as in the case of Leibniz’s pre-established harmony. For Herder, Leibniz was right to see the body only as an appearance of substance. Where he was wrong is the assumption that the inner condition which moves the body does not have any relation with the soul. The idea that the soul cannot have any effect on the body is baseless and meaningless (Herder, 2002b, p. 195). Summarily, the reality of the effectiveness of one single force and the connection between soul and body is clear to all human beings; and there is no need to spread out some fancy and arbitrary conceptual explanations. In Herder’s words, the answer to the question “Under what conditions does something irritate?” is that “Basically, still just that it irritates when it irritates, and that everyone believes. And

it must be believed, that is, experienced, sensed, and flees every general word-mongery and abstract prediction” (Herder, 2002b, p. 200)

In the second part of the first essay, Herder handles the issue of sensation. Following Haller, Herder categorizes senses as an outer effect in relation to nerve structure. The formulation is simple: the effect of things outside us gives rise to sensation through a medium. This medium is the provider organ for each specific sensation. In the case of hearing, it is an ear or in the case of seeing, it is an eye. As cognition would be null without the medium of sensation, the sensation would not be possible without the proper relation with objects through the necessary medium organ. The link providing the connection of inner and outer things is the nerve system as the unifying force of them (Herder, 2002b, p. 201-205). This formulation is the perfect example of the intertwined structure of physiology and psychology. The relation between sensation and cognition is another expression of the relation between body and soul. As mentioned above, Herder wants to avoid the unintended mechanistic consequences of Haller’s physiology by keeping the idea of effective one single force over the whole human being. This purpose requires explanation of the formation of cognition through sensation. In other words, the fundamental question is this: what is the relation between the idea of effective one single force and the unity of body and soul? This relation cannot be explained through the sole power of nerve structure, a muscle movement, or an effect of the pineal gland. On the other hand, the soul cannot be the only effective force without any connection with any bodily power. While the former would directly lead to a mechanistic point of view, the latter might end up with solipsism. The solution has Aristotelian echoes

in prioritizing the direct effect of the soul over the body by being in need of data provided by it³:

But as things are, since our structure knows nothing of such a wooden weaver's loom, since everything swims in irritation and scent and force and ethereal stream, since our whole body, so manifoldly ensouled in its diverse parts, seems to be only a single realm of invisible, inner, but less bright and obscure forces which is in the strictest bond with the lady monarch who thinks and wills within us, so that everything is at her command and in this inwardly linked realm space and time disappear – what could be more natural than that she rules over those without which she would not be what she is? For only through this realm, in this connection, did she become and is she a human soul. Her thought only arises from sensation; her servants and angels, messengers of air and flame, stream to her her food, just as they only live in her will. (Herder, 2002b, p. 207)

It is how Herder justifies the connection and relation between soul and body. In his system, it is not surprising to offer such a solution since the idea of effective one single force requires a necessary continuation of existence throughout the whole human being. As Beiser (1987) stated, “the difference between mind and body is not a difference in kind, then, but only one in degree: the body is amorphous power, the mind organized power” (p. 142). In this account, the movement of soul and body can be understood in harmony and examined in a scientific and philosophical manner without falling into a mechanistic or an agnostic point of view. In Herder's vitalism, “the mind is neither a machine nor a ghost, but a living organism” (Beiser, 1987, p. 128).

What Herder did in the first two parts of the essay is to present and examine the fundamental force in human beings and the formation of sensation as a cooperative action of body and soul. What is next is to discuss the nature of the self who holds this unity intact and the abilities of human beings providing this unity.

³ The Aristotelian heritage of Herder's concept of force can be seen also in the history of the concept of 'dunamis' and 'energeia' from Aristotle to Medieval Latin usage of the concept of 'vis' and its translation into German as 'Kraft'. See “Herder's Conception of “Kraft” in *PMLA* by Robert T. Clark, J., 1942, p. 739-740.

Herder begins the third chapter by giving the definition of apperception: “All sensations which rise to certain clarity (the inner condition in the case is unnameable) become apperception, thought; the soul cognizes that it senses” (Herder 2002b, p. 208). The soul unifies the manifold or the stream of disordered senses every time. That is how this divided and varied flux becomes ordered and one in the self. Apperception is an inner ability of human beings given by God and trained by nature constantly. For Herder, this action of unification is the imprint of the image of God in us. Thanks to this faculty, humans are able to think, will, abstract, feel, and reach every form of action of the soul. The source of these powers is irritation and consciousness of the self. For this reason, approaching these capabilities--or faculties --of the human soul as divided and separated compartments would be misleading since they are the effects of one single cause. No matter how we name them, as imagination, foresight, recollection, or memory, their activity is bound to the “inner activity that looks within itself, consciousness, apperception” (Herder, 2002b, p. 210). Even understanding, conscience, will, freedom have their source in the apperception.

As in the case of sensation, cognition must have a medium which governs and orders the activity of apperception. This awakening factor of cognition is language (Herder, 2002b, p. 211). As in the example of the light and sound for seeing and hearing, there would be no proper activity of cognition without the use of language. The strength of reason is dependent on the strength of the inner language of human beings. Herder still keeps his idea in the *Treatise on the Origin of Language* regarding the relationship between reason and language. Cognition as the fundamental activity of human rationality is not an independent faculty. It is shaped and directed in its relation to language. For Herder, claiming the total independence

of reason is like claiming to have no mother tongue. Herder sees philosophers or intellectuals who claim the independence of reason as that “Everything from them innate, implanted, the spark of infallible reason stolen from heaven without a Prometheus” (Herder, 2002b, p. 212). There must a Prometheus, a medium that activates the hidden ability of reason. The arguments in the *Treatise* would mean much more if they were to be read in the light of the ideas in this text. Furthermore, cognition cannot be a spiritless and emotionless dead activity of the soul. In other words,-- since Herder is against this kind of division as always --cognition cannot be separated from volition. Reason (Herder uses cognition and reason interchangeably) cannot be composed of only “pure fundamental principles” (Herder, 2002b, p. 213). Irritation, volition, inclination, will, love, and cognition cannot be understood as divided feelings, faculties, or abilities. Any distinction made between them does not conform with the reality of experience and the nature of human beings. The rationale behind this fact is the idea of one single force as Herder repeats it constantly: “If no through cognition exists without volition, then also no volition can exist without cognition; they are only a single energy of the soul” (Herder, 2002b, p. 213).

4.5 This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity

The philosophy of history occupies an essential place in Herder’s philosophy; and he might be considered as one of the first philosophers contributing to this field in philosophy. Because of its qualitative and quantitative essentiality of this issue, the full analysis of *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* (*Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*) (1774) and *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (*Ideen Zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*) (1784) is beyond the scope of our topic. Especially the

latter one is a very-detailed text on the history and the history of philosophy which examines the position of our earth in the cosmos to its relationship with human beings and the stories and places of civilizations in history. However, some points in the former text would be useful to grasp the indications of theoretical ideas on the nature of man in the practical field.

The question of the text is this: “What sorts of virtues or unvirtues have governed human beings at all times, and has the tendency of human beings been improved or worsened with time, or always remained the same?” (Herder, 2002c, p. 268). Herder does not think that human beings are subject to a change if it is understood leaving primitive conditions and moving towards better ones in a constant manner. It is certain that there are changes in the course of history, but on the other side, human beings are always the same. Herder presents a brief history of civilizations beginning with the Orient; then he moves to Egypt, Phoenicia, and Greece. The transition from one to the other carries the heritage of the former, but it can be possible only by adding something specific. In this regard, both the succession would be kept and a new identity would emerge. For Herder, it is essential to keep this fundamental difference in mind because it makes us avoid useless generalizations and understand a civilization in its specific conditions. No generalization can capture the whatness of a nation and an individual. Doing this would reduce them to a single identical condition which would be totally dismissive of their specificity. This idea is in accordance with Herder’s vitalism. As mentioned above, in the case of language and also in cognition, Herder thinks that to separate reason from any factor or faculty would be, firstly, making it something divine, and, secondly, a barrier to understanding its nature. Reason is not something that we can discuss only by being concerned with logical principles. It has to be examined in its

relation to language, senses, emotions, environmental factors, national identities, religions, and so on. That is why all of them—art, language, reason, religion--must be explained genetically, in their generation throughout history, rather than seeing them as eternal and independent entities (Beiser, 1987, p. 142). Also, for this reason, Herder read history from the same point of view:

If human nature is no independent divinity in goodness – it has to learn everything, be formed through progression, step further in gradual struggle – the naturally it is formed most or only on those sides where it has such occasions for virtue, for struggle, for progression. Therefore in certain respect each human perfection is national, generational (sakular), and, considered most exactly, individual. People form to a greater fullness of what time, clime, need, world, fate gives occasion for (Herder, 2002d, p. 294)

In this regard, some conditions or features cannot be specific to a certain time or place. It is not reasonable to claim that true happiness, rationality, or taste of art were gained in a determined time and by a determined civilization since the clime of each nation differs from others and each of them can keep its happiness or rationality in their special conditions. For Herder, it is the mistake of so-called enlightened Europe in his time. What they do is to judge the whole history from an assumed true position by absolutizing its own conditions as the apogee of humanity and ignoring the specific values and conditions of other nations shaped by the environmental and historical factors.

Herder's theory vacillates between two perspectives: determinism and relativism. On the one hand, he seems to be close to the determinist idea by saying that what we have in our hands can only be possible by the conditions of a certain climate. On the other hand, he rejects an absolute criterion for the true experience of rationality or happiness and claims that every nation and every individual has these experiences in their own specific conditions, which might open a way to cultural and moral relativism. It is hard to decide, at least on the surface, whether Herder states

these ideas because he is on the side of determinism or relativism. These ideas are open to being interpreted in both ways. For this reason, both interpretations can be found in the literature. Whether Herder is a historical determinist or not is not directly related to our topic. However, his position is supposed to be a reflection of his theoretical understanding of human beings, if his whole philosophy is consistent. The reflection of determinism and relativism in the field of politics is nationalism and pluralism. Herder, for a long time, was accused of being a forefather of nationalism and even, as mentioned by Beiser (2017), anti-semitism (p. 240). Linker (2000) and Wells (1952)⁴ think that Herder cannot be counted as a pluralist philosopher; and he certainly defends a historical determinism. As opposed to this view, Berlin (2013) sees Herder as one of the first thinkers who genuinely defends cultural and political pluralism (p. 210).

The reason for this difference of interpretations is because of evaluating the issue by the standards of contemporary or post-Herder definitions of basic concepts like pluralism, relativism, and determinism. In other words, in my opinion, those who accuse Herder of absolutism or “reluctant pluralism” as Linker did fall into an anachronism. For instance, Linker (2000) says that it is true that Herder acknowledges the plurality of norms, practices, and beliefs in human world history, but he thinks that they all serve a single and higher purpose of all humanity (p. 274). For this reason, Herder’s pluralism cannot be considered as genuine. However, if we define Herder’s pluralism as “the belief not merely in the multiplicity, but in the incommensurability, of the values and different cultures and societies” as Berlin (2013) did, Herder’s pluralism would be genuine (p. 218). Since there is not a

⁴ Wells (1958) claims that Herder is on the side of a certain determinism because of his idea of the analogy between the organization of animal and human body (p. 740). However, as explained above, Herder’s method of analogy is based on similarity not identity.

standard definition of pluralism, both interpretations might be seen as valid. In my opinion, though, if we want to understand Herder, it would be more proper to follow Herder's understanding. Herder defended a pluralism as defined by Berlin. He was not inclined to embrace all ideas, values, and cultures as truths. As mentioned above, Herder was against, not only in history or politics, but in all branches of thinking, the absolutization of any idea as the ideal of all humanity and the unity (in the sense of co-existence) of all humans. Without this idealization, a proper understanding of the concept of humanity is not possible.

Moreover, the idea of the effect of climate is persistent in the whole philosophy of Herder. In this regard, being on the side of Christianity might be considered natural for a philosopher, as a priest and aiming to keep the value of the Enlightenment without rejecting traditional ideas. Hence, Herder presents Christianity as the model of historical progress in several places of his texts. Accusing Herder by directing a question to him like that "But does not the bloody history of Christianity show that it behaved like all other historical religions in its intolerance of norms, practices, and beliefs different from its own?" seems a naïve attempt. In other words, seeing Herder as a pluralist rather than a determinist or a nationalist would be more plausible if we judge him according to his climate. A similar perspective problem in interpreting Herder can be seen regarding the relation of causation and climate. Bernard (1963) accuses Herder of being both "confused and undecided" regarding the priority of individual and the whole: while Herder seems to be on the side of the individual by putting the actions of the few before the whole in some passages, in others, e.g., regarding the revolution of Luther, he thinks that even this kind of seemingly individual effects would be possible in proper conditions of history (p. 210). From the observer's point of view, Herder's texts

might seem to be full of confusion and contradictions. However, if we try to look at the issue from Herder's eyes, it is exactly what Herder tries to show. Herder does not think that the absolutization of one way of thinking (defending absolute freedom and power of the individual or absolute determinism of conditions) cannot capture the reality of events because any kind of absolutization requires ignoring the opposite view. If it is a contradiction, the reality is itself a contradiction in Herder's philosophy.

4.6 Herder between two ends

After the presentation and examination of these four texts of Herder, we have a general picture of his philosophy. It is now possible to extract Herder's account of human nature from this picture. Without restating the arguments examined so far, we can summarize Herder's approach to human nature in three points.

Firstly, Herder's fundamental claim is that human beings does not have a determined nature. The human personality has a spontaneous nature. What human beings are given by God or by Mother Nature is the necessary equipment for survival in the world. The rest of it, the way of using this potentiality cannot be idealized or determined by any external factor. Each human being is supposed to find their own way by using their capacities under the conditions that they live in. As Schütze (1921) states that "in Herder's view, the synthetic principle of personality as individuated spontaneity is primary but not absolute; it is universal, yet infinitely differentiated" (p. 114). This approach of Herder explains why he presents his ideas on the nature of human beings in conjunction with the invention of language. As mentioned above, the invention of language becomes possible through awareness. By the ability of awareness, human beings becomes aware of the characteristic marks of

things and give names to them. This means that, as Waldow (2017) points out, “universality can at best be attributed to the structural features of the process of naming, but not to the particular manner in which reason manifests itself when the mind becomes able to think of objects as objects” (p. 152). The ability of naming is universal but the way that we name things can vary infinitely. In line with this principle, folks (*Volk*) can be differentiated infinitely in different conditions but all of them are a part of the greater whole (*Humanitat*) at the same time.

Secondly, Herder defended neither the absoluteness of reason nor individuality. His whole philosophy was consistent in defending this grey area as the fundamental condition of human nature. Claiming the knowledge of the things in themselves would lead to the absoluteness of reason. Hence, Herder posits the concept of Being as the base of all beings and the most unanalyzable concept. On the other hand, denying any structure of human nature would lead to the absoluteness of individuality. That is why, Herder’s method was an analogy from the effects to the causes without claiming a certain knowledge of them. Without this method, which has a long tradition in the history of philosophy from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas, knowledge itself would be impossible. In this regard, any theory of natural man as we see in Rousseau or Hobbes does not mean anything since they establish their theory based on a fictitious state and make assumptions regarding the source of the apparent effects. In other words, they try to move from hypothetical causes to real effects. For Herder, the method must be moving from the real effects to causes as far as possible since what we have in our hands is effects, not causes⁵. Hence, the idea of the natural man and ideal man is meaningless. Herder’s natural man is his conception

⁵ Later on, this method will be criticized by Kant for the two main reasons: first, if we do not know anything about causes, how can we know that the apparent effects are related to these unknown causes; secondly, it is an inconsistency to claim that teleological explanations are analogical and have a scientific status at the same time (Beiser, 1987, pp. 152, 158)

of the nature of man as the common characteristics of individual men known to all people (Schütze, 1921, p. 124). Therefore, Herder was against both the absoluteness of reason as defended by Enlighteners and the absoluteness of feelings as defended by Romantics.

Thirdly, Herder does not see human beings as privileged creatures who have a natural right to dominate other creatures or the world. As the difference in abilities does not give humans the right to dominate other creatures, achieving a higher capacity of intellectuality of one person or one nation, for instance, does not give the right to hegemonize others, either. In this sense, there is no *Favoritfolk* (favorite nation), and that is why, Herder has strong criticisms in his several texts for the oppression of Europeans over other nations. Concerning his naturalism, any relation other than father and son, husband and wife, brothers and friends are unnatural and not proper for human nature. It means that any rule of men over other men is unnatural (Berlin, 2013, p. 225). The so-called Enlightened men of Europe cannot have any right to exploit or hegemonize other nations for bringing them light.

These three points present the fundamental claims of Herder's philosophy on the nature of human beings. In the light of these analyses, it is clear that Herder stands at an original position in an essential threshold in the history of philosophy. His philosophy is not at the edge of thinking; namely, possible excessive points like determinism, relativism, subjectivism, and absolutism. His main purpose was to keep the subjectivity of human beings without ignoring the objective standards of its nature. Isaiah Berlin (2013) perfectly summarizes the philosophical position of Herder:

Herder is not a subjectivist. He believes in objective standards of judgement that are derived from understanding the life and purposes of individual societies, and are themselves objective historical structures, and require, on the part of the student, wide and scrupulous scholarship as well as

sympathetic imagination. What he rejects is the single overarching standard of values, in terms of which all cultures, characters and acts can be evaluated. (p. 293)



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the conclusions of analyses in the prior three chapters will be presented on two levels. The first level will be the comparison of Protagoras, Pico della Mirandola, and Herder in terms of the fundamental topics in their philosophies regarding the nature of human beings. It will be basically the re-statement of the positions of these philosophers examined in the body of the text. On the second level, I will present the rationale behind the positions of these philosophers through the historical dynamics: Why do they defend these positions in their historical and philosophical conditions? Since this issue is briefly handled in the body of the text, the second level will also be a re-statement of the conclusions.

The task assigned to the first level will be performed under three headings. These three topics are the main themes regarding the nature of the human being. In other words, the positions of these philosophers concerning the nature of human being are determined by their positions in these three issues. Additionally, the comparison of three philosophers will be made without going into details of the arguments behind their positions since a detailed analysis of them is already presented.

5.1 The first level analysis

5.1.1 The indeterminate nature of human beings

Protagoras, Pico, and Herder agreed on this principle but in different degrees. For Protagoras, the fundamental lack of instinctive abilities compared to animals is compensated by the gifts of Prometheus and Zeus. However, the equipment of

human beings with the technical and political abilities does not necessitate determined ends. In other words, the distinctive features of human beings do not signify the determinacy of its nature but the endless process of becoming human. That is why, for Protagoras, it is not possible to find an exact and fixed criterion for measuring the values of human actions. Defending such a position would indicate the idea that the nature of human beings can be determined by certain rules and principles as in the case of natural sciences. This would bring the idea of certain determination of the human soul and that is exactly what Socrates wanted to reach in the examined dialogue. In this context, you can defend “the best” human condition but for Protagoras, the furthest we can go is to pursue a “better” condition. However, Protagoras’ ideas do not go into an absolute relativism or libertarianism. As they are fundamental elements of the becoming process of humans, the gifts given by Prometheus and Zeus represent certain limitations for the survival of humankind. The purpose of Protagoras is to defend a plurality of values in a defined (not determined) area without falling into reductionism. Herder also shares a similar position with Protagoras. Herder explicates the nature of human beings based on its difference from animals. The fundamental difference is about having a diversified and indeterminate circle of existence. As opposed to other animated creatures, human beings do not have a determined circle of existence and, as a result of this, a determined end. While, for Protagoras, the weakness of humankind must be compensated in terms of strength of instincts, this lack is not a problem but an opportunity for the realization of the basic human condition, namely freedom, for Herder. The indeterminacy of human nature is the reason for its freedom. Herder does not feel any necessity for compensating this lack since, as mentioned above, he does not have a problem with finding a place for human beings in the cosmos.

Moreover, Herder also stands on the side of the pluralism of values. His insistence on approaching the human being by taking the historical and environmental conditions into account shows his attitude against any deterministic and absolutist approach. At the same time, he also puts effort into obviating any relativistic results by defending the idea of unity and effectiveness of one single force in human beings. This structure is universal for all humans, but its realization might vary in countless ways. For this reason, the human experience resists any form of reductionism, determinism, and absolutism. Both Protagoras and Herder want to keep the idea of indeterminacy and the principle of plurality without falling into determinism and limitless freedom. In the case of Pico, it can be said that he is also in the same line with Protagoras and Herder. For Pico, the idea of the indeterminacy of human nature occupies a central place. Human beings do not have a determined nature as other beings and a fixed seat in the order of cosmos. Thanks to this indeterminacy, human beings are free to go in every direction by using rational capacities. Also, as in Protagoras and Herder, being a human is a process and the condition or achievements of an individual totally depend on his/her efforts. Nothing is given except for the faculty of reason and everything must be earned. In this regard, Pico leaves aside the power of heavenly bodies over humans, the ontological connection between human beings and the cosmos, and the determinant power of the essential concept of Christianity like original sin and grace. At the same time, he also defends the values of Christian morality and responsibilities to God. However, the idea of indeterminacy and freedom have such a predominance that makes the effort of preventing the possible excessive outcomes of this idea a secondary and less important pursuit. Pico wants to channel this capacity of the human being to a philosophical and religious life but this desire does not go further than a good wish since it is not strongly supported by the

theoretical framework of his philosophy. In Pico, there is not a defined field or universal structure of human beings, which, in a way, identifies the human condition and averts going towards excessive directions, as we see in Protagoras and Pico. That is why those who see the echoes of Sartre and Nietzsche in Pico's philosophy might be right.

5.1.2 The privileged position of the human being in the cosmos

Regarding the privileged position of human beings, while Protagoras and Herder share similar positions, Pico stands on the opposite side. Of course, for all of them, the nature of human beings radically differs from other creatures. The cause of this difference is having the faculty of reason. The point that they do not agree on is the position of human beings in the cosmos earned thanks to this ability. For Protagoras, the gift of practical and political arts gives humans their specific nature. However, this specific ability does not bring forth any privileged position in the sense of manipulating the world (people and nature) without any limitation. Quite the contrary, these gifts are for finding a place for *akosmoton genos* in the orderly cosmos. At the beginning of the creation, the disordered condition of human beings is such a problem that this race does not deserve to exist in the eyes of gods. In this regard, the naked condition of human beings is a disordered state which needs to be dealt with. With the mentioned gifts, human beings earn the right to exist among other creatures in the cosmos. As the myth indicates, what Prometheus tries to do is to show Zeus the humans' right to existence by cultivating the potentiality in them. Humans are superior to other creatures at certain points as they are superior to humans in other points. Therefore, there is no clue as to the privileged position of the human being in Protagoras. In the same way, Herder does not mention any privileged

position of human beings arising from their specific nature. He does not look at this issue in terms of the relation between human beings and the whole cosmos, but rather in terms of the social and political order. If a privileged position is given to humans in nature based on having reason and freedom, this would not only lead to the domination of other creatures but also other people who are categorized as inferior. For him, nobody (an individual or a nation) has the right to claim any privileged position based upon the assumption of the best cultivation of rational abilities. However, Pico bases the difference of human beings from other heavenly and earthly beings on the idea of the privileged position. God positioned man in the center of the cosmos and this idea opens the door for hegemony and manipulation of the world. The disordered natural condition of human beings at the beginning of genesis is not a problem for Pico but an opportunity. Human beings do not have any fixed position in the order; and are not supposed to be put into the order in some way. The world of human beings is the fourth world apart from the orderly three worlds. In line with this, Pico rejects any direct ontological connection between cosmos and human beings, which is an essential idea in the tradition. For him, human beings do not have any place in the hierarchy; and it means that their privileged position is not limited by the structure of the cosmos. The surplus status of human beings in the genesis becomes the source of its dignity. As discussed in Pico's chapter, the intention of Pico does not seem to claim the right of domination or hegemony. The idea of privilege is related to the idea of human dignity. What he tries to do is to defend the dignity of human beings against the sovereign perspective until humanism which only sees impotency, wickedness, and miserableness in

humans⁶. For this reason, the idea of the privileged position seems to go further than its purpose.

5.1.3 The method

As explained above, the similarities between the three philosophers are dominant over discrepancies. In my estimation, this results from a methodical similarity. Protagoras, Pico, and Herder prioritize the realm of experience to the abstract analyses. Protagoras defends the idea of plurality, the incommensurability, and unteachableness of virtues based on real-life examples. For him, Socrates' effort of finding an exact principle for measuring the moral values of human actions is invalidated by reality. The matters of *techne* might be subject to scientific inquiry in the sense of reaching black and white picture at the end. Therefore, the analysis of this kind of issue, like the issues of physics or biology, can be done at a logical level and present certain conclusions that are valid in every condition. However, the matter of *arete* cannot be assessed and determined in the same way. In the realm of human actions, in social and political orders, and the realm of history, we do not see the same order as in the natural sciences. None of them denies that the practical realm has an order, but this is not an order identical to the order of the physical realm. That is why Protagoras puts the myth of Prometheus on the scene for presenting and keeping the distinction of demiurgic and political gifts since they differ from each other in kind. Furthermore, the idealization of a type of human being or the absolutization of any idea is not legitimate since every idealization and absolutization presupposes clothing the reality with abstracted ideas from a

⁶ For an example one can look at the title of Loterio dei Segni's (later Pope Innocent III) book *On the Misery of the Human Condition* (Copenhaver, 1992, p. 166).

theoretical distance without touching the real conditions of existence. Pico's rejection of the idea of teleological order in the cosmos, which limits the actions of human beings might be seen as the result of a similar approach. He presents a moral ontology based on the will of human beings rather than a metaphysical system as the source of human action. The idea of moral ontology serves for self-definition of man. His distinction between the realm of necessities and the realm of freedom is directly related to this approach. The realm of freedom has a certain priority over the realm of necessities and spirits and the latter does not have any effect on the former. The separation of these two realms in favor of the realm of experience is the manifestation of the Renaissance's moral man. Unlike Protagoras and Herder, Pico idealizes the values of Christianity and the type of human being following these ideals. However, in my opinion, the mentioned distinction of two realms is sufficiently revolutionary when we consider his position in the history of philosophy. This fact is much more obvious in Herder. The theme of the priority of experience is present in all of his texts and it is the substantial method of his philosophy. He thinks that logical relations cannot capture the real relations. For this reason, the former cannot be determinative over the latter. At most, it can be considered as the copy of the real ground. In his theory of language and history, Herder works like an anthropologist. He firstly presents the real data rather than building a theoretical framework. In his eyes, a theory must be the explanation of reality not the presentation of an ideal system. For this reason, Herder presents a new method based on the subjective condition of human beings in the analysis of Being, history, social and political order. In his treatise on language, Herder constantly repeats the necessity of understanding the nature of human beings in the process of natural events. Hypothetical arguments, metaphysical abstractions, categorizations, or

thought experiments are not proper tools to understand reality. For him, these methods are the reason behind the philosophy's inability to explain the daily life experiences and missing the natural course of events. It does not mean that scientific findings are useless. As we see in Herder's close contact with the current scientific progression in his time, the developments in basic sciences are essential. However, if these findings are not interpreted in the light of the realities of practical life, they are susceptible to direct us philosophically unjustified categorizations, like defending absolute determinism or relativism.

5.2 The second level analysis: why do they defend these ideas?

For a deeper understanding of the transformations of the ideas concerning the nature of human beings throughout the history of philosophy, it is necessary to consider the philosophical discussion of their time. In this thesis, this transformation is examined through the philosophies of three representative figures of the three essential thresholds of the history of philosophy. Looking at the ideas of these three philosophers in their historical context will provide a broader understanding of their philosophical positions.

The time of Protagoras is one of the first fundamental threshold in the history of philosophy. The antagonism of the time was between Sophists and Plato. Platonic philosophy proposes the explanation of the whole cosmos through rational inferences. In the eyes of Plato, every event in the cosmos, from the creation of the universe to the moral value of human actions, must be explained based on one principle through the proper activity of logos. On the other hand, the sophistic tradition does not believe in the given, innate, and determined ideas. The truth of a statement or judgment is related to its conditional appropriateness. In other words, if

one idea attracts the majority of the audience, this would be proof of its truth. The effort of the Protagoras must be understood in this historic dynamic. From his method to his ideas, Protagoras tries to defend an alternative approach. He believed believing neither the pure sovereignty of Platonic ideas nor the absolute relativity of values. For Protagoras, it is not possible to rationalize human nature and its reflections in the realm of morality with the method used in the realm of *phusis*. The order in nature, which includes the natural laws of events, the genesis of the earth, the emergence of basic elements, the functioning of animal and plants, and even the biological nature of human beings, cannot be equated with the whole nature of the human being composed of not only a biological body but also a soul. In other words, Protagoras thinks that the absolute categorization or measurement of human actions for determining the moral values of actions is not possible. This method can be useful and efficient in explaining the order in nature, but it does not capture the plurality and indeterminacy of human beings. On the other hand, there are certain potentials and dispositions of human beings, which is given to them for providing the order in cosmos. These abilities define the scope of their nature. In this regard, the nature of human beings cannot be determined by an idea in the intelligible world as it is not free of any principle. The idea of the indeterminacy of human nature, which resulted from a lack of its abilities at the beginning of the genesis and compensated by the gifts of higher powers is the key to presenting alternative ways without falling into the excessiveness of the mentioned two perspectives. I believe that it is the underlying philosophical reason for the ideas of Protagoras in his historical context.

There is no need to put emphasis on the essentiality of the time of Pico as a fundamental threshold since his text is called the manifest of Renaissance and his death is accepted as the mark of the ending of the splendid times of Florence. His

philosophy was in opposition to two perspectives. The first one is the doctrine of the Catholic Church which sees nothing other than misery and guilt in human beings. The second one is the reckless stream of Humanism which defends the rejection of the whole tradition due to holding the tradition responsible for the mentioned perspective of the Church. Pico wants to keep the treasure of the tradition and the dignity of human beings at the same time because he believes that the tradition, which is mainly composed of the Aristotelian and Platonic philosophies, was not understood in the right way. That is why the rejection of tradition is not a solution but the elimination of the source of the possible solution. For this purpose, the true understanding of the whole tradition is the essential theme of Pico's philosophy. On the other hand, realizing this purpose cannot be possible with keeping the idea of the determined nature of human beings since, in this context, this determination necessitates seeing human beings in a miserable condition and be depended on the salvation. In this sense, it is not possible to mention the freedom of human beings because salvation is not dependent totally on the actions of an individual but mainly on the grace of God. To give the full autonomy to the individual, the indeterminate nature and the privileged position of human beings were two substantial ideas. One can choose -and, for Pico, should choose- to follow the ideals of Christianity. However, this path should not be preferred for redemption from the determined nature of human beings stamped by the original sin which is not the result of a conscious action. It should be chosen for the sake of following rationally questioned ideals. Pico tried to present an alternative way against the two prevailing movements of thought. Putting the indeterminacy and mutability of human nature into the center of his philosophy perfectly serves this purpose in this context.

As in Protagoras and Pico, Herder fought on two fronts. On the one side, there was the philosophy of the Enlightenment. They defended the sole authority of reason which is independent of any factors of practical life like culture, religion, tradition, and so on. For them, the freedom of a human being can be provided only through the true cultivation of the faculty of reason. The human soul must be governed by the principles of rationality without the interference of any other factor. The enlightened human was defined and determined by this principle. This perspective requires understanding and articulating the nature of human beings from a theoretical distance based on the functioning of rationality. It means the negation of certain factors like the necessities of daily life, local values, or social order. On the other side, there were Romantics who base their philosophy on the precedence of feelings. They did not think that reason can be the determinative factor for comprehending the nature of human beings. For them, feelings are the sovereign ability of human beings. Every product of human beings in this world which is specific to this species is the result of their feelings. Therefore, for them, the nature of human beings is determined by their feelings. As Martin Schütze (1923) summed up the scene of philosophy in the time of Herder, “the two opposing principles, rationalism and ‘feeling’ were personified in two fundamental types of personality, the *Verstandesmensch* and the *Gefühlsmensch*” (p. 120). Herder was not eager to subscribe to either side. He thought that human beings cannot be only determined either by reason or feeling. In order to prove that it was necessary to grasp the nature of human beings in their natural condition. When we simply look at the life of an individual, what we see is not a constant realization of one faculty of the soul but a mixture of the powers of human beings and elements of real life. In this regard, for instance, happiness cannot be acquired through a universally determined way in

every corner of the world since it is not possible to equate the infinitely varied conditions of different parts of the world. Hence, the nature of human beings cannot be determined, categorized, or universalized by one factor. There is only one certain determination that is applicable in every condition: it is, paradoxically, the indeterminacy of human nature. In this way, the indeterminacy of human nature and the method of prioritizing the practical experience of the human being by keeping the freedom and plurality of ends would enable us to overcome the mentioned two camps.

It is essential to keep in mind that these mentioned factors are the possible reasons for the textual and philosophical similarities of these three philosophers. There are certainly other factors affecting the formation of their ideas. The historical, social, political, and even personal conditions which are not examined here had certain effects. In this regard, the focus of the thesis while finding the possible reason for their similarities are based on the philosophical discussion and environment in the examined thresholds.

Conclusively, the philosophies of Protagoras, Pico della Mirandola, and Herder were analyzed and compared regarding the issue of the nature of human beings. The examination of these three philosophers in tandem shows that similar conditions might bring forth similar philosophical ideas in the course of history. Philosophers who might not be thought of as related or connected at first glance can defend extensively similar positions. Protagoras, Pico, and Herder witnessed similar intellectual challenges. Their common point was the pursuit of finding an alternative way under the hegemony of two opposite prevailing philosophical positions. As we see, this pursuit requires defending the indeterminacy of human nature and the method based on the priority of empirical reality. I believe that this study is capable

of leading to further results in the literature. This kind of analysis and comparison can be an alternative method of examining several philosophical themes in the course of history. The examination of different philosophers from different fundamental thresholds of the history of philosophy sheds light on the transformation of ideas in the course of history. It also enable us to have a general understanding of the examined topic, and reveals the alternative readings covered by the prominence of well-known antagonisms.



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