

# Gadamer's Hermeneutic Project and Interpretation of Religious Beliefs

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**Abstract:** A novel understanding of truth as a process of dialogue, new experience and an encounter with different realities was the highlight of Hans George Gadamer's hermeneutics. He has redefined truth as a continuous and an ongoing process of interpretation rooted in history, thus negating the traditional understanding of absolute nature of truth. In the process of dialogue, a new meaning is generated through the fusion of horizons. This paper argues that recognizing the hermeneutics of existence in Gadamerian project is the recognition of hermeneutics of finitude. This paper also attempts to argue that there are ample avenues wherein Gadamerian project can be applied into the interpretation of religious beliefs. Gadamerian tools can be used to interpret the inter-textual phenomenon of the religious texts. It also indicates that a purely historical meaning would be insufficient for the best hermeneutical experience in religious realms. Intra-textual fusion of horizons, inter-textual fusion of understanding, the surplus meanings of religious experiences and the implications of incarnational approach are some of the positive outcomes of application of Gadamer's project.

**Keywords:** Truth, Dialogical Encounter, Interpretation, New Understanding, Fusion of Horizons, Prejudices, Intratextual, Intertextual, Incarnational.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

German Philosopher Hans George Gadamer has a unique place in the history of continental philosophy with his contribution to the field of hermeneutics. He is widely recognized as the leading exponent of philosophical hermeneutics. His main work *Truth and Method*, has exerted a profound impact on contemporary philosophical and theological discourse and has shaped new modes of interpretation in the disciplines of social sciences. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation.<sup>[1]</sup> For Gadamer, it is not mere science of interpretation or a method to bring out the hidden meanings or set meanings or the ultimate truth. Instead it is a dialogical process of understanding the truth embedded in the history and tradition. His method of interpretation is applied at various levels in the course of the interpretation of religious beliefs by many theological hermeneuticians.

## II. HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

Modern hermeneutics has developed in the backdrop of biblical interpretation and the philological investigations of the classics. For Spinoza interpretation is required when the meaning of the text is unclear. The aim of the hermeneutics is to understand the truth it contains. <sup>[2]</sup> Later Schleiermacher develops a universal theory where he changes the task of hermeneutics to reconstruction by emphasizing psychological interpretation.<sup>[3]</sup> Dilthey has connected interpretation with history and has focused his attention on the inner meaning of the text or event.<sup>[4]</sup> For both of them interpreting a text has meant recovering the original intention of the author who wrote it. Heidegger speaks on the task of hermeneutics as integration by pointing towards understanding as the realization of Dasein's temporal existence.<sup>[5]</sup> Gadamer's goal was to uncover the nature of human understanding. In his book, *Truth and Method* Gadamer has argued that "truth" and "method" were at odds with one another. He has attempted to render the nature of truth. The traditional philosophy in the vestige of metaphysics has been looking at truth as *conceptual*. The discipline of natural sciences have applied precise and

determined methods and have brought out the truth. Human sciences have attempted to model themselves on the method of natural sciences but failed to realize that their experience of truth is different from that of natural sciences that searched for a mathematical verification.<sup>[6]</sup>

Although he has developed a different approach to hermeneutics he was influenced by many philosophers who were his predecessors. Some of them who had formative influences on Gadamer's thought were Heidegger, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Holdelin, Kant, Hegel, Dilthey and Husserl. Though his main work is titled as '*truth and method*' he has never followed a method, because to follow a method has to set things under a framework and to dig out the truth or reality accordingly. He has attempted to formulate a different style which was beyond orthodox methods of interpreting reality. For him truth is not conceptual or not simply transcendental or permanent as conceived by the metaphysicians down through the history of philosophy. In '*truth and method*' he has reiterated that no method could ever be sufficient for the disclosure of truth because truth belongs essentially to history and it can never be disclosed fully.

In him, we find no system, no method to be applied, no effort to say the final word, no authorization of expertise <sup>[7]</sup> but we get the conviction that the laws of interpretation lies in every experience which is dialogical and each of this experience disclosed something new and it is an aesthetical experience that is to say it renews the self. Along with the massive progress of modern science, modern methodology has gradually evolved into a dominant ideology according to which human beings believe that they can arrive at truth as long as they grasp a "right" method. According to Gadamer most of these methods are crudely engrafted from modern sciences and technology that reduces hermeneutics to simply a knowledge exercise.

#### **A. Truth as a Process**

Traditionally, philosophy has explained the nature of truth as conceptual. The task of philosophy is to reach the truth through a proper method of enquiry. The metaphysical tradition has seen truth as something that is hidden behind phenomena. Truth is eternal, objective and immutable. For the traditionalists, it is permanent and static. Unlike the traditionalist, Gadamer has taken a different path. He has attempted to show that truth is a process, an event taking place in every moment of our encounter with things, texts and the other. Every new encounter with the things brings out a new experience of truth. Truth is a process. It is ever renewed. Truth is not a set thing to be dug out but it is an event which happens at every encounter with things, texts and the other. It is an ongoing process. It is an ever renewing experience. Gadamer looks at reality, history and the relation between the reader and the text. <sup>[8]</sup>

In the history of philosophy, aesthetics is considered a subjective experience. Often this experience is from works of art or natural beauty. This experience was not an experience of truth for them. Truth is objective and conceptual for the metaphysicians. It should be rational, verifiable and demonstrative and should be brought out in universal propositions. Gadamer's position is different. He says any experience of truth is aesthetical. Even the truth that we find in human sciences or specifically in history is aesthetical because experience of it creatively renews our self understanding. Gadamer's self is not the one that is pre formed and a completed essence. He speaks a self which is ever renewed with new encounters and this self is in a process of growth at each experience of truth which is aesthetical.<sup>[9]</sup>

#### **B. Truth as Dialogical Encounter**

Gadamer's philosophical temperament is dialogical. He says the truth of a matter emerges only in conversation or in dialogue. In other words truth is dialogical. Truth is reached through dialogical encounter with texts and others. It was Plato who began to use dialectical method as a means of inquiry. <sup>[10]</sup> Plato has influenced him as it is evident from his first work titled as *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, in which he has extracted a model for thinking through the logic of question and answer that is decisive for the elaboration of hermeneutics.<sup>[11]</sup> Dialogical thinking generally assumes that truth is there in the universe and it lies behind every phenomena. And this truth can be brought out through a process of dialectical thinking. He rejects Plato's claim of truth as foundational and unalterable from tradition to tradition, history to history. On the other hand Gadamer highlights truth as an ever renewing experience. For Gadamer truth is that which happens between two traditions, or between a text and an interpreter, or between a person and another person or between a person and a thing. For Gadamer truth is a new product. In the dialogues of Plato, the master of dialogue is Socrates. He sees dialogue or dialectical method as a means to bring out the truth as a midwife helps to bring out the child. Here dialogue becomes a tool to stimulate rational thinking and truth is brought out from the self. Here the truth is considered

conceptually present. But Gadamer has highlighted the non conceptual nature of truth. For him the experience of truth is dialogical and it is a new experience.

### *C. Meaning as Historical*

In hermeneutics truth is historical as human nature is also historical. Human nature is inseparably related to culture. The social and historical conditions play a vital role in the formation of human nature. My contact with my culture, the value system in which I live, the history and myths of my land, the geography of my place and the art and literature that prevail have influenced me and my selfhood is a product of all these elements. This selfhood is not a final product. It is ever renewed. New encounters and events change its perspectives. Therefore history and context plays a vital role in interpretation. Truth and meaning is historical if so it is dialogical. This position of hermeneutics is opposed to the position of traditional philosophy that has held that human selfhood is timeless and does not change according to the changes in tradition. For them to understand a truth of a thing we should understand it conceptually. If we understand a thing conceptually true it is objectively true. Truth and beauty are diametrically opposed. In his *critique of pure reason* and *critique of judgment*, Kant analyses truth and beauty as separate faculties of knowing and feeling. He has intended and employed a different approach and method of enquiry to find out the truth. Ground for knowledge was established and the method of natural sciences became the correct method to know the truth of the world.

### *D. Critique of Natural Sciences*

Gadamer criticizes the positions of natural and mathematical sciences that have looked for precision, certitude and perfectibility. Although their model is over emphasized but their claims are limited when looked at the hermeneutical perspective. Truth is not the result of the methodical exploration. There are countless unacknowledged realms of truth outside the established truth circle of natural sciences and mathematics. Truths of natural sciences were considered to be 'legitimate and acceptable'. Truths in humanities and in social sciences are different. Truths of social sciences are also valid and legitimate. They experience truth differently. Forgetting this fact the human sciences try to employ the methods of natural sciences. They feel inferior. They forget that their experience of truth need not have mathematical verification. Here truth is *that which happens*. Truth is *an event*. Truth is *not static*. It is *ever changing*. It is *ever renewed*. In every new reading, in every new encounter, in every new experience truth is renewed. Those who hold on to truth as universally valid and unalterable would impose their ideas over others. They become fascist. They do not want to listen to others because they think that their claims are absolute. There dialogue becomes impossible. They become narrow minded. It is here that Gadamer's views are relevant. Truth is formed out of modification of understanding. Our understanding is largely dependent on what others have to offer us and our receptivity to them. Gadamer's view is related to the position of Derrida who speaks of multiplicity of meaning of a text. There are elements of deconstruction in Gadamer's hermeneutics. For Gadamer meaning is formed through dialogue. He specifies a course or route for the development of meaning. It is not the result of differential play of truth as seen in deconstruction. But it is a joint venture of two horizons. This is called a fusion of horizons in Gadamerian interpretation. Truth is brought out through a joint activity of horizons: the horizon of the tradition of the text and the horizon of the self understanding of the reader or the interpreter.

## III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIALOGUE

The concept of dialogue plays an indispensable role in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. That is, philosophical hermeneutics is usually characterized by a dialogical structure of interpretation wherein the status of the text is elevated to a personified "thou" with whom the interpreter is engaged in a conversation. For Gadamer the ultimate goal of hermeneutics is also to achieve "a fusion of horizons" through a dialogue between reader and text, dialogue in the Gadamerian sense is to insist something new by virtue of the interfusion between text and interpreter. Through this kind of infinite dialogue, interpretation has become an unending event in which the production of meaning in a text comes to be an always-ongoing process.<sup>[12]</sup>

The understanding of something, for Gadamer, is thus a dialogical and interactive process. The primary hermeneutic task is therefore "coming into conversation with the text". Since dialogue necessitates "an essential symmetry of the dialogical relation" and "an essential selflessness of the partners". In dialogue a gradual development of truth takes place where the antecedent meaning is either negated or appropriated or dissolved in the newly generated meaning. Dialectical thinking marks this essence. One of the two moments of the truth, the truth of the text or truth of the interpreter is seen as prejudicial and it has to be modified. Here the interpreter has to be ready to improve, modify his earlier stand point. <sup>[13]</sup>

For Gadamer, the truths of the historical texts are aesthetical, because the self is renewed by the new understanding. Traditionally art was considered to generate such aesthetical experience but now Gadamer considers understanding of the historical texts also moment of creative experience of truth. Here not only the self but the tradition also gets renewed. Understanding a text from a different tradition would widen the horizon of native tradition of an interpreter. [14]

#### A. *Fusion of Horizons*

What Gadamer points towards the new understanding is a fusion of horizons. Fusion of horizons means the integration of our historically determined concerns with the object of understanding. The horizon of the texts and the horizon of the reader or interpreter are the horizons. The tradition of the reader and the tradition of the text are the horizons. In fact, here Gadamer is inspired by Heidegger who stated about the *thrownness* and *fallen state of Dasein* in the world. By highlighting the temporality of human being Heidegger was trying to overcome the trans-historical understanding of the human being and the self produced by metaphysics. To reach a genuine understanding in the process of search for truth, a person must be situated in tradition. To Gadamer, tradition constitutes a person's horizon.<sup>15</sup>

Here we agree or disagree but we should come to a better position by integrating the subject matter at issue with our own. It is a new truth, a new understanding. Understanding of a text is appropriating it. This approach is different from the method of natural sciences that see history as a precursor to present enquires. For hermeneutic understanding history is a tradition which must be considered or a partner in dialogue whose positions are significant even if they are revised and integrated within a new understanding. This is an event or this is an experience. When we try to understand an art or a text or a person we bring the object into our world, we try to illuminate the meaning it has for us and transform our perspectives. Outcome of this process is not the sole property of anyone but it is a new view and it is a new stage of the tradition.

For Gadamer, it is Bacon who is primarily responsible for the separation of experience from historicity he says "*truth eludes the methodical man.*"<sup>16</sup> Our experiences are experiences of one's own historicity. The concept of experience established in the natural sciences focuses on the repeatability of procedures and results. The recognition of historicity in experience constitutes the highest type of hermeneutical experience: "the openness to tradition possessed by effective-historical consciousness". This awareness of our historicity and finitude — our consciousness of effective history brings with it an openness to new possibilities that is the precondition of genuine understanding.

One horizon is formed by the totality of understandings so far gained by the individual subject. Understanding is the interaction of his consciousness with the surroundings. Many of these understandings are prejudices. These prejudices are not false knowledge but they would mean that there are possibilities for better understanding. A lesser understanding of a person is modified when he comes in dialogue with a better understanding. A new understanding emerges. A new truth emerges. This truth becomes prejudice when he is confronted another new understanding. Thus a prejudice becomes truth and this truth may later become a prejudice. Prejudices are simply the meanings of a culture a person imbibed and inherited during his life within his territory.

Prejudice, therefore, should be viewed as a positive factor in the task of interpretation. Gadamer therefore indicates that it is our prejudgments rather than our judgments that determine our Being. Understanding of something is thus a dialogical process rather than a monologue. Gadamer holds that prejudice and tradition are essential to understanding a text, a tradition, an art or a person. The content of perception is never entirely grounded in pure givenness but it is always prejudiced. Prejudice means simply pre judgment or in other words a judgment made before all the evidence has been adequately assessed. No understanding is objective in the Cartesian sense; all understanding rather involves projections of meaning that arise out of one's own situation. The meaning of a text or object is co-determined by one's own circumstances or life relations. Even in the case of a scientific approach, an object is studied or a method is applied in specific contexts. For Gadamer, no understanding is objective but it is rather subjective. Therefore all understanding involves projections of meaning that arise out of one's own situation and go beyond the observable facts. These define an interpreter's "*prejudices*" that affect how he or she will make interpretations. For Gadamer, these prejudices are not something that hinders our ability to make interpretations, but a prerequisite to interpretation. He postulates that biases cannot and should not be eliminated, but embraced in order to gain a more thorough understanding of a situation or argument's context. Gadamer criticized Enlightenment thinkers for harboring a "prejudice against prejudices." [17]

### ***B. Recognition of Finitude***

Gadamer's hermeneutics is "a hermeneutics of existence as a hermeneutics of finitude". Dialogue in Philosophical Hermeneutics, Gadamer himself writes, "Thus, it is part of any genuine conversation that one submits to the other, allows his viewpoint really to count and gets inside the other far enough to understand him, to be sure, as this individuality but rather what he says." All preceding arguments concerning finitude and effective-historical consciousness lead to another important notion in philosophical hermeneutics: Socratic **doctaignorantia** (the knowledge of not knowing). Genuine dialogue is based upon the recognition of our finitude. The knowledge we are expected to own is simply that we do not have absolute knowledge. Yet, it should be remembered that the recognition of one's lack of knowledge is merely a necessary but not sufficient condition for true understanding. What is still needed is a willingness to listen to the interlocutor. "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in the conversation are directed. It requires that one does not try to out-argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion" (TM 330). Genuine conversation is one in which each partner to the conversation is concerned entirely with the subject matter and arriving at the truth with regard to it. For this, the disposition should be to accept the limitedness of our knowledge and knowing. Gadamer refers to this as the theory of **doctaignorantia**.<sup>[18]</sup> This is to recognize our own infallibility, or to accept that we are finite and historical creatures and so we do not have absolute knowledge. This was the position of Socrates who said we do not know and hence we should have openness to the possible truths of other views. The participants should try not to out – argue or outwit each other; they also should not reduce the views of others to the conditions of their genesis.

### ***C. New Understanding***

In dialogue one partner should not impose his views on another or one should not be simply subservient to another's views. They should have a shared understanding. This is not an exclusive understanding that belongs to either of the partners but it should be a new understanding of the subject matter. Each one holds certain views and assumptions and when he is confronted with opposing viewpoints, he should be open to reconsider it. Thus there is a process of integration and appropriation. This does not mean that either of the partners simply give up their views and standpoints. Each one takes account of his position, tries to show what is wrong and what is right with his opinions as well as with whom one interacts, then formulates a view which is closer to the truth.<sup>[19]</sup>

This is the position that indicates a transformation of all the initial positions of all the involving partners. It is not the notion of application which indicates the imposition of prejudices on the object to be understood or not the anticipation of completeness which suggests blind acceptance of the views of that object. The condition of true understanding is the condition of a true conversation that is to accept one's own lack of knowledge and willingness to learn. The focus of understanding is the truth of the subject matter at issue. Understanding is reaching a consensus. Understanding is primarily an agreement. To what agreement it points to. It is not to simply agree with others viewpoints or not to submit to traditional authority. It is integrating the tradition or opinions of others into one's own. The experienced person is characterized not by a particular amount of experience but predominantly by openness to new experience. This openness is a radically undogmatic approach of welcoming everything which wants to be understood. Every experience worthy of the name runs counter to our expectation. By emphasizing the significance of learning from a negative experience, Gadamer links the historical nature of man and elaborates the essential difference between experience and insight.

The application of the understanding is an event that not only adds some new insights into the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us; it changes our mind. Understanding is a participation in meaning. The true meaning of language transcends the limits of methodological interpretation. Language as the medium for history is itself a place of mediation. Human understanding is always interpretive. Hermeneutic truth acquires a unique density and fullness of meaning. Hermeneutic understanding is not a process of construing a self-identical meaning of a text, but a continuous dialogue in which a mediation of meaning takes place. Dialogue is the model of hermeneutic understanding. A meaning cannot be determined from the perspective of propositional logic.<sup>[20]</sup>

Gadamer's hermeneutics is a philosophy of conversation. The dialectic of question and answer applied to the interpretation of the texts requires addressing the question to which the text serves as an answer. This puts into question not only the text that needs to be understood, but also, and in fact primarily, the interpreting subject itself by confronting him or her with the truth claim of the text. The hermeneutician is not concerned with individuality and what it thinks but with the truth of what is said; a text is not understood as a mere expression of life but is taken seriously in its claim to

truth. Our pre-understanding and pre-judgment that conditions understanding are tested in this confrontation. Following Heidegger, Gadamer understands the text as a derivation of existence.<sup>[21]</sup>

Therefore, the understanding of the text must originate with the understanding of existence. Since the text has something to say, the interpreter, in order to understand what needs to be understood, has to include in the event of understanding this invisible existence suppressed by the text. Hermeneutic understanding happens as a fusion of horizons.<sup>[22]</sup> Conscious of our own historicity we encounter a text from the past and confront ourselves in understanding the meaning of it. For Gadamer, hermeneutic truth is a matter of mutual agreement between partners engaged in dialogue and seeking common understanding. It is far more existential, and in this respect an ethical aspect of being-in-the-world.

#### IV. THE APPLICATION OF GADAMERIAN PROJECT OF HERMENEUTICS INTO THE INTERPRETATION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The application of Gadamerian project of hermeneutics into the interpretation of religious belief could be summarized in the following manner. Firstly, the theory of Dialogical encounter as the process of truth could be applied into the interpretation of religious belief, facilitating interaction between the text and the reader. This approach has significant implications. In other words, the approach of Gadamer could be well be applied into the aspect of inter-textual phenomenon of the religious texts for the interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Application of Gadamer's method indicates that a purely historical meaning would be insufficient for the best hermeneutical experience. For better probing of the text one should foster authentic fusion. Religious scholars like Sandra M. Schneiders, Gerry Wheaton, Zygmunt Bauman, AnniHentschel and Bruce Worthington tried to apply Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics into the interpretation of theological hermeneutics. Among these Worthington tried to use the text to interrogate the presuppositions of the modern reader. In other words, all these authors used the method of Gadamer directly.<sup>[24]</sup>

Another category of application of Gadamer refers to the type of fusion that would take place within the text itself. Hentschel would go for such an attempt. He highlighted the intra textual fusion of horizons. For instance in the gospel of John there is a fusion of horizon between the author of the Gospel of John and his or her source material. The Exegete Ming Him Ko would intersect the section of Shema with that of the final redaction of a particular account in the Deuteronomistic History. Brook W. R. Pearson, another scholar would try to find fusions between Paul and James, and Paul and Egyptian beliefs. Thus the interpretation of religious belief found new possibilities at the hands of Gadamerian theories of philosophical hermeneutics. One of them was to explore the possibilities of bringing together the horizons of the text and the interpreter into dialogue and again brining in a Gadamerian lens to various types of dialogue within the text themselves. Thus the theory of Gadamer on interpretation has very significant application into the religious and Biblical interpretations. <sup>[25]</sup>

In applying the theory of Gadamer Schneiders would examine the foot washing story of the Gospel according to St. John (13: 1-20). Accordingly, he would consider this text as a work rather than as an object. He also pays primary attention to the possibilities of human and religious existence that would project for the reader. Subsequently, instead of focusing on the traditional questions of authenticity or historical accuracy, the indications of interpretation of life and relationships that the text present is the primary concern. The implications of such attempt from the interpreter's own understanding are another outcome of such attempt. In order to highlight the application of the centrality of the concept of service in this particular passage, the author would unearth three models of the nature of service. Firstly, service grounded upon obligation due to the position of the one being served. Secondly, the service offered at free of cost just because the server in a particular way. Thirdly, service grounded upon friendship, the best way to realize true equality. Consequently, the decision to wash the feet of his disciples evaded any sort of hierarchy that Jesus had above them at the levels of a Teacher, par excellence and model to be emulated. Instead he expressed deliberate friendship and closeness. In this episode, Peter, a disciple of Jesus rejects Jesus's gesture to wash his feet, expressing his reservations about the abolishment of a hierarchical system in which he would exercise power under Jesus. Jesus earlier identified himself as teacher and Lord in John 13:13, but subsequently these attributes were dodged by a much more foundational friendship and love which will be instructive for his followers. Thus applying the theory of Gadamer, Schneiders reiterated the technique of pre-understanding that the gesture of Jesus was supposed to be an act of revelation with his foot washing is enlarged with the contemporary experience of service. Jesus defied the class structures of that period with Jewish background in Palestine.<sup>[26]</sup>

On the other hand, there are also scholars who reject the application of Gadamer into the Biblical studies. They have referred Gadamer as inadequate based on his failure to provide a rigorous method that would guarantee results indicating scientific objectivity. They would highlight that any person who would either implicitly or explicitly committed to a metaphysic that highlights a rigid distinction between subject and object would likely find Gadamer's hermeneutics unpersuasive.

## V. CONCLUSION

The method of interpretation of Gadamer could be applied at various levels into the interpretation of religious belief. First in the intra – textual level, there can be the fusion of the horizons of the author and his source material within the text itself. Second, in the Inter-textual level, the religious text, one of the major sources of religious beliefs would no more be a static ground for interpretation. There are many new possibilities of interpretation through the fusion of horizons. The fusion between the interpreter and the text may lead to an authentic fusion. This is inter-textual level: that is between text and text, text and the reader and so on. Third, in the *intratextuality* and *intertextuality* level, the interpretation is not confined to situatedness but rather *intratextuality* is conditioned by *intertextuality*. The radical claim of Gadamer that human beings themselves are hermeneutical beings would offer possibilities for interpreting significant texts points to the elusiveness of determinate meanings, to the surplus of meaning, and to the conflict of interpretations. With The application of Gadamerian method, the interpretation and application of religious belief gets an authentic historical space. The religious scholars who were confined to historical interpretation focusing on the historical accuracy are opened with new vistas for interpretation. In other words incarnational approach highlights that no interpretation is above history and time.

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## REFERENCES AND NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Hermeneutics* is derived from the Greek word ἐρμηνεύω. The technical term ἐρμηνεία (*hermeneia*, "interpretation, explanation") was introduced into philosophy mainly through the title of Aristotle's work *On Interpretation*.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence, Schmidt, "Understanding Hermeneutics-Movements in Modern Thought," Rutledge: Rutledge Press, 2006, pp. 95-114.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, has explored the nature of understanding in relation not just to the problem of deciphering sacred texts but to all human texts and modes of communication. He has reiterated that the interpretation of a text must proceed by framing its content in terms of the overall organization of the work. He has also distinguished between grammatical interpretation and psychological interpretation.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey has broadened the scope of hermeneutics by relating interpretation to the historical objectification. He has emphasized that understanding moves from the outer manifestations of human action and productivity to the exploration of their inner meaning.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger's philosophical hermeneutics has shifted the focus from interpretation to existential understanding, which was treated more as a direct, non-mediated-and thus more authentic - way of being in the world than merely as "a way of knowing.

<sup>6</sup> R.E. Palmer, "the Relevance of Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics" in *Hermeneutics and the Disciplines*, Mac Murray College, 2006, pp.40-45.

<sup>7</sup> D. Schmidt, "Gadamer," in *Contemporary Critical Thinkers*, Routledge: Routledge Press, p.433.

<sup>8</sup> L. Schmidt, "Understanding Hermeneutics", pp. 95-114.

<sup>9</sup> L. Schmidt, "Understanding Hermeneutics", pp. 95-114.

<sup>10</sup> ..., *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>ND</sup> ed., trans.by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, New York: Crossroad, 1989, pp. 356-363.

<sup>11</sup> D.Schmidt, "Gadamer", p.435.

<sup>12</sup> Georgia, Warnke, "Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason", Oxford: Polity, 1987, pp. 99-105.

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- <sup>25</sup> D.J. Fuller, "Gadamer and Biblical Studies: Retrospect and Prospect," in Dialogismos - 2 (2017) 17-52.