

## GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICAL THOUGHT AND HABERMAS'S CRITIQUE

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**Abstract:** *As long as humans always try to understand the deepest meaning of a text, symbol, or event, hermeneutics is a common activity. However, the gap between the creation of texts, symbols or events has created its own problems that must be solved. The problem is, should an attempt at interpretation of a text, symbol or event achieve its objective status in the sense intended by the author or writer, or not? Hermeneutic thinkers differ in solving this problem. Unlike Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey who emphasized the importance of revealing the author's original intent, Hans-Georg Gadamer emphasized the importance of the subjective dimension of the interpreter. In Gadamer's thought, prejudice and cultural influences in interpreting a text, symbol or phenomenon are also considered as one of the horizons. Dialectic and horizon fusion in itself will be an internal mechanism to reduce the dominance of prejudice or subjectivity that cannot be accounted for. By paying close attention to Jurgen Habermas's note that hermeneutics overemphasize the aspects of prejudice and cultural influences will only provide opportunities for certain communication distortions and cultural hegemony, Gadamer's contribution can still be maintained as a human hermeneutical activity.*

**Keywords:** *Hermeneutics; philosophical hermeneutics; deep hermeneutics.*

**Abstrak:** Sejauh manusia senantiasa berusaha memahami makna terdalam dari suatu teks, simbol, atau peristiwa, hermeneutika menjadi aktivitas yang lazim dilakukan. Meskipun demikian, adanya jarak antara penciptaan teks, simbol atau peristiwa telah menimbulkan masalah tersendiri yang harus dipecahkan. Masalahnya, apakah upaya penafsiran atas teks, simbol atau peristiwa harus mencapai statusnya yang objektif dalam arti sebagaimana dimaksudkan oleh pencipta, penulis, atau pelakunya atau tidak? Para pemikir hermeneutika berbeda dalam memecahkan persoalan ini. Berbeda dari Friedrich Schleiermacher dan Wilhelm Dilthey yang menekankan pentingnya menyingkapkan maksud asli pengarang, Hans-Georg Gadamer menekankan pentingnya dimensi subjektif penafsir. Pada pemikiran Gadamer, prasangka dan pengaruh kebudayaan dalam menafsirkan suatu teks, simbol atau fenomena ikut dipertimbangkan sebagai salah satu horizon. Dialektika dan fusi horizon pada dirinya akan menjadi mekanisme internal untuk mereduksikan dominasi prasangka atau subjektivitas yang tidak dapat dipertanggungjawabkan. Dengan memperhatikan secara sungguh-sungguh catatan Jurgen Habermas, bahwa hermeneutika yang terlalu menekankan aspek prasangka dan pengaruh budaya hanya akan memberi peluang bagi terjadinya distorsi komunikasi dan hegemoni kultural tertentu, sumbangan pemikiran Gadamer masih bisa dipertahankan dan aktivitas hermeneutis manusia.

**Kata kunci:** Hermeneutik; hermeneutika filosofis; hermeneutika mendalam

## Introduction

Hermeneutics as a systematic scientific method is not old, but its practice can be traced back to Ancient Greece.<sup>1</sup> Long before the birth of philosophy, the Greeks were engaged in interpreting prophecies, dreams, prose and poetry, even laws and contracts or treaties. The Greeks always tried to find the deepest meaning, the hidden meaning behind the various phenomena that appeared. They want to reveal who the speaker/writer is, what and why an issue is discussed or a story is told, when, how and where a text or story is constructed, and with what tools the story, narrative or writing is done. Thus, when Aristotle through his work “Organon” tried to distinguish the right and wrong meanings in a text (*verbum sensum a falso discernere*), hermeneutic activity wasn’t actually new in classical Greek culture.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, hermeneutics seems to have become an activity commonly carried out by humans who want to capture or understand “something” more deeply with a note that “something” here is meant as covering almost all aspects of human life. And that is in line with the stretching of hermeneutics as a scientific discipline and method which is becoming increasingly widespread, even moving beyond philosophy as the womb that gave birth to it. Modern hermeneutics has expanded its scope as an attempt to understand verbal and non-verbal communication,

language, law, history, and theology.<sup>3</sup> Instead of being a bad thing for philosophy, this shift or expansion of the scope of hermeneutics actually confirms the contribution of philosophy to human efforts to make sense of life and existence.<sup>4</sup> According to Werner G. Jeanrond, hermeneutics as a philosophical reflection and scientific method – especially a reflection on hermeneutical experience – has earned its academic status in the study of the humanities until now because of the contribution of Hans-Georg Gadamer's thought in his works of *Truth and Method : Outlines of a Philosophical Hermeneutics*, which first published in Germany in 1960. Jeanrond concluded that Gadamer's hermeneutics had matured, and thus, placed it as one of the primary theories of knowledge. Maturity occurred thanks to the dialectic of Gadamer's thought with previous hermeneutical traditions. Gadamer not only wanted to free hermeneutics from the snares of method, but also proclaim the universal aspects of philosophical hermeneutics.<sup>5</sup>

This background emphasizes two things as the focus of this paper. First, hermeneutics becomes a thinking “aids tool” for almost all fields of human knowledge, so it is not limited to the humanities, as long as thinking is positioned as an activity to reveal deep meanings. Second, in an arena where hermeneutics is increasingly expanding its field of study, the danger of losing its philosophical flavor – especially philosophical hermeneutics – is unavoidable. Therefore, the study of philosophical hermeneutic thought in its historical dialectical framework should be seen as a contemporary project, especially for students, academic philosophers, and various parties who are interested in philosophy. The last point should not be read as an attempt to assert the hegemony of philosophy over other human sciences, but rather as an intellectual exercise to understand the dynamics of philosophical hermeneutic thought itself. In that context, Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as discussed in this paper finds its relevance.

After a brief description of the biography, the description focuses successively on Gadamer's relation and separation from the previous hermeneutic tradition. The description then dives into the explanation of some of Gadamer's hermeneutical ideas and Jurgen Habermas's critique of Gadamer's thinking. The affirmation of the position of this paper will be formulated in the closing section.

### **View about Gadamer**

Hans-Georg Gadamer was born in Marbug City on February 11, 1900 from a father who was a professor of chemistry. Liking and then studying

philosophy, literature, and the humanities are contrary to his father's scientific discipline, although Gadamer was never forced to study science. Had studied philosophy at the University of Breslau, a few months later Gadamer moved to Marburg following his father. In Marburg, Gadamer attended lectures by some of the great philosophers such as Paul Natorp and Nikolai Hartman. Gadamer also became acquainted with Rudolf Bultman, a renowned Protestant theologian whose hermeneutical thought greatly influenced him.

Hans-Georg Gadamer earned his doctorate in philosophy in 1922 with a dissertation on Plato's thought which he wrote under Paul Natorp. After that he attended Heidegger's lectures in Freiburg. The encounter with Heidegger greatly influenced Gadamer's thinking almost all of his academic works. In 1929 he became a "private dozent" at Marburg and became a professor at the same place in 1937. Two years later he moved to Leipzig and in 1947 to Frankfurt am Main. From 1949 he taught at Heidelberg until he retired.

By the time he retired in 1960, Gadamer's philosophical career was at its peak. At that time his book entitled *Truth and Method* was published for the first time and received a tremendous response from the academic world. This work is an invaluable support for Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time). Gadamer's ideas are even quite influential in the humanities such as in sociology, literary theory, history, theology, law, and even in the philosophy of natural science. Other important works are *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Philosophical Apprenticeships*.<sup>6</sup>

### **Gadamer within Hermeneutic Tradition**

Admittedly, hermeneutical thought was developed specifically by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, and later Hans-Georg Gadamer, but the tradition of hermeneutical thought was actually referred up to Aristotle's thought.<sup>7</sup> Hermeneutics from apostolic times (first century AD) to the Middle Ages was practiced by the Catholic Church as a method for understanding the Scriptures, symbols and Christian traditions. In relation to the understanding of Scripture, hermeneutics is accepted as an adequate way of understanding in expressing the meaning of a biblical text. According to Robert M. Grant and David Tracy, hermeneutics became the art of interpreting Scripture because "interpretation of scripture is the principal bond between the ongoing life and thought of the church and the documents which contain its earliest tradition"<sup>8</sup>. In the context of Gadamer's thought, this understanding does not treat tradition as dogma, but as something that continues to be understood,

both exegetical and theological. That is why the subjective and objective dimensions of interpretation are highly emphasized in every activity of interpreting Scripture. That is, when interpreting the Scriptures, people not only understand the meaning of the text *per se* (objective), but also pay attention to the subjective dimension. In other words, the way to understand and express what the Scriptures mean can never be separated from the historical understanding and context of the interpreter, and that is where the dimension of subjectivity gets its part. “We are trying to get into his mind and circumstances (then) with a nowadays stand (now).”<sup>9</sup>

Historically, Gadamer distinguished between the task of hermeneutics before and after Schleiermacher. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was chosen because it was, he who made a sharp transition in understanding the task of hermeneutics. The following table can help us understand the task of hermeneutics before Schleiermacher and what exactly Schleiermacher’s contribution to the transition.

Table 1. Hermeneutics before and after Schleiermacher

Before Schleiermacher	Schleiermacher Thoughts
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hermeneutics arises because of a lack of understanding of the text. With hermeneutics we can understand the text without any obstacles.</li> <li>2. Hermeneutics appears as a pedagogical aid when we cannot understand the “subject matter” of a text.</li> <li>3. The main topic of hermeneutics is the text that cannot be understood, because it is hindered by one thing or another.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The focus of attention is no longer on incomprehensible texts but on misunderstood texts.</li> <li>2. In understanding a text, there is a difference between misunderstanding and miscomprehension. Misunderstanding occurs due to <i>lax practice of understanding</i>, while miscomprehension occurs due to strict practice of understanding</li> <li>3. <i>Misunderstanding</i> is a dynamic concept that makes us alert in understanding everything that needs to be understood. Misunderstanding is natural.</li> <li>4. The reality to be understood -the meaning of words, the worldview- always changes due to the time span between the writer and the interpreter.</li> <li>5. Meaning must be rediscovered through a strict reconstruction of the historical situation or life context from which the text originates.</li> <li>6. Interpretation is always critical, methodological, and controlled.</li> </ol>

Schleiermacher’s understanding of hermeneutics is evident in the attempt to interpret history. In understanding history as an event that has occurred in the past, the question to be answered is how a text from the

past could be understood today, how a text that is foreign to the interpreter could be understood?? According to Schleiermacher, the strangeness of a text, story, historical heritage, and the like must be overcome by trying to understand the author. The interpretation of a historical text in Schleiermacher's thinking is how the psychological state and the author's intentions can be understood. To understand the author's intention, an interpreter must go out of himself and equate himself with the original reader. Only in that way, the interpreter becomes friends with the original reader and with it it becomes easy to understand the intent of the author of the text.<sup>10</sup>

Further implications for Friedrich Schleiermacher's understanding can be found in Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833–1911) view of hermeneutics. Dilthey wants to build hermeneutics as a universal method in understanding cultural science (*geisteswissenschaften*). Schleiermacher and Dilthey agree that the world of the interpreter must leave him in order to understand the author's intent. The subjective dimension of the interpreter must be overcome because the subject or interpreter has certain prejudices on the text to be understood. For Dilthey, an interpreter cannot directly experience (*erleben*) events in the past. The Interpreter can only imagine how people in the past lived the event (*nacherleben*). Dilthey distinguishes between "understanding" and "explaining" processes. For Dilthey, explaining (*erklären*, to explain) is a method peculiar to Natural Sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*), while "understanding" (*verstehen*, to understand) is a method that characterizes Cultural Sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*).<sup>11</sup> This kind of overcoming is criticized by Gadamer as a methodological alienation of the interpreter from his own world (history). Hermeneutics developed by Schleiermacher and Dilthey is reconstructive hermeneutic. Both agree that the meaning of the text is the subjective intention of the author of the text itself.<sup>12</sup>

Gadamer firmly rejects the interpreter's methodological alienation from this world (history). For Gadamer, the interpreter's world is ontological and not just an accident to be transcended. Prejudice even opens our horizons to the world to be understood. The world and the historicity of the interpreter are positive. The world of the interpreter is a given situation which must not only be accepted, but also be a basis for understanding. The implication is that an interpreter will not strictly keep distance and objectify reality. An interpreter always understands the present situation (our world), events or texts he faces as a hermeneutical situation. "The givenness of the hermeneutical situation cannot be dissolved into critical self-knowledge in such fashion that the prejudice-structure of finite

understanding might disappear.”<sup>13</sup> In that sense, Gadamer has a very positive picture of tradition, prejudice, and the past. For Gadamer, the meaning of a text remains open and is not limited to the intent of the author. Interpretation is not merely reproductive, but productive. The subject or the interpreter can enrich the meaning of a text.<sup>14</sup>

## Gadamer's Hermeneutical Ideas

### *Philosophical Hermeneutics*

According to Gadamer, understanding must precede all kinds of scientific methods. Understanding itself does not have to fall into a method as practiced in the natural sciences. Gadamer's understanding is not methodical. For him, understanding is a hermeneutical experience, namely the experience of openness to a reality whose meaning is to be understood, an experience that provides space for prejudices, traditions, subject points of view, and which eliminates the distance between the familiar world and the subject of understanding and the world is remaining foreign and unfamiliar to be understood/interpreted.<sup>15</sup>

Gadamer called his hermeneutics as philosophical hermeneutics (philosophical hermeneutics). For Gadamer, philosophy is concerned with understanding of meaning as a whole.<sup>16</sup> Philosophy is a place where comprehensive understanding can occur. Within the philosophy, the thinking subject is not only aware of his involvement in a conversation with his own thoughts, but a conversation in which everyone is involved (German: *begriffen*) and never refuses to be involved. Gadamer admits that the philosophical hermeneutics that he introduced was not a new procedure of interpretation or explanation. Philosophical hermeneutics only describes what always happens and whenever someone wants to understand a text, phenomenon, event or even a symbol. Why is that? Because understanding is understood as more than the skillful application of a skill as Schleiermacher and Dilthey intended. Understanding always includes things that are broader and deeper than just understanding yourself.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the main task of philosophical hermeneutics is ontological and not methodological. His task is “seeks to throw light on the fundamental questions that underlie the phenomenon of understanding in all its modes, scientific and non-scientific alike, and that constitute understanding as an event over which the interpreting subject does not ultimately preside.”<sup>18</sup> The question to be asked is philosophical hermeneutics are not what we do or what we should do but what happens beyond our will and our actions.

Thus, the philosophical hermeneutics referred to by Gadamer is actually

ontological hermeneutics. Ontological hermeneutics which is understood as “the key to the nature of truth in understanding and interpretation related to human nature and historical existence” actually wants to be contrasted with epistemological hermeneutics, namely “human subjective process of something and dealing with an object.”<sup>19</sup> If the project of ontological hermeneutics is an attempt to overcome methodology, epistemological hermeneutics is instead concerned with methods, in addition to which the largest portion of understanding is given to the subject of knowledge.

### *Applying Hermeneutics*

Unlike the transcendental subject a la Immanuel Kant, which largely determines the understanding of reality, or the dogmatism of the subject power a la Descartes that places the subject as the determinant of objective truth, Gadamer instead argues that the reality- understanding subject always as a historical reality, a reality that has its own traditions and horizons, which now open to the subject horizon. The understanding of reality is never understood as a reconstruction or duplication of the past, but as a fusion of horizons.<sup>20</sup> For Gadamer, understanding a text always means “to apply it to ourselves in different ways, it is still the same text presenting itself to us in different ways.”<sup>21</sup> The understanding is always a matter of applying a text to ourselves. So, how did this application come about and what was it applied??

According to Gadamer, in every understanding we not only share the same meaning of a text, but also reach some kind of agreement about the content of the text.<sup>22</sup> The reader as a person who is trying to understand the text already has initial understandings and the accompanying prejudices in his understanding, to which the text opens itself, that is, opens the opportunity to communicate with the text. For Gadamer, prejudices are the initial conditions for understanding. The question is, can all prejudice be justified? Gadamer actually distinguishes between legitimate prejudices and illegitimate prejudices.<sup>23</sup> How both can be distinguished is not explained further by Gadamer. Instead of explaining these two things, Gadamer focused his attention on the rehabilitation of the notions of “authority” and “tradition”. In this regard, Gadamer argues that authority has no immediate relationship with obedience, except with the knowledge that de facto tradition is always a dimension of freedom and history itself.<sup>24</sup> This affirmation means that authority and tradition cannot be separated from our understanding. Gadamer himself asserts, “*Understanding is not to be thought of so much as an action of subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within a process of tradition*, in which past and present are constantly

fused.”<sup>25</sup> Understanding, then, is the mediation between the past and the present.

How can the mediation between the past and the present be properly understood? Here Gadamer seems to emphasize the importance of the hermeneutical circle, namely the idea of understanding the whole and its parts as two integral things that cannot be separated. In understanding the text, the interpreter is not the party that determines the interplay between tradition and himself. Every interpreter is in the same position/basic where tradition approaches us and we approach tradition. It is from tradition that we get an initial understanding of fundamental prejudices, thus we can start a dialogue with the text. With this then the temporal distance between the situation in which a text is produced and the interpreter himself can be overcome, due to the occurrence of dialogue with the text.

The nature of the interpreted text and all other texts, according to Gadamer, is *semantic autonomy*. That is, the meaning of the text will continue to transcend the author, and that interpretation will continue to be made. To borrow David West's understanding, meaning is never finished being produced. An interpretation will not be able to understand the whole meaning of the text, more over understand it once and for all.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the text that is interpreted or understood is never merely reproductive, but always productive. That is, dealing with any text we are never passive, but always ask questions, engage in dialogue by involving all our understandings and prejudices, and thus, produce a “new” understanding of the text.

For Gadamer, understanding is an emphasis on the importance of a tradition as a continuous dialogue or “dialectic” between the past and the present. This dialectical nature is really emphasized, because the past is not merely a passive object in the hermeneutic process, but a dialogue partner. It is wrong to reduce the past merely as an object. With the help of continuous questions and answers, one has a dialogue with the past, a dialogue that involves both, the past horizon and the present horizon. This dialogue not only corrects our understanding of the past and the texts understood, but also challenges some of our beliefs and leads us to a revision of the horizon and meaning we hold today. That why, the understanding is always a productive fusion of the horizon, through which the past continues to be active and effective or productive in the present.<sup>27</sup>

In Gadamer's hermeneutics, language plays an equally important role. Language is understood by Gadamer not only as an instrument of understanding, but also as the embodiment of the mind itself. Language is not only made up of vocabulary and a set of grammar, but is also a

storehouse of understanding. When we study a language—not only formally but as things in which we can live and act—we absorb opinions or display things that have been incorporated into the language itself. The language, which we live in, allowing us to approach reality with the initial understanding we inherited and thus allows things to speak to us. Language is a carrier of tradition, but it can also be a participation in human conversation and not merely a tool of it.<sup>28</sup>

The use of language by the subject in the process of interpretation is analogous to the use of language in drama. Language is not reduced to the intentions of a single player. Those who play roles in drama are absorbed into the activity in such a way that drama is no longer understood as something played by an individual. The particular subject that plays the role is the drama itself. Thus, drama transcends individual consciousnesses. In the context of interpretation, language and interpretation transcend the intentions or intentions of individual subjects.<sup>29</sup>

### **Jürgen Habermas's Critique on Gadamer's Hermeneutic Concepts**

In his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), Habermas intends to build an ambitious epistemological project. Through this work he systematically and explicitly establishes the relationship between work and interaction on the one hand and distinctive and rational categories of knowledge on the other. It is in this second aspect that Habermas distinguishes the sciences into natural sciences, cultural sciences (hermeneutics), and critically oriented sciences. Regarding the cultural sciences (hermeneutics), Habermas argues that these sciences find the basis for their objectivity in the pragmatic context of interaction or communication. History, *literary criticism*, and other disciplines have a primary concern for the interpretation of texts and symbols.<sup>30</sup>

Habermas admits that these sciences serve a cognitive interest in mutual understanding, where interpretation makes certain orientations of action possible within a common tradition. Unlike the analytical-empirical sciences, the cultural sciences (hermeneutics) are not manipulative or instrumental in their relation to objects. What this science emphasizes is the relationship between subjects which is colored by mutual understanding. This mutual understanding is essential for the survival of any society, both for the coordination of the activities of its citizens and for the historical accumulation of experience and insight. For Habermas, hermeneutics is nothing but a scientific form of interpretive activities from everyday life.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, Habermas has sharply criticized hermeneutics. He criticized the inadequacy of hermeneutical knowledge. According to

Habermas, as a consequence of the main concern of hermeneutics in understanding the meaning of a text or symbol, hermeneutical knowledge is not equipped with the ability to express ideological forms of consciousness. According to Habermas, hermeneutics is blind because it creates false consciousness or distorted communications that bring along power or domination.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding Gadamer's own hermeneutical view, Habermas puts forward a critique, especially on the universal aspect of the hermeneutics. For Gadamer, understanding the text will cover any interpreter as long as he is open to the text, allows himself to have a dialogue with the text and is always open to questions. Habermas actually agrees with Gadamer's assertion about the reflective elaboration of hermeneutical self-awareness and the independence of the subject over his language. Nevertheless, Habermas still sees hermeneutical awareness as insufficient awareness, because hermeneutics "failed to integrate into itself the reflective elaboration of the limit of hermeneutical understanding."<sup>33</sup>

Habermas points out that the limitation of this hermeneutical understanding lies in the "pseudo-communication" aspect contained in hermeneutics itself. According to Habermas, hermeneutics seems to build a communication, both between subjects with texts, as well as with tradition, but in fact it is not communication, but pseudo-communication. Authentic communication must occur where the communicating parties are able to realize that there is a misunderstanding in communication. Pseudo-communication will only create a system of misunderstandings where under the misleading appearances produced by erroneous consensus fail to see this as a fallacy.

Habermas is actually talking about "systematically distorted communication" which demands clarification through deep hermeneutics. For Habermas, depth hermeneutics requires a systematic initial understanding, which is broad, covering language as a whole. This is to be contrasted with the hermeneutical understanding (which is not deep) which derives itself in each case from the initial understanding is traditionally defined that develops and changes in linguistic communication. Thus, for Habermas, hermeneutics should be "a theory of communicative competence" which can reveal the initial conditions for communication and possible consensuses, in which theory is able to analyze forms of linguistic intersubjectivity and the genesis of their changes.<sup>34</sup>

It appears that Habermas did not intend to reject Gadamer's concept of understanding in its totality. Habermas only intends to criticize the claim of universal understanding and demands that critically enlightened

hermeneutics be able to distinguish between insight and limitation of vision, able to integrate into itself meta-hermeneutical knowledge about the possible conditions of systematically distorted communication. Habermas particularly criticizes Gadamer's view of understanding, that understanding mediates itself linguistically through the authority of tradition and plays a non-violent role in that tradition. In addition, Habermas also sees the danger of Gadamer's thinking about the criterion of truth. For Habermas, "truth is that special coercion which leads to unforced universal acknowledgment; this however is connected with an ideal situation of discourse and that means a form of life in which free, uncoerced communication is possible."<sup>35</sup>

### Conclusion

Apart from Jürgen Habermas's criticism of Gadamer's hermeneutical thinking above, the positive contribution of Gadamer's thoughts can still be initiated and affirmed at the end of this article. Gadamer's idea that humans can never free themselves from interpretation<sup>36</sup> is an interesting thought, not only because hermeneutics can overcome the tendency to understand the natural sciences that are purely measurable, observable, and objective. More than that, hermeneutics opens awareness to the richness of human understanding itself. Appreciation of prejudice, initial understanding, history, language, and tradition makes understanding or interpretation activities more dynamic and positive.

By saying that man can never free himself from interpretation, it also means that man cannot free himself from hermeneutical experience. It is hermeneutical experience that can connect us with other individual things, with other people, and with everything we understand. And that this experience can only be experienced because of an attitude of sympathy. It is the attitude and experience of sympathy that will be a source of insight into the nature of the other. Sympathy is a form or expression of love.<sup>37</sup> Through sympathy (and this is the deepest form of hermeneutical experience) we can communicate with texts, with other people, with history and traditions, and provide ears to hear poetry, move hearts to "enjoy" painting, and so on. It is clear that all of this is only possible by letting out natural science methods or ways of thinking from our minds.[]

### Endnotes

1. Thomas M. Seebohm, *Hermeneutics. Method and Methodology* (Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer Science & Business Media, 2007), 52.
2. Johann Conrad Dannhauer is considered a contemporary philosopher who first wrote

- a very systematic introduction to hermeneutics. C. Mantzavinos, "Hermeneutics," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/hermeneutics/>.
3. Jens Zimmermann, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.
  4. According to K. Bertens, today's practice of hermeneutics that covers a wide area emphasizes the basic nature of humans who want to understand and capture the depth of meaning in their lives. The activity of "understanding" as uniquely human is the most fundamental attitude in understanding the whole of human experience, and thus confirms the contribution of philosophy itself to human life.. K. Bertens, *Filsafat Barat Kontemporer: Inggris-Jerman*, 4th ed. (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002), 257-58.
  5. Werner G. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 8.
  6. Bertens, *Contemporary Western Philosophy: England-German*, 254-57.
  7. In his *Peri Hermeneias* (De Interpretatione), Aristotle argues that the words we speak are symbols of our mental experiences. Meanwhile, the words we write are symbols of the words we speak. Just as a person does not have the same written language with others, so he does not have the same spoken language with others. However, the mental experiences it symbolizes directly are similar for everyone, also such as our imaginary experiences in describing things. De Interpretatione, I. 16a.5. E. Sumaryono, *Hermeneutics: A Method of Philosophy* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius Publisher, 1999). 24.
  8. Robert M. Grant and David Tracy, *A History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). 3.
  9. Grant and Tracy, 4.
  10. Bertens, *Contemporary Western Philosophy: England-German*, 259-60.
  11. Bertens, *Contemporary Western Philosophy: England-German*, 260-61.
  12. Regarding the thoughts of these two philosophers, David E. Linge correctly concluded the following: "Starting from the documents, artifacts, and so on that are the context of the historical world, the task of understanding is to recover the original life-world the betoken and to understand the other person (the author or historical agent) as he understood himself. Understanding is essentially a self-transposition or imaginative projection whereby the knower negates the temporal distance that separates him from his object and becomes contemporaneous with it." David E. Linge, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1976), xiii-iv.
  13. Quoted from Linge, *Introduction*, xv.
  14. Bertens, *Contemporary Western Philosophy: England-German*, 263.
  15. Regarding this, K. Bertens understands it thus, "...our knowledge cannot escape prejudice. Avoiding any prejudice is the same as turning off the mind. That does not mean that interpretation becomes a subjective and uncritical endeavor. As much as possible we should be aware of the prejudices that guide our thinking, but it is utterly naive to feel capable of taking a certain attitude without any prejudice. That is why the new interpretation removes the unfavorable prejudices of the past but takes for granted the good and fair ones." Bertens, *Western Philosophy*, 264.
  16. Werner G. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, 9.
  17. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, 9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*.
  18. David E. Linge, *Introduction*, xi.
  19. David West, *Continental Philosophy: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 105.
  20. Here Gadamer actually criticizes not only Descartes, Kant, and Husserl who still glorify the power of the subject as a determinant of truth, but also Schleiermacher and Dilthey. See West, *Continental*, 107.
  21. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Bloomsbury Revelations, 2013), 359.

22. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 260.
23. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 245.
24. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 248.
25. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 258. Italicized is the original text.
26. West, *Continental Philosophy: An Introduction*, 111.
27. West, *Continental*, 113-14.
28. Robert Sokolowski, "Gadamer's Theory of Hermeneutics," in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer: The Library of the Living Philosophers. Vol. XXIV*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Illinois: Open Court Publication Company, 1997), 228.
29. West, *Continental Philosophy: An Introduction*, 112.
30. See for example Bertens, *Filsafat Barat Kontemporer: Inggris-Jerman*, 266-68.
31. West, *Continental Philosophy: An Introduction*, 73.
32. West, *Continental Philosophy: An Introduction*, 74.
33. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, 22-3.
34. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, 22-23.
35. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, 24.
36. West, *Continental Philosophy: An Introduction*, page 109.
37. Roderick M. Chrisholm, "Gadamer and Realism: Reaching an Understanding," in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The Library of the Living Philosophers. Vol. XXIV*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court Publication Company, 1997), 102.

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