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(HPPD7002) Exploring Hermeneutics from an Interfaith Perspective

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Philosophical hermeneutical approaches have much to contribute to the reading of texts in an interfaith context. Critically examine two philosophical approaches (eg: Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Lindbeck) and assess the benefits these approaches bring to interreligious dialogue.

This paper will critically assess Hans Georg Gadamer's approach to linguistic hermeneutics which is from his most celebrated work "Truth and Method" written in 1960. Gadamer's thought on Language and understanding involves three factors 1) The positivity of prejudice, 2) The Happening of Tradition and 3) The linguisticity of understanding ¹

Gadamer has many critics and supporters. The paper shall first discuss a few criticisms that his theory of linguistic hermeneutics has been subjected to and then it will move on to discuss the benefits his approaches bring to interreligious dialogue.

A critical review of Gadamer's hermeneutical linguistic approach

'Fusion of horizon' an ideal or necessary criterion?

Tracy disagrees with Gadamer's belief of an essential requirement in dialogue to accomplish a "mutual understanding" or a "fusion of horizons". For him, Gadamer's emphasis seems to be an error. He notes that authentic dialogue can terminate at an '*aporias*' (as it has been so in Plato's initial discourse). Dialogue need not reach a mutual understanding or a full 'fusion of horizon' in order to be acknowledged as a successful dialogue of the 'Gadamerian model'. According to her many dialogues which are assumed to reach a consensus, may in real terms not have been so. For example, many eminent Lutheran theologians suspect the 'consensus' publicized in the authorized Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on justification not authentic at all. According to Tracy, the declared consensus was not only frail but was untrue. However, dialogue between the two did occur. He states another example of eleventh- twelfth-century Muslim Cordoba and thirteenth-century Christian Toledo, of polemical exchanges and dialogical components between Muslims, Jews and Christians to help each other understand the limits of each religion.²

Tracy believes that the Gadamerian emphasis on the need for mutual understanding is a valuable ideal, but not an essential condition for dialogue. Gadamer's insistence on "fusion of horizon" is connected to another specific Gadamerian stress on a need for unity of meaning in a text for an accurate interpretation of the text. In terms of interpreting a text, unintentionally, a consensus is possible on the unity of meaning but it is not always a possibility. It is also

¹ Jeff. Malpas, 'Hans -Georg Gadamer', <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/>, 6 April 2020.

² David, T., 'Western hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue', in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, eds. C. Cornille & C. Conway (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010), pp 8-9.

possible that the textual meaning with the reader may not unify, horizons may not fuse and there is no consensus arrived in understanding, however, a dialogue still occurs.³

Unequal Power Relationships:

In dialogue, one individual has to endanger his or her present comprehension by revealing oneself to the other as other (person or text). It is only through this process that one can fully engage in a dialogue which is a back and forth movement of a particular question and answer at the issue of the subject matter in question.⁴ But, sometimes people in unequal or hierarchical relationships engage in a dialogue. Example, teacher and students, employer and employee, etc. In such situations a dialogue, many do not reach its fruition as one party may not want to expose him/ herself to the other or be ready to risk his or her present or current self-understanding. The termination of dialogue may also be caused by aggression due to an uninvited but apparent indication of a systemic distortion.⁵

A systemic distortion could mean that the person is not logically confused but unintentionally psychotic, then there is every right to terminate the conversation. A paranoid individual is not a pleasant dialogue partner. Systematic distortion also means one who is unintentionally filled with *resentiment* from unaccepted but observed “racism, sexism, homophobia, elitism, classism, colonialism, imperialism or Eurocentrism.” According to Tracy, these individuals are warranted to be flawed. They would not admit “any other to be truly other” and thus are incapable of being authentic dialogue partners.⁶

Dialogue reaching its natural limit:

Tracy reasons that at times dialogue ends due to a positive reason which is that it reaches its natural limit. Dialogues are time-consuming. At times, it could be possible that partners in good dialogue can be so well engaged in the rationale of questioning, which would be prevalent in both, that they would find themselves ‘in the dialogical zone’. They would find themselves being played more than they would be playing. When discursive dialogues like these reach its natural limit, one would be able to experience and comprehend one’s limit as one’s finitude and historicity while also be aware of a reality that bears itself from beyond the individual (the transcendence). This is the potential experience of a new reality that is more than real, is experienced at the limit of hermeneutics. It can be compared to an openness to the infinite, the ineffable. The experience of that excess which is possible to reach the limit of dialogue and discursive reason offers an invitation to think and seek new ways of post dialogue within the new experience of the incomprehensible.⁷

³ David, T., ‘Western hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue’, in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, eds. C. Cornille & C. Conway (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010), p.9.

⁴ David, T., ‘Western hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue’, in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, p.10.

⁵ David, T., ‘Western hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue’, in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, p.19.

⁶ David, T., ‘Western hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue’, in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, p.14.

⁷ David, T., ‘Western hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue’, in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, pp.19-20.

Understanding cannot always denote goodwill:

Jacques Derrida critiques Gadamer's relativism. According to him 'understanding' may not always denote goodwill. According to Derrida, understanding usually involves either implicit or explicit appropriation of the other. He also refutes the idea that understanding could be universal which is a clause assumed by Gadamer in his theory.⁸

A plurality of interpretation is at times a better option than arriving at 'the truth':

Richard Rorty has responded with pragmatism to Gadamer's idea of 'understanding'. He responds that no interpretation can be closer to 'the truth', but some (interpretations) are more useful or agreeable to us than others. Quoting the example of the dynamics of *Convivencia* he believes that engaging in dialogue is necessary, even if it leads to a "plurality of interpretations". He perceives that we may not reach consensus on our interpretation of truth, but he concludes that a quest to arrive at a singular truth could prove to be more damaging for human relations.⁹

Meaning of the text is authorial:

Lawn quotes E. D. Hirsch a literary critic and American educator who commented on Gadamer. Hirsch criticizes Gadamer that on undermining the meaning to an extreme extent due to which language loses its 'stability and sense of permanence'. According to Hirsch, the textual meaning is determined by the intention of the author. The text is meant to say what the author decided for it. The meaning thus remains stable and does not change. The objective of interpretation and criticism is to unearth the author's meaning. He affirms that the meaning of remarkable works of literature does not alter over time. Understanding the real meaning of the text requires a reconstruction of the author's intent. He recalls the example of Lewis Carroll where the author was able to satirize his position on the popular character of Humpty Dumpty where the character declares his intention of the words to be what he desires them to mean. Through this Hirsch discredits Gadamer's presumptive "relativization" and "destabilization" of meaning.¹⁰

Coalesce between the meaning of the text and its significance:

Lawn quotes E. D. Hirsch where he criticizes Gadamer's unclear difference between the meaning of a word, a text, and its significance. Hirsch analyses that Gadamer has coalesced the meaning of the text and its significance and uses them interchangeably. He reports that

⁸ Laurie L. Patton., 'The Door Keeper, The Choirboy, and the Singer of Psalms: Notes on Narratives on Pragmatic Pluralism in the Twenty-first Century', in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, eds. C. Cornille & C. Conway (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010), p.229.

⁹ Laurie L. Patton., 'The Door Keeper, The Choirboy, and the Singer of Psalms: Notes on Narratives on Pragmatic Pluralism in the Twenty-first Century', in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, pp.229-230.

¹⁰ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum International Publishing house, 2006), p.127.

when Gadamer refers to the meaning of the text, he would be in truth referring to its significance. Hersch affirms that the significance of a text changes over time. For example, he cites the example of Shakespearean plays which enjoyed much popularity in its time of nineteenth and early twentieth century but did not appear to enjoy as much significance. He thus asserts that the significance of a text may ascend or fall with the change of fashion and spirit of the age. Therefore, it would be appropriate to express the significance of a text for a particular time, but it would be incorrect to admit for the change in its meaning.¹¹

Hermeneutics of trust not very successful as against hermeneutics of suspicion:

Lawn indicates how Gadamer's hermeneutics of trust is opposed to Paul Ricoeur's, 'Hermeneutics of suspicion'. In the hermeneutics of suspicion, one has no trust in the transparency of communication. Lawn argues against Gadamer that even our mundane language is also "systematically distorted". It could be distorted due to the manifestations of unrecognized ideological mindsets, or unconscious adherence to forces of power, class or gender. Thus, according to him, Gadamer's trust in the feasibility of clear and honest communication would be naïve concerning the multiple distortions that language users face. He also argues the fact that some societies are inherently divided based on class. Thus, in this light, Gadamer's ideology of hermeneutics in such cultures would seem very naïve.¹²

Gadamer's (seemingly irrational) dependence on tradition:

Gadamer's ideology of hermeneutics is accused of subscribing to a conception of tradition which incorporates all forms of language, history, and culture. Lawn challenges it as it presents itself as one homogeneous power that does not include many other counter- traditions. The traditions in reference here are Micheal Foucault's theory of traditions of subversions. This point is derived from Enlightenment thought which assumes all traditions to be mostly oppressive. Lawn questions that if everything is a part of one unitary tradition, then is there a possibility of space outside this tradition for critical reflection and a capacity to pioneer a change? He questions if Gadamer's hermeneutics suggests a defense of status quo thus suggesting a 'deep political conservatism'?¹³ Lawn quotes Terry Eagleton, of his disapproval of Gadamer,

*"History for Gadamer, is not a place of struggle, discontinuity and exclusion but a 'continuing chain', an ever-flowing river almost, one might say, a club of like-minded people. Historical differences are tolerantly conceded, but only because they are effectively liquidated by an understanding which bridg(es) the temporal distance which separates the interpreter and the text"*¹⁴

Lawn agrees with Eagleton's critique about Gadamer's hermeneutics that all conflicts are 'smoothed over by an ever-flowing river' of tradition'. Lawn concurs with Eagleton as he also acknowledges that it is because of the absence of resources for critique in philosophical hermeneutics. According to Eagleton, tradition acts as an authority to which most people submit and there is a very low possibility that tradition is critically challenged, and he anticipates that its influence may not be very compassionate or charitable. Thus, according to him, surrendering everything to tradition, and conceding to a political or any other force is a

¹¹ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp.127-128.

¹² Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp.129-130.

¹³ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp.130-131.

¹⁴ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.131.

sign of deep conservative politics. The past according to Eagleton beseech a formidable power on the present and the future. He refers to Marx statement, “The traditions of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living”¹⁵

Lawn also supports Gadamer’s hermeneutics. He emphasizes that the above Enlightenment – stimulated interpretation of tradition is not close to Gadamer’s hermeneutics. According to him (Lawn) Eagleton’s Marxist conception of history as struggle accentuates a perpetual movement of opposition. He opines that Gadamer does not express about struggle but the dynamic within the hermeneutics symbolizes a continual motion demonstrated in a notion of play. As it is in a conversation and dialogue a step towards reconciliation and agreement, but this could be the junction where complete resolution is not achieved. Lawn at this point clarifies that the past in Gadamer’s tradition is not a phantasm pressure of the past generations, but rather a continuous dialogical communication between the past and the existing time. But inherent to the dialogue are distinct perspectives. The representation of the ‘continuous chain’ and the ‘ever-flowing’ river is inapplicable if they are supposed to suggest an uninterrupted harmony.¹⁶

Lawn asserts that even Gadamer himself refutes this allegation of identifying with the ideology of National Socialism or of being a conservative. Philosophical hermeneutics according to Lawn has been received as a “theoretical justification of reactionary politics” and contrarily, Gadamer considers himself a political liberal which can be witnessed from his theoretical literature. Profound coordination can be perceived from Gadamer’s comprehension of dialogue and his principle engagements dedicated to liberalism.¹⁷

Further, the paper shall discuss the benefits Gadamer’s linguistic hermeneutics bring to Interreligious dialogue;

Gadamer’s hermeneutical philosophy brings traditions together and provides genuine insight:

There is an inclination in much of contemporary philosophy to be in a very limited specialism and lose sight of the bigger picture or as Lawn quotes Richard Rorty, who in turn has quoted Sellars, who suggests the term, “How things hang together”. Lawn acknowledges Gadamer on this topic. He declares that it is difficult to characterize Gadamer’s position in conventional terms. Gadamer is not doing metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language or any other judiciously bundled traditional subjects within the discipline. According to Lawn, Gadamer is not even a methodical philosopher, like Hegel, who is able to show how these subjects come together in this broad system. However, Lawn suggests that what Gadamer offers is something in-between. Hermeneutics is compatible and useful (applicable) to all areas of philosophy and is also capable of providing a capsulation that a narrow specialism lacks. Through his work, Gadamer offers most age-old quality which is ‘wisdom’ which the modern world seems to have lost sight of. Philosophy too as a component of modern legacy deals with the theory of knowledge. Gadamer in his attempt draws upon the Aristotelian concept of phronesis or practical wisdom thus restoring wisdom in philosophical hermeneutics to brings things together and present a genuine insight.¹⁸

¹⁵Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.131.

¹⁶ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.131.

¹⁷ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp.131-132.

¹⁸ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.141.

Hermeneutics of trust to overcome the challenge of deformed or distorted dialogue:

Lawn argues that Gadamer failed to elucidate the possibility of disfigured or contorted dialogue. Considering the Gadamerian situation, it is always possible to have an unobstructed and clear communication, but dialogue involves expression and negotiation and some amount of understanding is always possible regardless of whatever divisions may exist in the beginning. The 'fusion of horizons' guarantee's that some amount of understanding exists even if it never reached a conclusion. Here Gadamer speaks of 'hermeneutics of trust'. He explains the significance of trust in a communication, a trust that the other individual (the dialogue partner's) willingness to reach out in sincerity and dedication to arrive at an understanding. Without the flexibility of trust in the other, language would break down. Gadamer believes that our social life relies upon our faith in each other to be authentic and reliable (trustworthy). A simple task of calling for a cab would otherwise not be possible. Thus, Gadamer expresses that "Understanding is the average case not misunderstanding"¹⁹

Philosophical hermeneutics is beneficial in interreligious dialogue as it able to distance itself from transcendent metaphysics:

Interreligious dialogue deals with many existential questions. Philosophical reflection on these takes place in ordinary language. Lawn asserts that it is significant in philosophical hermeneutics to focus on the smallest of changes in meaning over a period. Thus, with language as its priority, it is appealing to analytic philosophy. Gadamer suspects metaphysics and thus prefers to stay within the limitations of everyday language, which he terms as the language of 'homeland'. Gadamer ardently stresses the philosophical in philosophical hermeneutics. Contemplation upon philosophical issues calls for constants dialogue on for example; life and death issues, which as Gadamer states, 'matters at issue'. These are the conversations that we constantly return to, and they are carried out in ordinary everyday language. Thus, Gadamer's hermeneutics has been able to turn down the appeal of metaphysics and validate philosophical reflection.²⁰

Philosophical hermeneutics is beneficial for interreligious dialogue as it allows for figurative language to achieve understanding.

Philosophical hermeneutics competently brings together traditional philosophy and literature. Usually, a difference between analytic and continental philosophy is obvious. It is often seen that analytic philosophy is unable to treat tropic language and metaphor at par with a preposition. This issue between figurative and philosophy stems from the question of whether philosophy is to be viewed as an art or a science. If philosophy would be accepted as an art, then it would readily embrace rhetoric, metaphor, etc, but if it is perceived as a science, then it would be cautious of any literary devices and probably exclude them altogether. Gadamer's hermeneutics overrides this challenge. He recognizes and accepts language in all its diversity which includes language, rhetoric, and metaphor as its common approach to achieve understanding.²¹

Linguistic hermeneutics highly credible for interpretation of theology:

Gadamer finds hermeneutics for theology very dependable as it makes the understanding of theology very persistent and rational. It is not seen as an exception, but rather very contiguous.

¹⁹ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp.129-130.

²⁰ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.142.

²¹ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp 142-143.

He asserts that theology almost turns into hermeneutics. From the time of subsequent modern biblical criticism, it does not assume the truth of revelation as its object, “but the truth of the statements or communications that are related to God’s revelation.” Thus, according to Hedges hermeneutical approach would give theology an equal revival and make it open to new perspectives and fresh interpretations.²²

Language as a supporter for comparison and positive role of prejudice in understanding the Other in interreligious dialogue.

Hedges expounds Gadamer’s thought that all “understanding is ‘embedded’ in language”. This helps us understand anything but also constructs our ‘prejudice’ that is inherent in our understanding. According to Hedges, Gadamer’s hermeneutics is very helpful in an interreligious context where we can see language support comparison. Hedges cites Tracy for her input in Gadamerian hermeneutics. Tracy discloses, that if the function of the interpreter is neither penetrating the mind of the original reader nor his audience, then our responsibility we now assume is different. New developments in contemporary linguistic and hermeneutic theory admit the potential interpreter to understand that a written text, specifically as it is written, distanced both from the primary intention of the author and “from the original reception by its initial addresses”. According to Hedges, Tracy tries to suggest that we must effectively differentiate between semantics, which defines specific words or phrases and the referent of the text, which is, what it says about “the-mode-of-being-in -the world.” It is only after this that we would arrive at the task of hermeneutic. This is the space where prejudice enters because to analyze the referent of the text we are interpreting, it can be done using language (within language), but it is language that has actually already influenced our pre-understanding. Here, the answer to overcome this challenge is given by Gadamer. He suggests that in a paradoxical sense, language turns itself into a source for comparison. It is the language that prevails as part of “our common human-ness or “mode-of-being-in-the-world” which connects all the people of all communities and societies. According to Gadamer, our prejudices are received from what is known as “givenness” of all things. Gadamer further suggests that we should be aware that the probability to be accessible to the understanding of the Other resides “within the nature of our prejudices”. He indicates that prejudice towards the old or towards something that is already known to us should be abandoned. He adds that our horizon is not our limit but increases as we move ahead. Thus, it is not our limits, prejudice or horizon which are dangerous, but rather danger is the inability to have the drive to surge beyond such prejudices. He rightfully observes that a person who has no horizon is not able to visualize far enough, thus he overvalues what is closest to himself.²³

²² P. Hedges, ‘Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation’, *MDPI; religions* (2015), p.6.

²³ P. Hedges, ‘Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation’, pp. 10-11.

Hermeneutics or Interpretation of the other as an explicit form of understanding- A noteworthy comprehension that helps enhance the practice of interreligious dialogue.

Hedges states that comparative theology should be understood as a deed involving interpretation and translation of the other. Gadamer too affirms that interpretation is not a sporadic, supplementary act consequent to understanding, but rather understanding is all the time an interpretation, and thus interpretation is a specific mode of understanding. Hedges elaborates, that therefore we do not come with a pre-built comprehension “of our own traditions, but an interpreted tradition, and so the act of comparative theology builds upon this”. Thus, a link to engage others (from different traditions) is understanding that all religions as part of a cultural system are an essential part of a basic human expression of understanding the word through language. As Gadamer appreciating the linguistic nature of all interpretations, adds that each one of the interpretations incorporates the probability of a relationship with others. He further asserts that every speech binds the speaker and the person it is addressed to.²⁴

Translation of the text opens new meaning beyond the authors intent:

Hedges conveys Gadamer's thoughts on translation, where Gadamer expresses that specifically for comparative theology and interreligious dialogue that the whilst the Other could most of the times be strange, it should not mean that we become delimited in understanding it for our own selves. Gadamer asserts that the text not only carries its own truth in itself, but it also possesses its own truth for us. He further states that “the idea of the original reader is full of unexamined idealization”. Hedges explains that for Gadamer, the act of hermeneutics, and so interreligious translation, should not limit us just to the objective (intention) of the author or the planned (intended) public (audience). And if that happens then it restrains us and contracts us in unreasonable essentialism towards the rightful meaning of the text and the author's integrity. It is possible that we may be led to disregard what may be understood primarily as common sense. Gadamer expounds that initially it seems to be common sense that we should perceive only that which the authors and writers intended for their reader. But he further elaborates that this rule can only be applied in severe (extreme) cases. This is because the text themselves do not request the reader to be comprehended as an existing verbalization of their authors subjectivity. Thus, this is not a credible strategy to levy a curb on the written content’s meaning.²⁵

Hedges further explains Gadamer’s thought, that the function (act) of interreligious translation or interpretation in Comparative theology is thus free to broaden and enhance the text and its meaning. The interpreter can then perceive different concepts that the writer or the intended audience may not have perceived. Thus it is then possible for the comparative theologian (dealing with interreligious dialogue) to engage a text or a concept in his/her own individual

²⁴ P. Hedges, ‘Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation’, p.11.

²⁵ P. Hedges, ‘Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation’, p.12.

tradition to arrive at new understandings and insights which are stretched beyond the bounds of the original meaning. However, Hedges continues that this does not allow one to reject or disregard the original. Due precedence is to be given to the original meaning and comprehension of the context through which the content or idea has been procured. If the idea is not limited only to single texts but rather to complete religious traditions, then it would be seen that the ideas of one tradition are not hermeneutically closed or fixed within that system, rather hermeneutics advocates that any “unexamined idealisation” and the interactive nature of religious identities is to be understood that we can traverse borders between different religions as we cross physical borders.²⁶

Epistemology versus ontology:

Hedges quotes Gadamer where he agrees with other philosophers like Chladenius, that the action of transference or procuring a new interpretation from a text is not a loss but a gain. Gadamer justifies that it is possible that our comprehension of the text may be very distinct from the intention of the author or the intended audience, however, through this practice it is also possible that non-productive passages can become productive for us as they would inspire many thoughts. Hedges too affirms that we may see new meanings and thus we are not constrained to just perceiving only what they originally meant. Hedges furthers Gadamer’s conviction that humans are not always conscious of entirety of the meaning of their words, speech and written content. Thus, this can lead us to unearth something that the writer themselves did not aim to write or speak about.²⁷

Hedges further expands on Gadamer’s employment of Chladenius and Leibniz thoughts, that it is about having a viewpoint. (Hedges clarifies that this concept Gadamer borrowed from Leibniz) that it is precisely the reason why we are able to see things differently. We arrive at a fresh meaning arguably with two beliefs (opinions) differentiated into epistemology as opposed to ontology. This deals with how we apply (use) the other text. This concerns how we interpret, namely method of our interpretation which can be termed as our epistemology or either we interpret the text through the ‘being or essence’ of the text that is its ontology. Hedges notes that if we confer through Gadamer’s theory of knowing, then we grasp the new through interpretation based on our existing prejudices which finally leads to reshaping it. While, if we give significance to stress the original and primary ontological truth and nature of that which we are seeking to comprehend, then it means that we agree with Gadamer’s another theory- that we would disapprove of any views often identified as particularities, which suggests that each religion symbolise their own world view and thus are a different language game which are on the whole ontologically different and specific. Hedges analyses that Gadamer’s hermeneutics allows us to understand that all our interpretations are limited (partial) and thus all the time ‘open’. It is not possible for us to have a closed understanding, as such a

²⁶ P. Hedges, ‘Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation’, p.12.

²⁷ P. Hedges, ‘Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation’, p.13.

philosophical hermeneutics will also guide us to dismiss a closed view or a particularistic view of religion which defines it as disconnected worldviews which have no means to communicate with the others.²⁸

Engaging in Gadamerian theory of hermeneutics as part of interreligious dialogue, is developing self-story:

Hedges maintains Clooneys understanding that to engage in comparative theology is to be altered by its operation (process) and so the act of theology is a part of constructing one's self-story. To explain, Hedges quotes Clooney on his ideological example; if Clooney's own "theological instincts" have been moulded how he has thought of Hinduism, then consecutively Hinduism has re-constructed how he thinks theologically as a Christian.²⁹ Being aware of one's identity or self-story and being able to reflect on how the process of theology and dialogue changes us as individuals plays an important role in enhancement of the practice of interreligious dialogue. Hedges expounds this through Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics. Hedges reports that according to Gadamer, we can never desert our own prejudices or horizon, but we evolve from them and finally grow out of them. Gadamer's fundamental point is that our background and prejudice structure how we understand all other knowledge. Hedges further affirms that through Gadamer's theory we can overcome our prejudgements which hold us confined to our tradition. Hedges notes that this relates to both how we operate hermeneutics and is also autobiographical as such an advancement is a component of the narrative of the self.³⁰

Conclusion:

In conclusion, according to Tracy Gadamer's perception of hermeneutics is a bountiful and condensed modern restoration of scholastic western humanism which is its strength as well as its vulnerability.³¹ In the field of philosophical linguistic hermeneutics, Gadamer's approach is identified not by his pursuit to use any theory which was available, but rather by the effort to comprehend from within the area in concern, and in a manner that gives it consideration.³² According to Lawn, with his idea of textual understanding Gadamer backs the concept of a canon of strong literary works. His canon is constantly in a course of being re-defined and as a companion in dialogue is continually being modified. His canon includes contents which bring its audience in a dialogue. Lawn elaborates, that the concept of horizon of text acknowledging

²⁸ P. Hedges, 'Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation', pp. 13-14.

²⁹ P. Hedges, 'Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation', pp.16.

³⁰ P. Hedges, 'Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation', p.16.

³¹ David, T., 'Western hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue', in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, p. 42.

³² Jeff. Malpas, 'Hans -Georg Gadamer', <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/>, 12 April 2020.

its reader generates good sensibility. This also gives a good explanation or reason for some books to be accepted as part of a canon, while others to be excluded. This is due to their capacity to acknowledge the ones seeking comprehension, which is finally self-comprehension. Lawn further states that texts that acknowledge us in the current times may not have acknowledged those in the past. All texts at some time in their explanatory history, call on a congregation. It is possible that they may go unrecognised for some period, but they will at some point be able to respond to the requirements and interrogations of the later generations. In many ways' it is possible that texts are more advanced than their times. It is only when we are attracted in their horizons that we start to explore them. Lawn deservedly states that Gadamer's canon is not a frozen memorial in history but a dynamic, existing voice in constant discourse of humanity.³³

³³ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.128.

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