



HANS GEORG GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS VS BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Dina Elisabeth Latumahina^{1*}, Gunaryo Sudarmanto²

^{1,2}Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Arabona

*)Email Korespondensi:dina.latumahina@gmail.com

Abstract: *At first, Hermeneutics as an interacting science was only used among the church as a method of Scripture Interpretation, with a standard system or method of hermeneutics. This hermeneutics is often referred to as Traditional Hermeneutics or Biblical Hermeneutics. However, in its development, Hermeneutics came out of biblical studies into the scope of philosophy, art, literature, and history. This hermeneutics is referred to as New Hermeneutics and appears in various variants. The purpose of this article is to introduce the New Hermeneutics system of the Postmodernist era, specifically Hans Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutics, and compare it objectively with the Biblical Hermeneutics System with the standard Grammatical-Historical method, which is often used to interpret the Bible. This study uses the comparative analysis study method to find fundamental similarities and differences between Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic concepts and Biblical hermeneutics. Finally, the author makes conclusions and recommendations for Bible interpreters who are doing hermeneutics.*

Keywords: *Hans Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutics, Biblical Hermeneutics, Comparative Analysis Studies.*

PENDAHULUAN

New Hermeneutics¹ began to develop in Europe around the 19th-20th century, not only limited to discussions in the field of theology but also in the field of philosophy, so that Hermeneutics also became a method of philosophy commonly referred to as the philosophy of interpretation.² In this postmodern era, Hermeneutics has become one of the disciplines that discusses the principles of interpretation, often referred to as Theoretical Hermeneutics, which was started by a German Protestant philosopher, F.D.E Schleiermacher³. He is considered the "initiator" of modern Hermeneutics: anything in the form of text can be an object of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics as a method of interpretation is not only limited to the text of Scripture but also to art, literature, and history. Furthermore, Hermeneutics developed and then changed the methodology of the humanities, which was referred to as Critical Hermeneutics. The hermeneutics model was developed by Habermas and his Methodist Hermeneutics Wilhelm Dilthey. Hermeneutics was then set in a more philosophical direction, working on philosophical themes or philosophical

hermeneutics by Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer.⁴, and continued by philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur, Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard.⁵ Of course, the shift is indirectly affecting the way we interpret the Bible as God's Word.

METHODS

Research methods are methods that researchers can use to obtain data to be researched in a study. According to Sugiyono, the research method is a scientific way to get data with specific purposes and uses.⁶ The research methods used in this article are qualitative, descriptive, and comparative studies. Nazir explained that comparative research is a type of descriptive research that wants to find fundamental answers about cause and effect by analyzing the factors that cause the occurrence or emergence of a particular phenomenon.⁷

Comparative analysis examines the differences between two or more groups in one variable. The purpose of comparative research is to investigate the relationship of one variable to another by testing whether the value of the dependent variable in one group is different

¹ Donald K McKim, *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 18.

² McKim, 30.

³ Friedrich Ernst Schleiermacher lahir 21 November 1768 di Breslau Jerman dan berasal dari keluarga Protestan yang sangat taat. Sejak muda beliau sangat tertarik pada filsafat, terutama kepada filsafat Imanuel Kant, bahasa Latin, dan teologi. Mujia Raharjo, *Dasar-Dasar Hermeneutika Antara Intensionalisme Dan Gadamerian* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media Group, 2008), 37.

⁴ Raharjo, 28.

⁵ Para Tokoh post modernism seperti Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard dan baudrillard mengembalikan semua persoalan keberadaan dan kehidupan manusia kepada bahasa, sebab bahasa merupakan pusat kegiatan ada dan hidup manusia. Mujia Raharjo, *Dasar-Dasar Hermeneutika* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2008), 34.

⁶ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014).

⁷ Mohammad Nazir, *Metode Penelitian* (Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 2005), 58.

from the value of the dependent variable in another group.⁸

Comparative analysis methods are carried out to compare the similarities and differences of two or more facts and properties of the object under study based on a certain frame of mind. This study explains Hans Georg Gadamer's concept of hermeneutics and compares it with the idea of Biblical Hermeneutics. The steps involved finding the fundamental similarities and differences between the two concepts and formulating conclusions and recommendations for Bible interpreters in their hermeneutics.

RESULTS

Hans Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutics continued Heidegger's version of Dialectical Hermeneutics, which rejected the neutrality of interpreters.⁹ Interpretive work can only be done and preceded by the prejudice/preconception of the Reader or Interpreter in the interpretation of a text. In his early work *Being and Time*, Heidegger stated that earlier experiences in the web of life greatly influenced interpretations of life. He formulates: When something is interpreted as something, that interpretation is essentially based on *for-having*, *foresight*, and *conception*. Interpretation is only an understanding with a presupposition about something proffered to the Reader. So is the view of Hans Georg Gadamer.¹⁰

⁸ Nazir, *Metode Penelitian*.

⁹ D G Adian, *Pengantar Fenomenologi* (Penerbit Koekosan, 2016), 46, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=h1rbDwAAQBAJ>.

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (A&C Black, 2013), 268–69.

Hans Georg Gadamer¹¹ wanted to reach the truth not by method but by dialectical process because through the dialectic process, the opportunity to ask questions more freely is more likely than by method. For Gadamer, correct understanding leads to an ontological, not methodological, level.

Some Salient Issues Of Hans Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutics

Presupposition: Philosophical Hermeneutics

Hans Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutic Presupposition is the Philosophical Hermeneutic Presupposition. Presuppositions of Philosophical Hermeneutics are philosophies that have been sparked by philosophers in previous times and are very influential. There is no new philosophy proposed by postmodern hermeneutics alone. They went on to take ideas from the philosophy of prior philosophers and make them the basis of their hermeneutics. So, his hermeneutics is called philosophical hermeneutics. What takes precedence in philosophical hermeneutics is different from the correct system or methods or formulation of principles for the interpretation of texts that can serve as standard guidelines for obtaining objective truth. However, philosophical hermeneutics works on the level of understanding itself that can apply to human life. Its main concern is the phenomenon of

¹¹ Hans Georg Gadamer was born in Marburg (1900-2002), Heidegger's student philosopher. He was Professor of Philosophy at the Universities of Leipzig and Heidelberg. Truth and Method is Gadamer's most influential work, his magnum opus. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

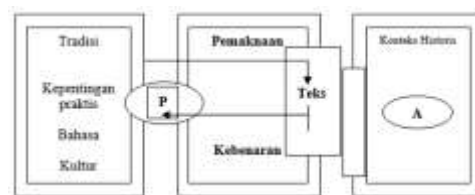
understanding itself. The philosophies that preposition Philosophical Hermeneutics include Existentialism, Humanism, Empiricism, and Phenomenology.

Dialogical Hermeneutics

The minds of philosophers of philosophical hermeneutics have always been linked to the Greek way of thinking handed down by Plato and Aristotle, and platonic dialogical structures were sought to understand Plato's philosophy. Only using dialogue or debate can he know the Platonic texts and this process is constantly repeated to gain a sufficient understanding of them.

After that, dialogue or dialectics was used as a model of Hermeneutics by Martin Heidegger and subsequently adopted by Gadamer. Dialogical interpretation describes the reader/interpreter with text that is engaged in a give-and-take conversation. In the process of interpretation, there is an interaction between the interpreter and the text, where the interpreter considers the historical context along with the interpreter's preconceptions, such as tradition, practical interests, Language, and culture. The method used is by asking and answering or by developing all knowledge through questions because, in the dialectic process, the opportunity to ask questions freely is more likely.

In summary, Dialogical Hermeneutics can be described as follows:¹²



¹² Raharjo, *Dasar-Dasar Hermeneutika Antara Intensionalisme Dan Gadamerian*, 93.

In the process of interpretation, there is an interaction between the interpreter and the text, where the interpreter considers its historical context along with the interpreter's prejudices such as tradition, practical interests, Language, and culture.

Furthermore, asking questions means causing openness. Openness to what is being questioned is the fact that the answer is not given like a rhetorical question that has not only a questioner but also an object. The openness of the question is limitless. The question horizon limits it. A question that has no horizon will float. However, questions must be asked so that they contain openness and restrictions.¹³

An interpreter who seeks to understand the text must question what is behind what is said in the text. He must understand it as an answer to all questions. If he goes back again behind what was said, questions inevitably go beyond what was said. The interpreter understands the meaning of the text only by obtaining a horizon of questions that in itself include other possible answers. So, the sense of a sentence/text is related to the question that is an answer; that is, it goes beyond what is said in it. The logic of humanitarian science is the logic of questions. The question is the realization of the merging of the Horizon of understanding that becomes the introduction between the text and its interpreter.¹⁴

Analysis: Hermeneutics is indeed a dialogue, but Gadamer's concept of dialogue is based on subjectivism, which is very dangerous when applied to derive the meaning of the biblical text. The

¹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 436–37.

¹⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

Bible and interpreters are considered equals. Subjectivism tends to equate the interpreter with the Bible by lowering the text to the interpreter.¹⁵ Hermeneutics is a dialogue that upholds the Authority of Scripture. Biblical hermeneutics maintains the integrity of biblical Authority in all matters of truth, faith, and personal life. The interpreter may approach the biblical text with questions that prepare it for meaningful dialogue but with a strong attitude and desire to gain an understanding that goes beyond their previous knowledge or contradicts the interpreter's preconceptions. In line with the above experience, Dialogue in Hermeneutics, according to Padilla, is:

Hermeneutics has to do with a dialogue between Scriptura and the contemporary historical context. Its purpose is to transpose. The Biblical message, from its original context into a particular twentieth-century situation, has a basic assumption that the God who spoke in the past and whose word was recorded in the Bible continues to speak today to all humanity in Scripture. Although the illumination of the spirit is indispensable in the interpretative process, from one point of view, the Bible must be read 'like any other book'. This means that the interpreters have to take seriously the fact that they are facing an ancient text with its historical horizons. Their task is to let the text speak, whether they agree with it or not, and

¹⁵ Richard L. Pratt, *He Gaves Us His Stories* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2005), 15.

*it demands that they understand what the text meant in its original situation.*¹⁶

Phronesis

The main emphasis of philosophical hermeneutics is not on understanding the text correctly and objectively but on how to 'understand the act itself'. What is being discussed here is 'the nature of interpretation', not 'theory of interpretation'. Hermeneutics is not merely about how to interpret correctly but also about the phenomenon of interpreting itself. Interpretation on interpretation. Regarding the nature of interpretation, hermeneutic philosophy introduces 'Phronesis' (practical wisdom).¹⁷ Gadamer writes:

"I learned from Heidegger, and it was, above all, in the first seminar in which I participated, in 1923, when Heidegger was still in Freiburg, on the Sixth Book of The Nicomachean Ethics. At the time, 'phronesis', the virtue of 'practical reason', that 'allos eidos gneseos', that other form of cognition, was for me truly a magical word. Certainly, it was an immediate provocation to me when Heidegger one day analyzed the distinction between techne and phronesis and then about the sentence, "phronesis de ouk esti lethe" (in practical reason there is

¹⁶ McKim, *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation*, 302.

¹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 560.

no forgetting), explained, "That is conscience".¹⁸

In response to this concept of Philosophical Hermeneutics phronesis, Malpas says:

The concept of phronesis is important, not only as a means of emphasizing our practical 'be being-in the world' over and against theoretical apprehension, but it can additionally be seen as constituting a mode of insight into our concrete situation (both our practical situation and, more fundamentally, our existential situation, hence phronesis comprises a mode of self-knowledge). How Gadamer conceives of understanding and interpretation is as just such a practically oriented mode of insight—a mode of insight that is own rationality irreducible to any simple rule or set rules, that cannot be directly taught, and that is always oriented to the particular case at hand. The concept of phronesis can itself be seen as providing a certain elaboration of the dialogic conception of understanding Gadamer had already found in Plato, and, taken together; these two concepts can be seen as providing the essential starting point for the development of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

Phronesis is a form of thought and practical knowledge, not theoretical knowledge or epistemology, nor is it an application of methods. Gadamer

introduced phronesis and praxis to explain the character of philosophical hermeneutics. The four characters of Hermeneutic Philosophy are interconnected: Hermeneutic Situation, Preconception, Fusion Horizon, and Hermeneutic Circle.

Hermeneutic Situation

What is meant is awareness of the 'hermeneutic situation'. Readers need to realize that hermeneutic situations limit a person's ability to see in reading text. Each interpreter must adapt himself to the hermeneutic situation he has. Being tied to a problem does not mean that the claim to truth made by each interpretation is considered subjective or temporary. An interpreter cannot possibly break away from his traditions and prejudices but can enter the traditions and prejudices of others. Both are inevitably present in every act of interpreting, for both reflect the historical conditioning of human beings. Similarly, Armas commented:

Gadamer's hermeneutic situation is a prejudgment that cannot be eliminated because it is a given. For Gadamer, prejudgment is inseparable from human nature. The present condition of the interpreter, therefore, is not an obstacle that hinders interpretation but rather is the productive basis of all understanding. For Gadamer, the current situation, which is our prejudgment, does not cut us off from the past but is the beginning that opens our horizons because human beings can never be separated from history. Man

¹⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Univ of California Press, 1977), 9.

belongs to history, not the other way around.¹⁹

Pre Conception

This Hermeneutic situation then forms what in the Reader that certainly influences the Reader in dialoguing the text with context; these prejudgments are positive conditions that allow positive understanding. In the view of Philosophical Hermeneutics, human understanding existed before man began to understand. Therefore, understanding is an ontological problem and not an activity of interpreters and methodological issues.²⁰

In his book "Kebenaran dan Metode" (Indonesia), Gadamer dismisses the enlightenment search for rational objectivity as 'prejudice versus prejudice'. He argues that preconceptions in hermeneutics are not only difficult to avoid but also essential for understanding.²¹ Although this is a requirement in reading the text, according to Gadamer, the Reader must always revise and not always impose his ideas on a text so that the Reader avoids errors. Gadamer said: "All correct interpretations must guard against the ridiculous riches and limits imposed by floating habits of thought and must direct their attention to things themselves."²²

¹⁹ Adnin Armas, *Metodologi Bibel Dalam Studi Al-Quran: Kajian Kritis* (Gema Insani, 2005), 14.

²⁰ Armas, *Metodologi Bibel Dalam Studi Al-Quran: Kajian Kritis*.

²¹ Gadamer, *Kebenaran dan Metode*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Belajar, 1975), 327-328.

²² Gadamer, *Kebenaran dan Metode*, 327-328

Fusi Horizon

After that, the Reader should combine two horizons: the Reader's Horizon and the text's Horizon. Both must be communicated so that tensions between two different possible horizons can be overcome. The Reader should open at the Horizon of the text and let the text enter the Horizon of the Reader because the text with its Horizon must have something to say to the Reader.²³ On the other hand, the Reader's Horizon, which is certainly already influenced by his hermeneutic situation, is also very decisive.

The Horizon of the text: the background of the text, the linguistic crystallization of the reality that surrounds it, the new meaning created after the Reader with the Horizon, has to understand the text. Reader's Horizon: Placing the text as the object of study, making the text an intermediary material to get the true meaning behind the text, and considering factors that exist outside the text as elements that play an important role in interpreting a text. The Reader must master the dimensions that shape the situation of contemporary society, both economic, political, and cultural.²⁴

Circle Hermeneutics

It is this interaction between the two horizons that Heidegger and Gadamer passed on as the 'Hermeneutic circle'. The hermeneutic process is described as a circle, that is, a constant cycle of back and forth between the Reader and the text. Part of the text can be understood as a whole, and the whole text can only be understood through

²³ Gadamer, *Kebenaran dan Metode*, 364.

²⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 328

its parts. Departing from the assumption that man cannot be separated from the tradition in which he lives. Every Reader, according to him, certainly must maintain the tradition where he lives. Every Reader, according to him, certainly cannot just stop his tradition when he wants to read the text. It means the meaningful meaning of the text, not the objective sense of the text. In interpretive activities, philosophical hermeneutics presupposes an interpreter or Reader is preceded by the Reader's Horizon, which then forms a pre-understanding. In other words, understanding is a circular process. To achieve understanding, one must depart from understanding; for example, to understand a text, one must first have a preconception about the text. Otherwise, one can't gain an understanding of the text. By reading the text, pre-understanding will manifest into real understanding.²⁵ McKim outlines the process of hermeneutic circles as follows:

The 'circle' of the hermeneutical process begins when the interpreter takes his preliminary question to the text. But because his questions may not be the best or most appropriate ones, his understanding of the subject matter of the text may at first remain limited, provisional, and even liable to distortion. Nevertheless, the text, it runs, speaks back to the hearer: it begins to interpret him; it sheds light on his situation and own questions. His initial questions now undergo revision in the light of the text itself, and he directly speaks

²⁵ Raharjo, *Dasar-Dasar Hermeneutika*, 46.

*more clearly and intelligibly. The process continues while the interpreter achieves a progressively deeper understanding of the text.*²⁶

According to Gadamer, we need help understanding the hermeneutic circle if we try to get out of it. The interpreter is unlikely to interpret from the neutral side. Interpreter is reinterpretation, understanding new text and new meanings as well.²⁷ The true interpreter lets the text come to the interpreter for a dialogue between the two to relieve tension. Like the reader/interpreter, the text also has its history, which is called the text horizon.

Analysis: Such a philosophical hermeneutic view is very impactful when applied to *the interpretation of the Bible*. The interpreter of the Bible must believe that the Authority of the Bible is absolute and must give priority to the search for the intended meaning of the author of the Bible (Exegese). The interpreter who subjectively forces his prejudices or preconceptions into the text to be interpreted is called Eisegesis. The interpreter certainly cannot escape at all from theological presuppositions or preconceptions, or previous experiences when he approaches the biblical text. However, care must be taken, and interpreters must be open to correction by biblical truth. The constant correction of interpreters' presuppositions or preconceptions by truth is referred to as a Hermeneutic spiral.

The hermeneutic spiral is a process that constantly rotates between the interpreter and the Bible.

²⁶ McKim, *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation*, 16.

²⁷ Armas, *Metodologi Bibel Dalam Studi Al-Quran: Kajian Kritis*, 17.

Not only is one circle closed, but several circles are spiral-shaped. First of all, the interpreter reads the Bible with certain presuppositions. Still, if the interpreter produces a truth that differs from his presumptions, the interpreter must be willing to be corrected by that truth. This fixed understanding becomes the new interpreter's presupposition for interpreting the Bible further so that the interpreter progressively reaches a correct understanding. What makes the spiral move toward accurate understanding is the Holy Spirit. Its illumination helps the interpreter move toward truth.²⁸ For this reason, the use of the biblical hermeneutic system is strongly encouraged so that Bible interpreters discover the real truth.

Spiral Hermeneutic is principally different from *Circle Hermeneutic*. *Circle Hermeneutics* is a constant cycle of back and forth between the Reader and the text.

However, spiral hermeneutics is a dialogue relationship between text and Reader that points to a forward movement of that dialogue toward a fuller understanding. According to Osborne, the differences are:

A hermeneutical circle within which our interpretation of the text leads us to its interpreting us. However, such a closed circle is dangerous because the priority of the text is lost in the shared gestalt of language event. A spiral is a better metaphor because it is not a closed circle but rather an open-ended movement from the Horizon of the text to the Horizon of the Reader. I am not going round and round a

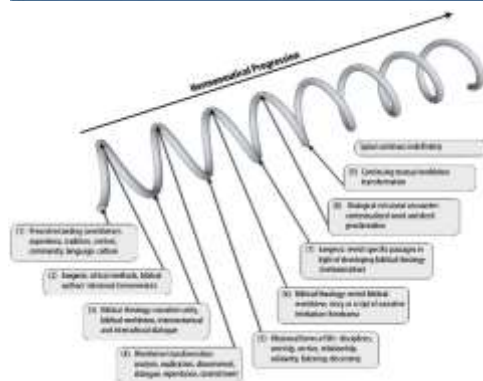
*closed circle that can never detect the true meaning but am spiraling nearer and nearer to the text's intended meaning as I refine my hypotheses and allow the text to continue to challenge and correct those alternative interpretations, then the guide my delineation of its significance for my situation today.*²⁹

In line with Grant Osborne, William Arnold III agreed that the process of the hermeneutics of the biblical text, until it acquires its true meaning, is a spiral process. Arnold says: When the receiver (interpreter) approaches the message, he brings along his presuppositions. This is both inevitable and necessary. To understand anything, a certain amount of presuppositions (or preunderstanding) is needed. Without this, how would one make sense of the symbols? What meaning would he ascribe to the words that he is reading or hearing? To begin interpretation, he must have some understanding of the basics of communication already. However, as the interpreter uses his preunderstanding to exegete the meaning of the message, his understanding deepens or even changes. In his mind, the meaning unfolds, and this new meaning becomes his unique insight and his present point of view when he looks back at the message. As the interpreter continues to learn, he builds on his previous knowledge and grows in understanding as he progresses. Now, the interpreter must

²⁸ Pratt, *He Gaves Us His Stories*, 42.

²⁹ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 6.

keep the author's intended meaning as his goal at all times. He must seek to discover what was meant by the one who put it there if he does anything less.



Spiral Hermeneutics³⁰

If Bible interpreters follow this concept, then they do not need to rely on the principles of interpretation because the interpreters' understanding comes from their preconceptions that were forcibly brought into the text. Their preunderstanding falls into a closed circle that can no longer be influenced by anything, so the biblical text must conform to the interpreter's preconception or preunderstanding.

Man and Language

Gadamer clearly states that Language has a central role in understanding. In Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, it is stated, "Gadamer places language at

the core of understanding".³¹ Therefore, for Gadamer, Hermeneutics is a new way of 'associating' with Language; "understanding" means understanding through Language (The Linguisticality of Understanding).³² Language is the medium of hermeneutic experience, whether it is Language as a determinant of hermeneutic objects (literary tradition, linguistic nature) or Language as a determinant of hermeneutic action (translating into one's language and debate questions and answers).³³ We must think of Language or understand it as something that has a purpose (teleology) in itself.

That is, words or expressions are never meaningless.³⁴ People who can bridge the gap between two languages provide an important bright spot. Here come Gadamer's four humanistic concepts: *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, *Judgment*, and *Taste*. Just as the task of hermeneutics is to understand texts, understanding itself has a fundamental relationship with Language. Gadamer asserts that an interpretation will be correct if it can disappear behind the Language used. The point is that the translation will be appropriate when the Reader experiences a subtlety and rhythm of the Language. The translation is very beautiful if it is not faithful to the original Language, and if it is accurate, then the translation is no longer attractive. It means a good

³⁰ Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*.

³¹ Raharjo, *Dasar-Dasar Hermeneutika*, 33.

³² E. Sumaryono, *Hermeneutik* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Fajar, 1993), 26.

³³ E. Sumaryono, *Hermeneutik* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Fajar, 1993), 26.

³⁴ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Kebenaran Dan Metode* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Belajar, 1975), 473.

translation if it is not word-for-word but adapted according to its variety of languages. Borrowing Gadamer, Raharjo says:

Language does two things in the interpretative process: (a) it limits our interpretative powers and keeps us from gaining absolute access to any textual meaning, even the meaning of our text, and (b) it enables some access to textual meaning. This enabling power can be defined in terms of a dialogical conversation, a "fusion of horizons", and a creative communication between Reader and text. As interpreters, however, we only achieve a partial and objective interpretation since we are limited by our historical circumstances and by the particularities of our Language.³⁵

Analysis: The author sees that three dangers threaten if the concepts of man and Language in hermeneutics are applied in the process of interpreting the biblical text. *First*, the emphasis on spoken Language and assuming that written Language is far from the context of the speaker, alienated and not alive, will lead interpreters or readers of the Bible to believe that the texts of the Bible are texts that are not original, which no longer correspond to the original speaker's intent when the text was spoken. In the process of writing text, there have been shifts in meaning and context or even many errors. If so, then this concept is at odds with the Biblical Hermeneutic presupposition of the Bible as a written text: it is the Word of God inspired by God. The Bible itself

makes it clear that the Bible writers did not merely express their thoughts but their words.

The apostle Paul wrote: "*All writings inspired of God* are useful for teaching, for revealing error, for correcting conduct, and for training people in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). Although God's Word is given through writing human hands and using human Language, its primary source is God. The word inspiration also relates to the process by which the Holy Spirit guides the writers and writing of God's Word so that their words are God's Word (Verbal Inspiration). God cannot inspire the wrong. Any written text normally produced by man is likely to be wrong, but the Bible is not a normal human product.³⁶ *Second*, Gadamer proposes to combine the interpreter's language horizon with the Native Speaker's Horizon to find one common Language that can be used in text translation. This proposal is very difficult to implement because transferring a concept from one language to another is a very difficult job, and combining it is difficult. Combining can compromise meaning so that the true meaning of the original author becomes ambiguous, unclear, and not revealed.

In general, Language describes the worldview and life view of its owner. Language is also a mirror of the society of its users. Language is the way of thinking of a person or a nation. So, it is with the languages used to write the Bible. These languages were the human languages of his time and were very different from the languages of modern interpreters. Therefore,

³⁵ Raharjo, 39.

³⁶ R.C. Sproul, *Kebenaran-Kebenaran Dasar Iman Kristen* (Malang: SAAT, 2005), 18–19.

Biblical Hermeneutics also strongly emphasizes the role of Language, but its point of view and emphasis is very different from Gadamer's Hermeneutics. Language analysis is needed in the process of hermeneutics, but what is emphasized is the word study and grammar used by the original author. If you want to get the right understanding, the Language of the text used by the author must be understood correctly. After gaining experience, the interpreter formulates a sense of his Language. *Third*, a beautiful translation if it is not in the original Language but adapted according to one's Language. This concept is the concept of subjectivity, the product of the interpreter's meaning rather than the author's meaning. This method is very dangerous if applied to the text of the Bible. The interpreter determines the meaning of the text, and not God, through the author of the Bible. What must be known is that the Bible is from God to man, not from man to man.

Gadamer's four humanistic concepts of Hermeneutics that influenced hermeneutics were Bildung, Sensus Communis, Judgment, and Taste.³⁷

Bildung

Bildung from the German "Bild" means "picture or model". This meaning is synonymous with "formation", i.e. "form or formation" That is, when one reads texts included in sciences such as history, literature, and philosophy, the whole background of his experience comes into play. Two people with different cultural backgrounds, ages, or education levels will not interpret the

situation in the same way. Discoveries that people did not notice in the early years will attract a lot of attention in the following years.³⁸ So, Bildung is more than a commonly used cultural understanding in general; it includes art, history, experience, sharpness of mind, spirituality, expression, style, and symbol. Bildung refers more to the mind, behavior, and the human mind that flows harmoniously from his knowledge and feelings about all moral and intellectual endeavors, abilities of feeling, and character.³⁹

Census Communis

Census Communis: An ability that exists in humans in the form of the main ability to decide on knowledge of concrete reality whose nature can be sensed by many people. Or the basic ability to see, understand, and weigh everything that can be shared with almost anyone.⁴⁰ Sensus Communis is a social wisdom. Sensus Communis also has a moral aspect, namely, the wisdom to determine one's attitude toward others. Sensus Communis can also be translated as 'heart', 'heart', or 'conscience', so Sensus Communis is very influential on interpretation methods, especially in the field of humanitarian sciences.

Judgment

Judgment is a person's ability to reassemble what he learns and knows so that he can use these things correctly.⁴¹ The concept of census communis is closely related to the idea of Judgment. Judgment and Sensus Communis both fall under

³⁷ Gadamer, *Kebenaran Dan Metode*, 10–48.

³⁸ Gadamer, *Kebenaran Dan Metode*.

³⁹ Sumaryono, *Hermeneutik*, 65.

⁴⁰ Sumaryono, 24.

⁴¹ Sumaryono, 69.

the interpretation of life. If, through the *Communis Census*, one develops a view of the common good or love of humanity, then on that consideration, one can sort out various events. This is a concept of Gadamer's humanity that can be applied to the Hermeneutics of the sciences of life.

Taste

Taste, in Gadamer's sense, has nothing to do with personal inclinations or personal preferences. In contrast, Gadamer's views overcame personal preferences. According to Gadamer, people can like something that others don't. Therefore, there is no need to debate about Taste because there are no criteria for determining Taste. Taste is the same as Taste or Taste, which, in operation, does not use reason. Taste is not limited to what is naturally beautiful and, in art, the whole, but on the contrary, includes morality or character. Taste is something like a feeling. In other words, Taste is a balance between sensory instincts and intellectual habits.

If connected with Hermeneutics, it is the method used by the sciences of life or the sciences of man: Life is not static but changes between a series of good and bad, noble and inevitable, noble and low, tense and mediocre. From this reality of life, *Bildung* is part of determining which ones should be remembered and which ones should be thrown away. The *Communis census*, which is sensitive to human relations, gives the community a special complexion. At the same time, Judgment and Taste discriminate against things that are contrary to the beautiful and the good. In his interpretation, Gadamer uses all four concepts of man.

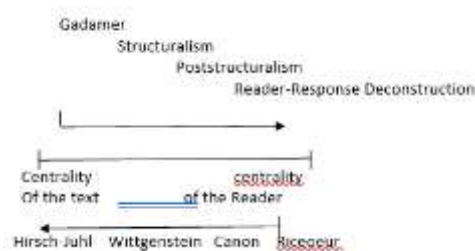
Analysis: Considering the meaning of the words *Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, *Judgment*, and *Taste*, it can be concluded that every human being or interpreter has his *Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, *Judgment*, and *Taste*. That means if two or more interpreters approach the same text, with *its Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, *judgment*, and *Taste*, then they will interpret the text in different ways. If this is the case, there will be many discoveries, new meanings, and new formulations of truth that previous interpreters have never noticed. If this concept is applied to gain an understanding of the biblical text, interpreters' theological formulations always differ according to the times.

The implication is that these theological truths are impermanent and irrelevant to people of all ages. It all depends on the interpreter's bill. It all depends on the conscience of the interpreter. Thus, finally, the attempt at interpretation of the Bible Text fell into the problem of subjectivism. This concept is in complete contrast to Biblical Hermeneutics, which firmly believes that the Bible is relevant to humanity throughout the ages. Another influence is in the moral and spiritual spheres. There is no longer a standard and absolute reference for humans to behave. There is also no address to whom man should account for what is done, what is good to obey, and what is bad to avoid. People can also be judges of themselves or judges of others. The Bible, as God's Word, was given to organize the lives of sinful people according to His will. Man, as a created creation of God in the image and likeness of God, must be responsible for what he does. The measure of moral truth, ethics, attitude, and man's social life is God

and His Word, which has been revealed in the Bible.

Point of View (Triadic: Author-Text – Reader)

The process of discovering the meaning of the written text is centered on three components: *Author, Text, and Reader*. The writer produces the text while the Reader learns to understand the text. From the perspective of Biblical Hermeneutics, the meaning of the text is usually determined by the Author (Meaning of the Author and the Text). But the problem of interpretation begins and ends with the presence of the Reader. If the Reader does not return to the original intent of the text by the author, then shift the Meaning of the Author and Text to the Meaning of the Text and the Meaning of the Reader. The following is a diagram.⁴² This attempts to illustrate the transitional form from the Author/Author-centered Hermeneutic System and Text to Text and Reader or interpreter, which is a distinctive characteristic of New Hermeneutics Figures in postmodern times.



Analysis: The chart above shows Gadamer's Hermeneutic System centered on the text and reader or interpreter (Combined Text Meaning and Reader Meaning), as McCartney puts it.

⁴² Osborne *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 396.

*Gadamer attempts to spell out how this encounter may happen. It is not a matter of simply applying the distinct meaning that stems from the author's 'horizon' to the present situation but of achieving an initial meaning by the preconscious fusing of the Horizon generated by the next itself with the Horizon of the Reader.*⁴³

Osborne also commented on Gadamer's Hermeneutics thus:

*There are not two (interpretation and understanding) or three (with application) separate aspects in the hermeneutical enterprise but rather one single act of coming to an understanding. Past and present fused. One cannot interpret "God so loved the world" merely from the Johannine perspective of one's present of divine love. Gadamer's aesthetic hermeneutic moves from the author and the text to a union of text and Reader, with roots in the present rather than in the past.*⁴⁴

So, according to Osborne, Gadamer's hermeneutics is the transition from writer and text to a combination of text and Reader with roots in the present rather than the past. Nor did Gadamer develop a methodology.

⁴³ D McCartney and C Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (P & R Publishing, 2002), 297, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=IQILA AAACAAJ>.

⁴⁴ Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 371.

This view makes the Hermeneutic system only Text-oriented. The text is not a closed system but is autonomous and alive. This means that the text has its own life independent of the author or author so that the text is open to the possibility of being read more widely according to the context of the Reader.⁴⁵ For Gadamer, interpretation is not only limited to reproducing meaning but also producing new meaning. Hermeneutics is no longer tasked with acquiring the objective meaning desired by its author but producing a new meaning entirely centered on the historical and social conditions of the interpreter/Reader. This system of Hermeneutics does not pay attention to the role of the author of the text at all. The author is as if it does not exist or is dead. Roland Barthes says:

*"The death of The Author must requite the birth of The Reader". Interpretation thus becomes 'more creation than discovery...less demonstration and proof than individual insight and construction'. This means that the age of the Reader is located neither behind nor in the text but rather in front of it.*⁴⁶

Analysis: The text never stands alone. The existence of text because someone writes. The purpose of the author of the text is, of course, to convey the author's intention. Therefore, the correct interpretation is the interpretation

that aims to find the meaning of the text according to the purpose of its writing. An interpreter is not allowed to insert their meaning into the text. This principle must be held closely by Bible interpreters. Kevin J. Vanhoozer says:

*Understanding Scripture is discipleship and Death of The Reader.*⁴⁷ *Christian interpreters read for the author's voice. The text is a shell that contains a spark of the author's soul. The meaning is the message that the Reader extracts from a bottle. The goal of interpretation is to recover the original meaning of text... The Father Author guarantees authenticity and also commands and controls meaning. Authorship implies ownership. The parallel between God and the author is again instructive. The earth is the lord's and everything in it (Mzm.24:1). God is the author of the book of nature. God is the Author of Authors, being of the book of nature and the Authority behind all authorities.*⁴⁸

God is the ultimate author of the Bible, who is behind the human writer. Therefore, the Bible is always objective and infallible even though the writer and reader/interpreter as human beings are very limited because of their sinfulness.

CONCLUSION

Gadamer's hermeneutics is thick with subjectivism when applied to *interpreting the Bible as the Word*

⁴⁵ Osborne, 109–10.

⁴⁶ K J Vanhoozer and C L Blomberg, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Zondervan Academic, 2009), 148, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=wCbEiVFNGS8C>.

⁴⁷ Vanhoozer and Blomberg, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*.

⁴⁸ Vanhoozer and Blomberg, 43.

of God because each interpreter can find their meaning from the interpreted text of the Bible and not the meaning of the text itself as intended by the original author. The second problem, Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, is antihistorical. The emphasis is not on the history and background of the biblical text so that it acquires its original meaning but on the history and background of the interpreter himself. He negates the role and intent of the author towards the text. The most important thing for him is the text and the Reader or interpreter himself. Another implication is to equate the interpreter with the Bible to derive the text on par with the interpreter. McCartney says:

However, this determined meaning does not stand only the one leg of authorial intent, but on three legs: (1) the author's intent, which is knowable by reference to his historical and linguistic situation; (2) the interpersonal character of utterances and the continuity of people and their relationship (which preserve meaning in the text even when the author and his original context are unknown), and (3) God's Sovereignty, which provides the basis for an absolute, transcendent, determinate meaning for all texts.⁴⁹

Therefore, an interpreter of the Bible is honest, open, attentive, and obedient to the Authority of Scripture.

However, there is something positive that must be noted:

⁴⁹ McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*, 301.

Gadamer's Hermeneutics makes Bible Interpreters think about two important things in *doing hermeneutics*. *First*, indirectly, he 'taught' the interpreter of the Bible to pay attention to the context of the Reader in the interpretation of the text to produce not only correct interpretation or correct doctrines but also the application of meaning or truths that are 'grounded' or 'relatable' to readers according to their situation and condition. *Second*, it also reminds Bible Interpreters that although in theory, Bible Interpreters and Christian Theologians reject Gadamer's Hermeneutics, which favors presuppositions, interpreters' preconceptions in interpreting texts. But in practical terms, Bible interpreters often get caught up in Gadamer's practice of subjective Bible interpretation, for example, taking Bible verses out of context for the interpreter's ulterior purposes and purposes. This point should receive serious attention from Bible interpreters in their doing hermeneutics.

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