

HERMENEUTICS A NEW VISION

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Hermeneutics, like Sunnie D. Kidd would say, is the philosophy of interpretation and understanding. Martin Heidegger would consider it to be an account of ontology. Paul Ricoeur would view it from an epistemological point of view. Hans-Georg Gadamer places the emphasis on interpretation saying that interpretation and understanding are one and the same. The integral understanding of all this is that the way we understand this world is not separate from being-in-the-world.

We exist in the world and in relation to others. We live in tradition and history. We are not isolated entities. Friedrich Schleiermacher would tell us that understanding is a referential operation. Meaning is only meaning in relation to a particular. Specifically, Schleiermacher says that hermeneutics is rooted in language.

Our existence includes the situation in which we live and human faculties in which we interpret this existence, including our fore-understanding of the world. Heidegger would tell us that understanding is grasping one's own most possibilities of being-in-the-world. This includes being within the context in which we exist. Symbols, such as text, are part of this reality we share.

We share reality through symbols in what we write, paint and speak. Text, for example, has many contexts. Gadamer would take this further to say that it is the linguistic nature of interpretation that each interpretation has possibilities of relationship with others. For Gadamer, there is no speech that does not bind both the speaker and the person spoken to. One understands something when it becomes one's own.

The history we live in, the signs we share and languages we speak are not tools. They constitute our way of being. Heidegger would say that language is being speaking. We do not only use symbols but we are constituted by such. We are language.

Consciousness is consciousness of. Consciousness intends towards life. This intentionality is at the center of knowing. Consciousness, however, is not identical with its objects but intended towards them. We are

intentional beings oriented towards understanding, knowledge, experience and above all meaningfulness.

Experiences can be articulated but never reducible to such articulations. For Ricoeur, bringing experience into language is not making it different from what it actually is. It is the development and articulations that make it become what it is, signification. This signification makes experience present to us. Experience pre-exists signification. Experience pre-exists signification at the same moment signification brings it into meaningfulness.

We are beings-in-the-world, as Heidegger would say. This is a multisided concept. Our act of symbolization as signification of the world brings meaningfulness and assurance to being-in-the-world. This is not to say that the whole world is exhausted by this act. There will always be a surplus of meaning. There will always be mystery. This surplus of meaning fuels the continuation of our presence, being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world pre-exists the act of signification. Furthermore, speech, as an act of signification for example, precedes writing, as the field of possibilities of signification.

Since being-in-the-world precedes knowledge, there is always fore-understanding and fore-knowledge. When interpreting, there is anticipation and expectation. Gadamer would tell us that we read a text with certain expectations or fore-projections. We always revise such expectations as we go further in reading according to what is present before us. Every revision sets a new meaning, where new meanings emerge side by side to make the unity of the meaning of the text clearer.

For the interpreter to fully understand, the interpreter does not only engage in a dialogue with the text but also test the validation of the fore-understanding present within. Since the world is beyond our knowledge and contains a surplus of meaning, it guides us referentially to revise our fore-understandings of it.

The act of reading a text involves the meeting between the reader's horizon and the text's horizon. These horizons seem limiting to the extent of current interpretation. This is called the hermeneutical circle. One can only know what one is prepared (open) to know.

Sunnie D. Kidd tells us that we are aspiring beings and when considering the continuation of time, this circle is not really limiting to what we can interpret and understand. It is our reflective/reflexive nature that pushes us over the horizon, so to speak, with intuition as the primordial ground for intentionality and cognition.

Reading is not only the meeting of horizons but it is also the meeting between the historicity of the text and the historicity of the reader, the situatedness. There is no pure reading or pure meaning (perfect meaning). It is historical reading and existential meaning that take place. Existential meaning, so to speak, is the infatuation between the historicity of the interpreter and the historicity of that which is interpreted. This is the case whether it is a text or just any work we are looking at. Existential meaning is what stands out according to both historicity.

One's horizons depend on one's cultural situatedness. Simply, the act of interpretation of a text, for example, depends on the cultural situatedness of the writer and reader. Any text is an embodiment of the writer's style, the writer's individuality, unconscious and conscious understanding, orientation towards the world and intentionality.

Ricouer would say that understanding goes through the understanding of cultural signs in which the self forms itself. Ricouer promotes self-understanding as the way of constitution of meaning. He calls this reflective hermeneutics upon the ground of intentionality.

Gadamer also elaborates on the notion that self-understanding is an act of culture and that culture is a personal act. He would tell us that we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and historicity in which we live before we understand our self through self-examination.

Interpretation includes the interconnectedness of past and present horizons into forming a new horizon of what is understood. Horizons do not exist separately but are an ongoing continuum. It is this interconnectedness of all horizons that change us culturally by bringing the values and meaningfulness of life into manifestation.

Hermeneutics, as Sunnie D. Kidd tells us, is interpretation and understanding. Interpretation represents one of many possible meanings but

understanding changes through further interpretation. Put simply: one has to say, “at this time I am seeing this.”

This is where transcending current horizons change such understanding through time continuation. This process represents the movement of interpretation and understanding.