

## CHAPTER II

### CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF HERMENEUTIC AND ITS SCOPE OF STUDY IN UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY TEXT

#### A. The Early History of Hermeneutic

Nowadays, hermeneutic is well-known as the art and science of text interpretation. especially texts in the areas of literature, theological and law. The term “*Hermeneutic*” originally is as derivation word of the word “*Hermes*” which it’s mean the God’s name of ancient Greece mythology,<sup>1</sup> the mythological Greek deity whose role is that of messenger of the Gods. derived from the Greek word *hermeneuine* and *hermenia* which one means “interpreting” and “interpretation”.<sup>2</sup> But the latin definition of hermeneutic was coming at early 17 century. By the times, the term Hermeneutic meet the change and development of its meaning. It was began by Jewish and Christian theologians were seeking the understanding of re-evaluate texts in their scriptures.

A doctoral dissertation on hermeneutic states:

“Originally, the term “Hermeneutic” was employed in reference to the field of study concerned with developing rules and methods that can guide biblical exegesis. During the early years of the nineteenth century, “Hermeneutic” became “General Hermeneutic” at the hands of philosopher and Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher transformed Hermeneutic into a philosophical field of

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<sup>1</sup>Josef Bleicher, *Comtemporary Hermeneutic* ( London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980 ), 11.

<sup>2</sup>Dannhauer gives two notions of hermeneutics, that is as a set of methodological principles of interpretation, and as a philosophical excavation of the nature and conditions that can not be avoided in activities of understanding. ( quoted from *Hermeneutika Gadamerian*, UIN-Malang Press, Malang, 2007, 89)

study by elevating it from the confines of narrow specialization as a theological field to the higher ground of general philosophical concerns about language and its understanding<sup>3</sup>.

And finally, hermeneutic is defined as a process of changing something or ignorance become an understanding.<sup>4</sup>

Hermeneutic has a long history, reaching back at least as far as ancient Greece. However, new focus was brought to bear on it in the modern period, in the wake of the Reformation with its displacement of responsibility for interpreting the Bible from the Church to individual Christians generally. This new focus on hermeneutic occurred especially in Germany.<sup>5</sup> Hermeneutic history emerged and developed sporadically. for more comprehensive understanding of hermeneutic, it is needed to see the overview history of Hermeneutic from the mythological Greek until the current time.

### **1. Hermeneutic In Greek Mythology**

In Greek mythology, the Gods led by Zeus with Maia, this couple had a son named Hermes. Hermes roled as mediator between the gods themselves, and between the gods and humanity to deliver Gods' message.

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<sup>3</sup>Aref Ali Nayed, *Interpretation As the Engagement of Operational Artifacts : Operational Hermeneutics* (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Guelph, 1994), 3-4, quoted from Dr.Ugi Suharto, *Apakah Al-Qur'an Memerlukan Hermeneutika?*, (Jurnal ISLAMIA, No.1 Muharram 1425 H), 47.

<sup>4</sup>Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutic* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 3.

<sup>5</sup> On the history of hermeneutics in general, and on the role of the Reformation in particular, see W. Dilthey "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutical System in Relation to Earlier Protestant Hermeneutics" (1860) and "The Rise of Hermeneutics" (1900), both in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Hermeneutics and the Study of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

the God Hermes served to interpret messages from the other Gods. Like Hermes' name, the term *hermeneutic* comes from the Greek word for "interpreter". The concept of utilizing a system to interpret texts was first noted in early writings by Aristotle.

According to Greek understanding of language, the linguistic element does not appear to enjoy any respectable anatomy of its own. It is but mean of expressing something, a thought process that lies "behind" the graphic or phonetic expression itself. The unitary task of hermeneutic in antiquity seems to have consisted in going back from what was said to what was meant, to the *vouloir-dire* beneath language. This understanding of hermeneutic tacitly assumes that language is invested with a meaning that precedes or goes beyond the uttered word itself. There something like transcendence or excess of meaning in regard to what is uttered. An utterance can even carry a different meaning than the one it appears to have.

The followers of Antisthenes which established around the mid-4th century BC have applied hermeneutic in Homer's epic (IX century BC). They interpreted Zeus as the Logos (reason), the wound of Aphrodite-The Goddess of Beauty- as a defeat of Barbarian troops and etc.

So, it can be concluded that actually since the last times ago it had been seen that a tradition of seeking some results of anything could be considered as hermeneutic in classical texts. Such as Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* which is often translated in Germany as "Aristotle's

Hermeneutic “. The Greek used the word “*ermenia*” to describe what we now refer to as translation or more appropriately defined as interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

Although hermeneutical interpretation has been practiced in the Greek tradition, however, the term hermeneutic first time encountered in Plato’s work (429-347 BC) *Politikos*, *Epinomis*, *Definitione* and *Timeus*. In *Definitione* Plato clearly stated hermeneutic means “show something” that is not limited to the statement, but includes general language, translation, interpretation, and also the style of language and rhetoric. Whereas in Plato’s *Timaeus* hermeneutic connect with the authorities the truth, that truth can only be understood by a “prophet”. The Prophet here means a mediator between the gods and man. Which his function was connecting etymological between the clumps semantic hemeneus and intermediaries god Hermes.

## **2. The Rise of Hermeneutic: From Biblical Theology To The Modern Philosophy**

The emergence of hermeneutic triggered by problems that occur in the interpretation of the Bible. Originally started when the reformers reject the authority of Bible interpretation that are in the grip of the church. According to Martin Luther (1483-1546 AD), not the church, not the Pope who can determine the meaning of the scriptures, but the scriptures themselves are the sole source of the finals for the Christian. According to Martin Luther, the Bible must be the interpreters of the Bible itself. He

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<sup>6</sup>Jean Grondin, *sejarah Hermeneutik*, ( Ar-Ruzmedia, Jogjakarta, 2007 ), 48.

said: “This means that (Scripture) itself by itself is the most unequivocal, the most accessible (facilima), the most testing, judging, and illuminating all things,…”<sup>7</sup>. Martin Luther’s assertion that sued the church authorities monopolize the interpretation of the Bible, is a widespread and became a principle of Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone enough, no need to ‘tradition’) Based on the principle of Sola Scriptura, it was built method of interpretation called hermeneutic.

In contemporary times, the word *hermeneutic* is generally used to refer to interpretation of the Bible. Scriptural hermeneutic are used by religious scholars as a system by which to correctly understand the meanings of the Bible. By adhering to a specific set of guidelines, scholars seek to uncover of the basic truths set forth in Scripture.

How the Bible writers think about themselves and the way people think of modern Christians are considered different. The world of texts eventually considered as a representation of the world of myth and modern society is considered to represent the scientific world. Hermeneutic is considered the best way to bridge this gap. The New Encyclopedia Britannica writes, that hermeneutic is the study of the general principles of interpretation of the Bible (the study of the general principle of biblical

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<sup>7</sup>Werner Georg Kummel, *The New Testament : The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, Translated by S.McLean Gilmour dan Howard C.Kee (New York : Abingdon Press, 1972), 21-22, quoted dari Adnin Armas, MA, *Filsafat Hermeneutika dan Dampaknya Terhadap Studi al-Qur'an*, Bahan-Bahan Mata Kuliah *Islamic Worldview* di Program Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam Pasca Sarjana Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Editor : Adian Husaini, 2008.

interpretation). The goal of hermeneutic is to find the truth and values in the Bible<sup>8</sup>

The use of hermeneutic as the art of interpretation can be found in the work of J. C. Dannheucer entitled *Hermeneutica Sacra Sive Methodus exponendarum Sacrarum litterarum*, (Sacred Method or the Method of Explanation of Sacred Literature), published in 1654. There hermeneutic already distinguished from exegesis as the interpretation methodology. Although the meaning remains the same but the object is extended to non-Biblical literature. Since the publication of the book of J. C. Dannheucer hermeneutic understanding wasn't just going out of the Bible context, but even began to arise the view that the interpretation of Bible texts can not be distinguished from the interpretation of other texts. So in addition to the Bible text itself textually problematic, they themselves have not put the Bible as a sacred religious books anymore. Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) in 1670 in his work entitled *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (Treatise on Political theology) states that "the Bible is the standard for reasonable exegesis that is acceptable to all". Reformed Church has strongly criticized this book and then stop the circulation. Even so slowly in this sense hermeneutic recently accepted as a means of (exegesis) Scripture interpretation, and also as an introduction of science interpretation discipline.

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<sup>8</sup>*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago : Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 15<sup>th</sup> edition)

### 3. Hermeneutic In The Modern Era

In a further development, the meaning of hermeneutic shifted to how we understand the reality contained in ancient texts And how the Bible was translated into reality life. One issue that is always raised is difference between the language of the text as well as old-fashioned ways of thinking and modern. As originally hermenutic developed among church and is known as the motion exegesis (interpretation of religious texts) and later developed into “philosophical interpretation” of social life.

Signs of the shift of hermeneutic discourse of dogmatic theology to the spirit of rationalism already begun to appear since the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. This sign was increasingly apparent during the period of Enlightenment in the next century. Spinoza statement was a strong evidence of the displacement theology role in hermeneutic. At that time the people of Europe have tended to use reason and no longer believe in religion and traditional authority. The realization of the ideals of liberal, secular and democratic society emerging slowly.

A Protestant, F.D.E. Schleiermacher was responsible for bringing hermeneutic space studies of biblical (*biblische hermeneutike*) or scriptural interpretation techniques to the scope of philosophy (universal Hermeneutic), so any texts could be the object of hermeneutic.<sup>9</sup>. For Schleiermacher, there is no difference between the philological tradition of hermeneutic grappling with texts from Greco-Roman and theological

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<sup>9</sup> Raharjo, Mudjia. *Dasar-Dasar Hermeneutika: Antara Intensionalisme & Gadamerian* (Yogyakarta : Ar-Ruzzmedia, 2008), 30.

hermeneutic were struggling with scriptural texts. One of his ideas in hermeneutic is universal hermeneutic. In this idea, religious texts should be treated as other texts written by human. Schleiermacher's thought was further developed by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), a philosopher who is also an expert of social sciences. Thereafter, the case study method of hermeneutic turn to ontology in the hands of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), which passed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-1998) and Jurgen Habermas (1929 -). " Schleiermacher not only continue the efforts of his predecessors such as Semler and Ernesti that seek "free interpretation of the dogma".<sup>10</sup> More than that, he also proposed the need to text desecration. In general hermeneutical perspective, "all the text should be treated equally," no one should be favored, no matter whether it is the holy book (Bible) text or humans work.<sup>11</sup> And because of the transformation he did, then Schleiermacher regarded as the father of modern hermeneutic.

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<sup>10</sup> Johann Salomo Semler, *Vorbereitung zur theologischen Hermeneutik, zu weiterer Beforderung des Fleisses angehender Gottesgelerten* (Halle, 1970) and Johann August Ernesti, *Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti*, ed. Christoph Friedrich von Ammon (Halle, 1809; first published at 1761). Cf. Manfred Frank, *Das individuelle Allgemeine : Textstrukturierung und interpretation nach Schleiermacher* (Frankfurt am Main : Surkamp, 1977), quoted from Dr.Syamsuddin Arif, *Orientalis & Diabolisme Pemikiran-Bab Hermenutika dan Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, (Jakarta : Gema Insani Press, 2008), 179.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 180



## B. Understanding Hermeneutic

### 1. The Typology of Hermeneutic

Josef Bleicher classified hermeneutic into three parts, theoretical hermeneutic, philosophical hermeneutic, and critical hermeneutic<sup>12</sup>.

#### a. Theoretical Hermeneutic

This means hermeneutic as a method. An attempt to find the true meaning and understanding of the text as the author meant. (Objective meaning or meanings are valid according to the author). Regarding this hermeneutic Schleiermacher did this with two approaches linguistic approach (grammatical interpretation). It is by direct analysis of the text. And the psychological approach (psychological interpretation) that leads to an objective psychological element of the author (the interpreter must know the psychological text author) assumes an interpreter or reader should equate his position with the author to achieve an objective meaning, the psychological approach stating that the interpretation and understanding of the process is having -the mental processes of the author of the text or *reexperiencing the mental processes of the text author*.

The same opinion was also approved by Dilthey with his historical approach. He stated that meaning as the product of the activity of interpretation is not determined by a transcendental subject but born from the historical reality of life. Dilthey also desired objective is the meaning from the expression of the history of the text emergence. Thus, the text is

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<sup>12</sup> Josef Bleicher, *contemporary hermeneutic : Hermeneutic as a method, philosophy and critic*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) 2

actually a representation from the historical condition of the author of the text. Then proceed by Emilio Betti who unified these approaches between Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's become linguistic approaches, psychological approaches and historical approaches that generate objectively meaning or understanding.

b. Philosophical Hermeneutic

The current of hermeneutic that is not as a method. Hermeneutic is influenced by the flow of existentialism philosophy that emphasizes the existential understanding. The top figure of this flow is the Germany philosopher Hans George Gadamer. Philosophical hermeneutic (ontology), the process of comprehensive understanding of the pre-meeting between the reader and the text. Philosophical hermeneutic found unequivocally that the interpreter or reader has an understanding of prejudice or pre-faceted text so it is impossible to make an objective meaning or meanings according to the author of the text. Hermeneutic does not aim to obtain an objective meaning as hermeneutical theory but on disclosures about the temporality of human *dasein* and history. The implication of this concept is involved in the interpretation ultimately shifted from reproduction of a pre-existing text to participating in the ongoing communication between the past and the present. Another term that if theoretical hermeneutic aims to produce meaning as meaning, that is the meaning of the text author desired, then philosophical hermeneutic aims to

produce an entirely new meaning. People who support this flow is Heidegger and Gadamer.

This hermeneutic concept is from the methodological-epistemology to ontologism range or another term that hermeneutic is not a way of knowing but a mode of being. And then Gadamer walked through that way and stated that interpretation is fusion of horizons. horizon is the author and interpreters or readers, past and present. Thus the meaning of the text as the product of interpretive activities will surely surpass the the author of the text itself.

c. Critical hermeneutic

Critical Hermeneutic (uncovering the author's desire) because in this text hermeneutic considered as suspicious. generally, the critical term here is the assessment or in the relationships that already exist in the standard view, which comes from the knowledge of something better, that there has been a tendency and the potential of this era. While specifically, the term refers to the critical hermeneutic of the existence of a relationship with Frankfurt critical theory. It said the critical hermeneutic of view are criticized because standard concepts that exist in the previous interpretation, the hermeneutical theory and philosophical hermeneutic. Both hermeneutic that have a different point of view turns out both have the attitude of each of the text, which means that both seek to ensure the truth of the meaning of the text. It later became lading hermeneutic criticism, which was more inclined to suspect the text is assumed as the

hiding place false consciousnesses. Critical Hermeneutic more likely to investigation with open sheaths causes a distortion in the understanding and communication that takes place in everyday life interactions. The figure who agreed with this point of view is Habermas. He then considered the factors that are considered outside the text constitutes the context help the text itself.

## **2. Hermeneutical Triadic (Author, Text, Reader )**

Hermeneutic, generally discussing the pattern of the triadic relationship between the text, making the text and the reader (text interpreter). In hermeneutic, the interpreter (hermeneut) in understanding a text - whether it's scriptures or general text - are required to not only see what a text, but rather to what is behind the text and the author of the text.

The author and the interpreter (reader) each bring their own particular horizon of experience to the text. To be sure, the author presumably has a certain purpose in mind in writing or creating his text and intends for it to have a certain meaning. The author is operating within a particular historical context, however, in which words and sentence structure and such have particular meanings that can change with time. The author's life has involved formative experiences enmeshed in particular ideas and events that have had at least some influence on him, much of which he may not be consciously aware. The same can be said of the interpreter, whose historical experience and language-use may be vastly different from those of the author. And, moreover, since one cannot

have direct and complete access to the author's mind, interpretation is necessary.

### **C. Hermeneutic in the Views of Philosophers**

#### **1) Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher**

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834) probably cannot be ranked as one of the greatest German philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (like Kant, Herder, Hegel, Marx, or Nietzsche). But he is certainly one of the most interesting of the second-tier philosophers of the period. Nor was he only a philosopher; he was also an eminent classicist and theologian. Much of his philosophical work was in the philosophy of religion, but from a modern philosophical point of view it is probably his hermeneutic (theory of interpretation) and his theory of translation that deserve the most attention.

Hermeneutic as a method of interpretation and assume all of the text can be the object of study of hermeneutic. Hermeneutic is a theory of translation and interpretation of the text and hold a traditional concepts of scripture and dogma. Schleiermacher offers a method of historical reconstruction, objective and subjective to a statement, discuss the language as a whole. The main task of hermeneutic is to understand the text as well or even better than the author's himself .

The model of Schleiermacher hermeneutic includes two parts

1. Understanding of the text through the mastery of language syntax rules that authors use linguistic approach / grammatical interpretation.

2. Getting the inner emotional content of the authors intuitively by including the interpreter themselves into the inner world of the author / psychological interpretation.

## 2) Wilhelm Dilthey

Wilhelm Dilthey was a German philosopher who lived from 1833–1911. He is best known for the way he distinguished between the natural and human sciences. Whereas the primary task of the natural sciences is to arrive at law-based explanations, the core task of the human sciences is the understanding of human and historical life. Dilthey's aim was to expand Kant's primarily cognitive *Critique of Pure Reason* into a *Critique of Historical Reason* that can do justice to the full scope of lived experience. Understanding the meaning of history requires both an inner articulation of the temporal structures of our own experience and the interpretation of the external objectifications of others. Dilthey's reflections on history and hermeneutic influenced thinkers in the twentieth century, especially Ortega, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur.

### **Historical Understanding and Hermeneutic**

Hermeneutic is essentially historical, meaning never stop at one time, but it is always changing according to the modification history. The final phase of Dilthey's philosophy can be said to begin at the turn of the twentieth century with his essay "*The Rise of Hermeneutic.*" Whereas the early prize-essay on Schleiermacher's hermeneutic had been more focused on textual and theological interpretation, the new essay makes hermeneutic

a connecting link between philosophy and history. Dilthey argues that the study of history can be reliable only if it is possible to raise the understanding of what is singular to the level of universal validity. Here he also comes to the realization that “the inner experience through which I obtain reflexive awareness of my own condition can never by itself bring me to a consciousness of my own individuality. I experience the latter only through a comparison of myself with others”. Others cannot be assumed to be mere extensions of myself. They are accessible to me only from the outside. It is the task of understanding to confer “an inside” to what is first given as “a complex of external sensory signs”<sup>13</sup>.

### **3) Paul Ricoeur**

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) is widely recognized as one of the most distinguished philosophers of the twentieth century. In the course of his long career he wrote on a broad range of issues. The most important contribution of Ricoeur to his hermeneutical thought is the theory of interpretation.

Ricoeur limited hermeneutic to the interpretation of the text. The interpretation Theory of Ricoeur seek a dialectical integration of the dichotomy *verstehen-erklären* Dilthey, as well as out of the fixed price offered by Gadamer between taking a stance that alienated methodological and distance or take a position of truth and lose its objectivity of science.

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<sup>13</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey 1996, 236.

He dreamed of a model text that is able to reach the original meaning of the text without forgetting its relation to reality.<sup>14</sup>

Text is autonomous or stand-alone and does not depend on the intent of the author. There are three kinds of text autonomy as follows :

- 1) Intention or author's meant
- 2) Cultural situation and social condition when and where the text begin.
- 3) The object of the text.

Interpretation is deemed to have successfully achieved its purpose if the “ world text “ and “ interpreter's world “ have mingled into one.

#### **4) Han-Georg Gadamer**

Hans-Georg Gadamer is the decisive figure in the development of twentieth century hermeneutic—almost certainly eclipsing, in terms of influence and reputation, the other leading figures, including Paul Ricoeur, and also Gianni Vattimo (Vattimo was himself one of Gadamer's students). Trained in neo-Kantian scholarship, as well as in classical philology, and profoundly affected by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, Gadamer developed a distinctive and thoroughly dialogical approach, grounded in Platonic-Aristotelian as well as Heideggerian thinking, that rejects subjectivism and relativism, abjures any simple notion of interpretive method, and grounds understanding in the linguistically

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<sup>14</sup> Geir Amdal, *Explanation and understanding: The Hermeneutic Arc Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation*, ( Oslo: University of Oslo, 2001), 1.



mediated happening of tradition. Employing a more orthodox and modest, but also more accessible style than Heidegger himself,

The concept of Gadamer's hermeneutic is prominent in emphasizing what is "understanding". Hermeneutic circle, the part text is understood through the entire text can only be understood through each parts. Any understanding is something that is historical, and dialectic-linguistic events. Hermeneutic is ontology and phenomenological understanding.

In some of his works, including the *Truth and Method*, which it is his greatest work, Gadamer's hermeneutic tries to detach from the sciences, especially the social sciences. To do that, then he re-read the writings of Plato. According to Gadamer relationship between the reader with text are similar to the dialogue relationship between two people who are talking. In this sense the dialogue loses its rigorous scientific dimension, and become a rational conversation to understand an issue. Besides Gadamer also read the writings of Aristotle, especially on the ethics. Gadamer makes ethics as a basis for hermeneutic. The ultimate goal remains the release of hermeneutic tends rigorous science, scientific, and its instrumental.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Jean Grondin, "Gadamer's Basic Understanding of understanding", in *Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 36.