
Hermeneutics as a Discourse of Postmodern Worldview: History, Theory and Implications

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Submitted 2 March 2024

In Review 11 July 2024

Accepted 27 August 2024

Published 28 August 2024

Abstract

This article aimed to elaborate on 'Hermeneutics' as a Discourse in Postmodern Worldview; emerged in the Christian theological system, advanced then reached its peak in the Postmodern era. Hermeneutics later did not merely develop itself within Christianity but implied several consequences to Islamic Studies. In order to come deep into the discussion, this research used the 'Content Analysis' method in the form of 'Qualitative Research', revealing the nature of Hermeneutics as the discourse of Worldview, altogether with its impact on Islamic Studies. This article concluded that Hermeneutic is classified as a discourse based on the Western-Postmodern Worldview with some historical background and theoretical framework and implications towards Islamic Studies, especially in regards to the Qur'an..

Keywords

Discourse, Hermeneutics, Islam, Postmodernism, Worldview

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Introduction

Hermeneutics is not unfamiliar to religious studies discourse. It is a method of reading commonly used for the study of authoritative ancient texts -scripture-, applied to Theology, reflected philosophically, then became part of the social science method¹. The use of Hermeneutics today is not only fixed on its historical reading of biblical texts but has also been recognized as an analytical tool².

The problem arises in the context of the use of Hermeneutics as a branch of science that has value based on the worldview of Western civilization, which is often full of basic assumptions, paradigms, as well as a theoretical framework that is contrary to the Islamic Worldview. The use of hermeneutics in Islamic studies, often thought to have ignored the origin of its construction, also indirectly influenced the ideas that were the object of interpretation. Further reflection on Hermeneutics should be important in order to consider it as part of scientific deepening³. This paper will answer the following research question : "How to understand Hermeneutics as a Postmodern Worldview?"

Methods

This article is a Qualitative Research using the Content Analysis method. As qualitative research, this research will try to capture and describe the 'meaning' of phenomena in certain contexts presented in the form of narratives, theories, actions, and cases⁴. In the context of qualitative research, the following paper will review specifically the topic of

¹ Brecht Deseure, *New Philosophies of Social Science* (London: Macmillan Education, Limited, 1987).

² Daan F Oostveen, "Hermeneutical Explorations of Multiple Religious Belonging" (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2017); Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Hermeneutics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 275–284.

³ David I Hanauer et al., "Teaching Scientific Inquiry," *Science* 314, no. 5807 (September 16, 2006): 1880–1881.

⁴ Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, "QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND RELATED SUBJECTS," *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People* 7, no. 1 (May 7, 2018): 23

'Hermeneutics' and its interrelation as a 'discourse on the view of life'. In order to achieve that, this study will present an overview of Hermeneutics and Worldview one by one sequentially in order to get an argumentative answer to the Research Question.

Content analysis is a method of examining and interpreting the features of messages that are present in texts. It serves as a discreet technique that enables researchers to effectively handle and condense substantial amounts of information, offering significant historical and cultural understanding of a research issue. In this particular context, it will be strongly linked to Hermeneutics and the Postmodern Worldview. This research employs content analysis, which involves the systematic selection of texts relevant to the research questions, the identification of message units, the creation of content categories, the coding of the text, and the interpretation of the findings⁵.

Result and Discussion

1. UNDERSTANDING THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF HERMENEUTICS: FROM ST. AUGUSTINE TO LUTHER

Hermeneutics comes from the Greek verb 'hermēneuō' ἑρμηνεύω i.e. "to interpret". Literally, this word describes how the Greek God, Hermes, was in charge of delivering messages from gods so that they could be captured by human intelligence. Hermeneutics, in Palmer's (1969) notes illustrates the existence of a process for understanding something. In the Biblical Tradition, Hermeneutics was originally used in matters of interpretation of sacred texts; it later had much broader significance as a method of analysis in its development. Hoy (1982) emphasizes the urgency of Hermeneutics as a method of understanding Bible Verses as well as general texts—in accordance with the affirmation of Hermes' duty as the Messenger God as follows:

⁵ Diane M. Badzinski, Robert H. Woods Jr., and Chad M. Nelson, "Content Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, 2nd Edition. (London ; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2022).

“... In the absence of Hermes, the modern age needs hermeneutics. In a more limited sense, hermeneutics is the concern with speech and writing, and hence with the methodology of interpretation of text. When hermeneutics was largely an ancillary discipline of theology, the “word” to be interpreted was that of the Bible; interpretation involved spelling out the meaning of a word that already spoke to and claimed its hearers. ...” detail, discussed thoroughly by including arguments or facts that can be scientifically justified, both arguments originating from the Koran, hadith, and the words of rational scholars. What is often used by classical commentators is the ijmal method. What is the ijmal method? Ijmal is a brief interpretation without lengthy explanations. Lastly, the Muqarran (Comparative) method, which means interpreting verses of the Qur'an and discussing a problem, is done by comparing verses between verses or verses with hadith, either from an editorial perspective or between the opinions of interpretive scholars by highlighting certain differences of the objects being compared.⁶

of an Ancient Greek God, many scholars who believe the theological aspects of Hermeneutics are mainly found in none other than St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*. This work is a manuscript composed of 4 components that explain how humans should understand, interpret, and behave in accordance with the teachings in the scriptures. This is as explained by Kevane (1966), that: “... it (*De Doctrina Christiana*) is a treatise on biblical hermeneutics, indeed the first of a long line of such textbookish manuals or introductions to Scripture that extends to the present.” Kevane's opinion is also in line with that presented by Jackson (1969): “... He does in fact apply the properly semantic notions of sign, thing, and signification to hermeneutics.” Both Kevane and Jackson agree that early hermeneutical principles emerged none other than at the hands of St. Augustine. In other words, the tradition of interpretation in Christianity only came into existence in the 4th century after the era of Jesus. Similarly, recognized by a number of other researchers.⁷

⁶ David Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle: Literature, History, and Philosophical Hermeneutics*, First page. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982). p. 1-2.

⁷

d) Provisions from good things, Allah also provides sustenance from things that are halal and good for humans to consume and sell

e) Priority is given to the creation of other creatures, such as being given a mind, a creation that is different from other creatures.⁸

Of the five advantages of humans, summarized in Tafsir Al-Azhar, it is said that God gives humans reason and thoughts, as well as imagination which is used to think about the past, present and future. Humans can also command all creatures, the more advanced human thinking has become from the era of rock cave life, farming, to fishing and trading from island to island, continent to continent. Well, this is where the symbolic meaning of the verse is found, which means that in the past people were already active in passing between islands, this indicates that human movement (mobility) in this study is termed migration, all of this was done by humans to earn a living, earn a living and so on.⁹ The meaning of this verse also means that if someone needed to travel where previously there were only ships, Allah also provided land-based vehicles like in classical times: camels, horses, donkeys, whereas now cars, motorbikes and so on are available.¹⁰ However, here Ibn Assyur has not mentioned *Taskhitul Jawwi* (conquering the air), namely the invention of the airplane, because at that time there were not so many airplanes.

Analysis of the Interpretation of Ibn Assyur Qs. Yasin verse 40:

وَأَيُّ لَآئِمٍ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ

Meaning: "And a sign (of Allah's greatness) was for them that We brought their descendants in an ark full of cargo."¹¹

Specifically, in Ibn Assyria's interpretation, it means a place to store goods and then move them to another place. The place to accommodate the

⁸ Muhammad Tahir Ibn 'Asyur, Tafsir Tahrir Wa At-Tanwir Juz 22. Hlm. 26- 30.

⁹ Abdul Malik Abdul Karim Amrullah, Tafsir Al-Azhar Jilid 6 (singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, n.d.). hlm. 4094

¹⁰ A. Hassan, Al-Furqon (Tafsir Al-Qur'an) (surabaya: al-Ikhwan, 1956). Hlm. 864.

¹¹ Qs. Yasin (36) : 41.

goods is a vehicle that can be transported on land. Meanwhile, in the sea, humans created ships to transport them on a journey, which explains that carrying is not just transporting, but through travel, moving places, this is what gave birth to the term migration or mobility, which humans are able to provide. Allah inspired Ibn Asyur in his interpretation saying that humans were able to create something that had never existed, such as the creation of Noah's ship for the first time to cross the flash flood at that time. This incident is immortalized in Qs. al-Haqqah verse 11:¹²

This was the beginning of the existence of vehicles that were strong enough to accommodate and were able to float on water and in the next era humans created various new alternatives that were able to control the sea, land and air, as in the past when people traveled long distances using camels, now they can use motorbikes, cars and other things, in the air there is a plane, this is the uniqueness and superiority of humans who are given intelligence that exceeds that of other creatures, that is the meaning of the verse contained above and this explanation also requires very deep reading and reflection because the Koran is able to give rise to a new scientific thing that cannot be eroded by time.¹³

The existence of Asbab al-Nuzul which is behind the descent of the Qur'an is more as a method of education (manhaj al-ta'dib) and not as part of religious teachings, either in the form of commandments or prohibitions. Obligations in religion (taklif) that arose along with certain events, then the suitability was only characterized as education for Muslims at that time. But in general, man is conceptually the object of commandments and prohibitions (khitab) with broader realities than those related to the realities in which revelation came down. Therefore, the events that occurred at the time of the descent of revelation were only 'precisions' as a natural process

¹² Tim Ma'had Yanbu'ul Qur'an, Al-Qur'an Terjemah (Kudus: Pt. Buya Barokah, n.d.). hlm. 566.

¹³ Asmaji Muchtar, Tafsir As-Salam (Wonosobo: Unsiq Press, 2019). Hlm. xxi

(sunnatullah) of revelation. This is clearly evidenced in the method of Ushul Fiqh; 'Ibratu in 'General al-Lafdz la bi khususi al-Sabab'.¹⁴

The influence of the use of Hermeneutics in Islamic studies, in Azami's (2003) notes, has its own significance in the distortion of the Qur'an. In *The History of the Qur'anic Text*, he wrote: "... all Orientalists must, to varying extents, practice dishonesty if they are to successfully distort the Qur'an, whether by transmutation, deliberate mistranslation, wilful ignorance, use of suprious references, or other means..."¹⁵ This view has a simple effect, because, in some cases, Muslims are 'forced' to acknowledge the existence of a human element in the revelation of the Qur'an¹⁶

Closing

Conclusion

Hermeneutics can actually be classified as a discourse based on the Postmodern Western worldview. It was born theologically from a Christian womb, developed to its peak in the Postmodern era, then scientifically implicated the Muslim view of life especially in looking at the Holy Qur'an. Further study is needed in understanding the Hermeneutic discourse more comprehensively and in detail reviewing the origins, processes, and implications arising from Hermeneutics, especially related to Islamic Studies.

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¹⁴ Muhammad Abu Syuhbah, *al-Madkhal li Dirasah al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Riyadh: Dar al-Liwa, 1987), 160.

¹⁵ Al-A'zami, *The History of The Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testament*, 318.

¹⁶ F. Peter Ford Jr., "THE QUR'AN AS SACRED SCRIPTURE: AN ASSESSMENT OF CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES," *The Muslim World* 83, no. 2 (April 1993): 142–164.

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