



# The Development Of Hermeneutics In The Era Of Friedrich Schleiermacher

Dr. Monalisha Biswas<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup> Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Raja Peary Mohan College, Uttarpara, Hooghly, West Bengal  
Email Id:- Monalisabiswas38@Gmail.Com, Mobile No. :-9903438034

**Citation:** Dr. Monalisha Biswas et al. (2024), The Development Of Hermeneutics In The Era Of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 30(5), 14439-14442  
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i5.6676

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received Date: 21 April Accepted Date: 03 May Published Date: 15 May	<p>My present project concern itself how the term hermeneutics developed on Friedrich Schleiermacher's era, for that first we talk something about the relation between philosophy and hermeneutics. All through the hermeneutics as exegesis is essentially embedded in tradition, the emergence of hermeneutics in the modern period and engagement with philosophy need special attention for there are different dimension of this relation. But before we attempt to explore thin relationship it will be order to have on idea what hermeneutics is. The term 'Hermeneutics' comes from a Greek word 'Hermes' which means 'to interpret' and earliest occurrence is found in Plato's Cratylus in Greek mythology 'Hemer' in the messenger of gods, a go between of gods and humans, who tells lies as well as truth's, who misleads as well as leads. Similar Aristotle's work per Hermeneutics (on interpretation) concerns the way in which sentences or statements can be understood. Hermeneutics then is the traditional name for the art of interpretation.</p> <p>Principle of the interpretation were laid down in ancient and medieval attempts to interpret sacred texts, e.g., the biblical text. During the late middle ages, hermeneutics was applied specifically to the interpretation of legal texts and was later revitalized in philology by the effort of Renaissance humanist revive classical learning in the Enlightenment and in the Romantic era hermeneutics was looked upon a providing some kind of general method of understanding. In the nineteenth century, it emerged with Friedrich Schleiermacher's as a separate and independent discipline on its own right as 'general hermeneutics', as a general method of understanding, or as a general theory of interpretation-grammatical and psychological for all type of texts.</p> <p><b>Keyword:</b> Hermeneuin, Hermes, Hermenenias, Sina qua, Per Hermenenias, Sprache, Rede</p>

Friedrich Daniel Ernest Schleiermacher was born in Breslau in 21<sup>st</sup> Nov., 1768 and died in Berlin in 12<sup>th</sup> Feb., 1834. He is considered a major figure in the history and development of hermeneutics. Almost every account of the history of Modern hermeneutics pays some kind of tribute to the funding role played by him. However, hermeneutics was not his only ort even main interest. He was a professor of protestant theology at the university of Berlin and a preacher, of him complete works available in English translation, hermeneutics an criticism dialectic and ethics only the first is devoted to his writing an hermeneutics, complied out of a number of notes and aphorism (1808-09), a compendium (1819) two academic lectures (1829), a separate discussion on the second section 1829 compendium and a group of marginalia (marginal notes from 1823-33). The rest are devoted to theology alone, nor in Christianity. But Schleiermacher does not belong to theologians allowed to monopolize him. The problem of interpretation and understanding, the sina qua none of hermeneutics, underline his activities as theologian and preacher, as they died him translation of Plato.

Hermeneutics as used in the eighteenth century refers to the interpretation of texts. Though initially it was used in religious writings, later on it was extended to linguistic understanding. It was Friedrich Schleiermacher who used hermeneutic practices in theology and defines it as the art of avoiding misunderstanding. However, it is not quite correct to say that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics represents the philological tradition. His is a borderline case lying in between philological and philosophical phases of thought. Some of the most radical arguments of philosophical hermeneutics derive from the insights articulated by him.<sup>1</sup> Kurt Muller Vollmer has

gone to the extent of remarking that the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher represents a complete break from tradition "with Schleiermacher modern hermeneutics was born."<sup>2</sup>

This observation is not to be taken in an unqualified manner. It is true that Schleiermacher's contribution represents a turning point in the development of hermeneutics. However, he did not create his hermeneutics in a vacuum. The early Romantic movement in Europe formed the background of his work. He brought together and synthesized the major trends from the older schools of Christian Wolff, J.M. Chladenius etc, and at the same time laid the foundation of hermeneutics, both the philological and historical hermeneutics of the nineteenth century. The hermeneutic philosophy at the twentieth century is indebted to him.

Schleiermacher attempted to ground hermeneutics in a concept of understanding and since then "understanding" has become the cornerstone of hermeneutic theory. He describes hermeneutics as the art of avoiding misunderstanding.<sup>3</sup> There is always an element of the other, the alien, in all our experiences. With the presence of the other, there is always the possibility of misunderstanding. Hence, interpretation has universal scope. If we see interpretation in its universality of demand, we also come to see that the question of hermeneutics is not what are the specific techniques and rules of interpretation of specific texts and discourses, but how understanding of the other is possible. Therefore, according to him, the purpose of interpretation is to achieve understanding. He says in his aphoristic manner, "Two definitions of understanding. Every thing is understood when nothing nonsensical remains. Nothing is understood, that is not construed"<sup>4</sup>.

The ancient task of interpreting and explicating texts suddenly appears in a new light. For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics was no longer occupied with the decoding of a given meaning or with the clearing away obstacles in the way of proper understanding, but was above all concerned with illuminating the conditions for the possibility of understanding and its modes of interpretation. It is not the case that a reader understands everything unless and until he encounters contradictions or non-senses. Schleiermacher advances, from the point of view of hermeneutics, to the conception of the organic unity of a work, with possibility of infinite interpretations. We cannot claim to understand anything that I "cannot perceive or apprehend as necessary and which I cannot construct. In accordance with this maxim understanding is an unending task".<sup>5</sup>

In saying this, he contradicts the rationalistic concept of the historical, philological interpretation of his predecessors. He claims that whenever we seek to read out of texts the sense and meaning rich have gone into them, and ever-renewed, unique and special hermeneutic effort has to be made. The task of understanding must be repeated ever anew whenever we encounter the word of others, whenever run up against what is new and unfamiliar to us, whenever we seek for understanding, insight, assimilation of what is alien and range to us. We can clarify the matter with some examples from our own culture. The epic of Mahabharata has been understood differently by different scholars as they are separated from the text in space and time. Rajsekhar Basu's understanding differs from Buddhadeb Basu's and this again from Iravati Karve's. This also plies to the understanding of its isolated episodes like the meeting of Karna and Kunti or the dramatization of Draupadi's complaints against her husbands by Shaoli Mitra. Understanding also becomes urgent when one wants to translate, say, in English Greek dramas, which are far-removed from us both spatially, temporally and culturally. We may here refer to Gilbert Murray's translation of Greek dramas, an effort which was criticized by T.S. Eliot at lacking in understanding the intentions of the author. This shows that understanding is not only possible but necessary and hence hermeneutics is indispensable.

Schleiermacher also does with the distinction between understanding and what is understood. For him, the need of understanding arises not only when my rationality comes in conflict with an instance of alien speech and writing. Rather the very conception of rational insight and the categories of interpretation which help me in my encounters with the speech and writings of others can no longer be taken for granted as unproblematic. I, my own speech, my own capacity for understanding, and all the concepts and categories by which it is organised are subject to questioning. The result of this analysis of understanding reveals conflicting views of the truth as against some objective structures of timeless truth. Competing value and belief systems bear witness to the inexhaustible variety and uniqueness of human beings and human groups, which cannot be reduced to a single standard or criterion of judgement. In a remarkable passage of *The Monologue* (Monologen)<sup>6</sup> he writes that for a long time he had been under the Spell of the supremacy of Reason - its uniformity. He believed that each human being was merely an identical element which was everywhere the same. But later on it dawned upon him that every man should express his humanity in his own unique fashion, that human nature should be revealed in every possible way and not in some once-for-all embodiment of absolute perfection. The finite perspectives in which human nature reveals itself, each of which is equally valid both emerges from Schleiermacher's coming to grips with the problem of understanding and gives it validity. Certainly, gestures, bodily posture, facial expressions, dress, self-adornment, domestic decorations, and a thousand and one other human manifestations convey sense and meaning. But the locus per excellence of understanding and meaning is language. Here the problem of understanding is seen in its fullest and most sophisticated form. Language at once makes possible and also demands understanding. It is an objectively given web of general terms which makes understanding possible, yet every manifestation of it is indissolubly tied to an identifiable individual which makes understanding a necessity. Language is in the first place a common stock of identical signs and symbols, which is shared to a greater or lesser degree by all those who participate in it. It opens up a vast region of understanding. Understanding then is an understanding of language and through it of what it is that a spoken or written language would have us understand. But language

does not write and speak itself. While all thought is only given its perfected form in speech, it is not words or speech themselves that do the thinking. Rather, language is thought of as a capacity and as a potentiality, not as something fixed and final and fully realized. It is a system of signs and symbols, which generate sense and meaning only when it is put into operation. Language according to Schleiermacher possesses an element of generality and objectivity and at the same time, of individuality and subjectivity. For this reason, language and language users are the two vital ingredients in hermeneutics. Now it is clear from this that hermeneutics is not a merely subjective activity devoted to interpreting signs and expressions in any way it pleases. For, understanding is concerned, not only with the speaker but with what he says.

Accordingly, Schleiermacher gives a linguistic interpretation to understanding. Understanding for him, is an activity analogous to that of speaking. Both are defined from man's linguistically or capacity for speech, that is his knowledge of language (*Sprache*) and his mastery of speech (*Rede*). Schleiermacher thinks that every human being is equipped with a basic linguistic disposition, which has to be realized by acquiring a given language at a particular moment in history, and by interlacing its grammatical rules. Knowing a grammar for Schleiermacher is therefore, the same as knowing a language. Men express their linguistic competence in speech acts, which produce utterances. Similarly, their linguistic competence enables them to understand the utterances of others. Thus speech acts and acts of understanding closely correspond to each other; "Their co-relation consists in that every act of understanding is the reverse of an act of speaking, and one must grasp the thought that underlies a given utterance".<sup>7</sup>

Thus we see that Schleiermacher introduce a distinction of Crucial importance for hermeneutics. He believes that understanding an utterance whether spoken or written necessarily involves two things. The first concerns the understanding of an expression solely in terms of a relationship to the language of which it is a part. Each utterance must be seen and understood as forming part of the given interpersonal linguistic expression, as a part of the speaker's life process, his internal mental history. Understanding for Schleiermacher, takes place only in the co-relation of these two moments.

We may venture to state that this distinction drawn by Schleiermacher comes very close to what Searle; a noted theorist of speech acts has to say, even though he does not mention Schleiermacher. Searle draws a distinction between what a sentence in the production of a speech act means in the language one is speaking and one's meaning something by it. He asks, "...what is it for one to mean something by what one says, and what is it for something to have a meaning?"<sup>8</sup>The difference according to him is twofold. "One difference is the sounds or marks one makes in the performance of an illocutionary act are characteristically said to have meaning, and a second related difference is that one is characteristically said to mean something by the utterance of those sounds and marks".<sup>9</sup>

### **The two moments distinguished by Schleiermacher are the following:**

- (i) An act of speaking cannot even be understood as a moment in a person's development unless it is also understood in relation to the language, which he shares with other speakers of the language,
- (ii) Nor can an act of speaking be understood modification of the language unless it is also understood as a moment in the development of the person. This needs explanation. The words, expressions, gestures of another person are expressive of his world of thoughts, feeling and aspirations. They should not be cast in the well-worn and familiar concepts and categories of our own world. The understanding of another's language requires seeing that he is 'thus and not otherwise.

How are we to reconcile Schleiermacher's declaration that understanding is an infinite task with the assertion, which we have already quoted that I understand nothing "which I do not apprehend as necessary and which I cannot myself construct"? We can combine then in the following manner. I first grasp the unique, specific sense of meaning of a particular human life or a collection thereof, in the richness of a given historical context. Then, in the second place, an active recreation is made of the hopes, aspirations etc. of the relevant historical persons.

The construction must be of such a kind that one recognizes that he cannot escape giving it. This gives it necessity. Under the given circumstances, there is an inner necessity for the act of construction. The necessity is not logical but quasi-psychological, but not less compelling than the logical. It is also quasi-aesthetic in the sense that the art of understanding is a kind of creative reproduction, a new creation when the interpreter resurrects the sense of a text, using his own creative substance and from his own sense of perspective, thereby giving the work a new life and a new voice to express its originality and uniqueness.

The goal of hermeneutics is both to understand the meaning of the text and "to understand the discourse just as well as or even better than its creator"<sup>10</sup> Such a process of interpretation is called 'divination', as it transforms oneself into the other person in order to understand his individuality directly so as to apprehend the inner origin, meaning and style of the author and his work. As such, it is the recreation of a creative work. Schleiermacher is very much aware that the art of interpretation is still far from being a perfect one. He admits that "no individual inspection of a work ever-exhausts its meaning; interpretation can always be rectified. Even the best is only an approximation of the meaning. Because interpretation so seldom succeeds, and because

even the superior critic is open to criticism, we can see that we are still far from the goal of making hermeneutics a perfect art"<sup>11</sup>.

### Notes & Reference

1. F. Schleiermacher, hermeneutics handwriting manuscript, ed., Heind kimmerle : trans, Jamer Duck and Jackson Forstman Missoula, MT : Scholars Press, 1979, pp.109-10
2. F. Schleiermacher, Hermeneutic and Kritik, ed., F. Lucke, Berlin, 1838, trans as Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writing by Andrew Bowie, Oxford : Oxford university, press, 1988.
3. Krut Mueller – Vollmer, ed., The Hermeneutics Reader, Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1985, P.8.
4. 1 bid, P.10.
5. Maurizio Ferraris, History of Hermeneutics, trans, Luca Somigli, New Jersey : Hermeneutics Press, 1988, P.81.
6. "Paradigm Shifts : The Philosophical Hermeneutics of F. Schleiermacher" Mid- Western Journal of Theology, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2011.
7. Leben Schleiermachers, vol.1, Berlin : Rainer, 1867-70, vol.11, Berlin : De Gruyter, 1966. Sourecc Maurizio Ferraris, History of Hermeneutics, trans, Luca Somigli, New Jersey, 1988.