



Reading a Feminist Response on “The Book of Knowledge” Based on Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics

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Abstract

The position of woman and knowledge in Islamic perspective has been an interesting issue in Islamic studies. One of the female Muslim scholars who focus her studies on feminism is Sa’diyya Shaikh. By exploring Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, this paper is aimed at explaining the basic concepts of the philosophical hermeneutics of Sa’diyya Shaikh’s “Knowledge, Women, and Gender in the Hadith: a Feminist Interpretation” published in 2014. The work is focused on the interpretation responding to the selected texts of the Hadith in “The Book of Knowledge”, the collection of the prophetic traditions by Sahih al-Bukhari. It was found out that prejudice influences Shaikh’s motivation in interpreting the text. However, as there are neither merely subjective nor objective aspects in the interpretation, Shaikh positions herself in the structures of self-understanding which reveal “the truth” for her within a horizon. Indeed, Shaikh’s interpretation is dynamic. Thus, it can still be fixed and changed to invite new perspectives

Keywords:

Feminism, Hermeneutics, Interpretation

Introduction

In this paper, the writer explores the concept of philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) by discussing the feminists’ responses to the issue of knowledge and women in Islamic perspective. The responses have been developed by Sa’diyya Shaikh,¹ a

¹ Sa’diyya Shaikh is a senior lecturer at Department of Religious Studies,

Muslim feminist woman, in her article “Knowledge, Women, and Gender in the Hadith: a Feminist Interpretation” (2004). Shaikh addresses her interpretation responding to the selected texts of the Hadith² in the *Book of Knowledge* in Bukhari’s collection of the prophetic traditions.³

The writer aims to explain the basic concepts of philosophical hermeneutics; prejudice, circle of hermeneutics, horizon, and fusion of horizons, by examining Shaikh’s interpretation as her hermeneutical experience to certain texts based on her feminist position. Based on the reading, the writer assumes that those basic concepts of philosophical hermeneutics are possible to explain the hermeneutical basis of the feminist perspective employed by Sa’diyya Shaikh to interpret the *hadith*. On this paper, the writer argues that the concept of understanding on mediating the past and present in philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer is very important in developing Islamic feminist scholarship, especially to reinforce hermeneutical conversation between the text of our tradition, which is presumably grounded in patriarchal norms, and the present intention of liberating women from injustice.

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2 Hadith is usually defined as saying, deeds, and approval of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). Other terms used to refer to *hadith* is *sunnah*, means “tradition” in the sense of a course of action commonly followed by the Prophet.

3 Bukhari’s collection is compiled by Imam Muhammad b. Isma’il al-Bukhari (194-256H/810-870CE). Unlike the Qur’an, which only has one version, the Hadith has a remarkable number of versions, editions and compilations covering a wide range issues related to the daily lives of Muslims. Bukhari’s collection is one of the reliable collections of the prophetic traditions, yet it is the most authoritative text for Muslim Sunni after the Qur’an.

The Task of Philosophical Hermeneutics

The topic of knowledge and women, chosen intentionally by Shaikh as it relates to the prevalent construction of being women, leads her—and any interpreters—to the perception and understanding of ‘being-in-the-world’ of women. The discourse of knowledge always represents power relation, as the less knowledge will be defined by the more. Shaikh begins the article by claiming that her personal is political. By claiming that, she does not only share her belief and her experience, but she rather establishes a hermeneutical foundation from what she believes in as a Muslim and what she experiences as a woman. She actually questions and establishes herself of being women in Islamic perspective while interpret the texts or the traditions (Maritato 2017; Hemmasi 2017; Contractor 2017; Golkowska 2017). According to her, while Islam has a fundamental commitment to justice, at the same time as a woman, she experiences as ‘the other’ in the real life which is constructed by some authoritative texts of Islam in her community (Reilly 2017; Nyhagen 2017; Rasmussen & Kohut 2017).

The whole work of the article establishes of being a woman in the world of Islam. Both women and men are equal in Islam. They both have the same right to seek and earn knowledge. In Islam, feminist knowledge is epitomized in the characteristic of Aishah, the beloved wife of the Prophet (Pbuh), the very active seeker of knowledge by questions and interrogations. Shaikh believes in the wholeness of human in Islam, women and men, in term of knowledge. Knowledge relates to the body and sexuality is valuable in Islam as well as it relates to the soul and spirituality. In this sense, she questions the traditions which exclude women and the knowledge which relates them to ‘being-in-the-world’ as the center of Islam. She rejects patriarchal perspective and proposes equality of all human beings, which is embodied in the concept of *khalifah* in Islam, as the fundamental of Islamic view. Accordingly, religious anthropology

in Islamic scholarship should be transformed radically to include women experiences in determining religious thought. In doing so, she constructs “a religious anthropology in which humanity, male and female, is presented in ways that are holistic, non-hierarchical, [and] egalitarian.” (Shaikh 2004, 88-108)

Her work, interpreting selected texts of the *hadith*, is much more dialectic rather than methodic, between her truth of being women and the truth which embodied inherently in the texts. She puts the text, which is the prophetic tradition, in its past context that it is presumably being the normative at the center of male religious discourse, while she believes in the truth of the text is the principle of justice. Imperative things to do is being aware of the way in which the human being is constructed, removing patriarchal perspective from the prophetic traditions and reconstructing alternative interpretation which promotes equality and justice. In doing so, she argues a feminist hermeneutics in reading the texts of the *hadith*.

The key concepts of the article are about being women, women experiences and dialectical process, which are also the principle of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. Unlike traditional hermeneutics which focuses on theories, methods, and methodology of understanding, Gadamer rather centers on preliminary and more fundamental question of understanding itself as the process of ontological ‘being-in-the-world’, as his teacher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) has already put it.

According to Gadamer, “to understand, we may say, is itself a kind of happening” (Gadamer 2004, 29). Hermeneutics, for Gadamer will not help people to understand the truth through its methods, as understanding itself always moves back-forth within historicity of ‘being-in-the-world’. It is rather dialectic that allows understanding itself to be guided by the shared subject matter of what is being understood (Palmer 1969, 163).

“Philosophical hermeneutics takes as its task the opening up of the hermeneutical dimension in its full scope, showing its fundamental

significance for our entire understanding of the world and thus for all the various forms in which this understanding manifests itself: from inter-human communication to manipulation of society; from personal experience by the individual in society to the way in which he encounters society; and from tradition as it is built of religion and law, art and philosophy, to the revolutionary consciousness that unhinges the tradition through emancipator reflection” (Gadamer 2004, 18).

“The circle of understanding is not methodological circle, but describes an ontological structure of understanding or being. The hermeneutic task becomes of itself a questioning of things, whereby early understandings or fore-projecting become replaced by more suitable projections, as it becomes clear what the meaning is. In other words, fore-projections are constantly revised as new meanings emerge from the text, constituting the movement of understanding and interpretation” (Mohammadi 2008, 74).

Prejudice and Dialogue with the Texts

Traditional hermeneutics, represented by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), asserts that interpreting a text correctly means recovering the original intention of the author who wrote it, prejudices of its readers and its interpreters. It is assumed that historical and cultural distance of the interpreter from the text being interpreted necessarily causes misunderstanding, while Gadamer argues that prejudices of the interpreter, the context of intelligibility, enable understanding as well as misunderstanding. Prejudice is a condition and necessary part of understanding. According to Gadamer, we must be situated in the world before understanding can occur. He believes rather in that there could be no understanding without prior-knowledge, presupposition, and assumption. Moreover, the ties to one’s present horizons, one’s knowledge, and one’s experience are the productive grounds of understanding (Mohammadi 2008, 72-73).

The concept of prejudice is very central in the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer. It is known as hermeneutical situation where

the interpreter relates her/his present situation to the past situation of the text. The objectivity of understanding and interpretation therefore is not in avoiding prejudice but in its confirmation. We should be aware of our own prejudices or our biases before and when we interpret the texts, in the sense that we remain open to listen to ‘the otherness’ of them and participate new meanings into them within historicity of our present. According to Gadamer, “to understand, in the sense of knowing and explaining, already involves within it something like an application or relation of the past to the present” (Palmer 1969, 187).

“Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must be validated by hermeneutics theory, which is far too dominated by the ideal of a procedure, a method” (Gadamer 1995, 290).

“The past is never simply a collection of objects to be recovered or duplicated by the interpreter, but rather what Gadamer calls an “effective history” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) that alone makes possible the conversation between each new interpreter and the text of event that seeks to understand. The prejudices and interests that mark out our hermeneutical situation are given to us by the very movement of tradition –of former concretizations that mediate the text to us– and constitute our immediate participation in this effective history. It is not exaggeration, to say that for Gadamer prejudices function as a limit to the power of self-consciousness” (Linge 2004, xvii).

Thus, the historical and cultural distances between the Prophet (570-632), Imam al-Bukhari (810-870) and the collector of the prophetic tradition, and between Imam al-Bukhari (810-870) and Sa’diyya Shaikh, a contemporary feminist writer, create presupposition and assumptions – prejudices- wherein the context of both Bukhari’s collection and Shaikh’s interpretation is shaped for the intelligibility. Imam al-Bukhari had been situated in his world before his act of collection and understanding occurred, as Shaikh has in her world before she interprets the texts of

Bukhari's collection. Presupposition which is created by historicity of her present in her world makes her not only in relation with the past of the *hadith*, but also prompts her to a participation to unearth the truth of the *hadith* itself which put in a dialogue with her truth of 'being woman' in her Islamic perspective.

“Hans-Georg Gadamer stated that factors such history and tradition, as well as factors such as the interpreter's aims, methods, and themes, influence their interpretation of the text. He recognized not only the subjective nature of the text, but also the subjective nature of the interpretation of the text. Hermeneutics thus recognizes that people live within and create meaning through the social, cultural and historical context in which they are embedded, and through which they make sense of their world. Therefore, understanding and meaning, for Gadamer, results not only from the text, but also through the interaction between the text and the interpreter located in their own life world, larger cultural context and historical point of time” (Mohammadi 2008,75).

It is pertinent to note here that the whole life of the Prophet (570-632) has never been captured by the whole texts of the collection of al-Bukhari. When he received around 600,000 texts from his teachers, the accepted ones were only 9.082 texts according to his evaluation. One text of the *hadith* consists of one, two, three or more sentences describing sayings, deeds, and/or approval of the Prophet. The number 9.082 texts of the collection include texts repeated in more than one place of the collection. Discounting all repetitions, Bukhari's collection contains only 2.602 texts of the *hadith* (Kamali 2002, 46-51). It is a number that never preserves all cases in the lifetime of the Prophet (Pbuh). Collecting the *hadith* accordingly means understanding it within prejudices historicity of Imam al-Bukhari.

Bukhari's collection of the prophetic traditions is divided into 106 books and total of 3.450 chapters. The Book of Knowledge (*Kitab al-'Ilm*), which is responded by Sa'diyya Shaikh, is the third book in the

collection after the first book “The Revelation” and the second book “The Creed”. Her response specifically is focused only on 6 texts, which relate to women as actors or involve women indirectly, of 136 texts of the *hadith* comprising “The Book of Knowledge”. This fact shows how temporal distance with creates prejudices as the intelligible context of both texts of collection and its interpretation.

In the process of interpretation, Shaikh does not only recognize her prejudices, but also brings them into account as her basis in analyzing the texts of the collection and offers alternative possibilities in which her prejudices are comfortable with. Below is Shaikh’s position that shows obviously her prejudices and lets them involve in the process of understanding and encountering the tension between the texts and the present:

“There are two significant personal motivations that propel me and my academic work. Firstly, I have a fundamental commitment to justice as a spiritual core of Islam. The second related point is my experience of spiritual and psychological and social dissonance when I read much of the authoritative textual material in Islam which makes it almost impossible to consider myself, a female Muslim, as the normative addressee of the text. I am very often left with uneasy and unpalatable notion that as a female, I am the ‘Other’ within the house of Islam. It is not a position I am willing to accept. My rejection is not only base on the very real pain that I experience as a human being through this exclusion but, more importantly, it is my very deep commitment to the fundamental Islamic view of the full *khilāfa* of all human beings, male and female. This commitment makes it impossible for me to surrender my religion to what I consider to be the *shirk* of patriarchy” (Sa’diyya 2004, 99).

In the statement of position above, Sa’diyya Shaikh shows the horizon of her personal and social background in which she situates herself in relation to the texts. Presupposition and assumption are necessary, according to Gadamer, in term of the process of understanding. In this respect, Shaikh does not only recognize her prejudices, but takes them into

account in the process of interpreting the tradition. The tension between two aspects of patriarchy and liberation in Islamic heritage has been exploited, in the process of her understanding, to establish and employ feminist hermeneutics. The *hadith* or the tradition, according to her, does not only have a significant role in the formation of Islamic images of women in the early periods of Islam, but also a critical important role in our present times as many Muslim proponents of patriarchy often underpin their attitudes of sexism in Islam with the references of the *hadith* (Zubair & Zubair 2017; Gokarikel & Smith 2017; Imam et al. 2017).

For Shaikh, interpret the tradition accordingly should be sensitive and critical on sexism, either in operate the text, analyze the tensions, or offer the alternative possibilities within the text. She exploits her prejudices in examining knowledge construction of Bukhari's collection, assumes that the ideals of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' have already been shaped in the discourse of prevailing religious anthropology. In the process of interpreting, she deconstructs the ideals and engages them in conversation with the whole principle of justice in Islamic teachings. In her discussion of the following text for instance, it is her projection to allude to male religious authority embedded within it, in which women are associated with lack of knowledge and shortage of religious illumination.

Anas ibn Malik said: I will narrate to you a Hadith and none other than I will tell you about after it. I heard Allah's Apostle saying: from among the portents of the Hour are (the following): *first*, religious knowledge will decrease (by the death of religious learned men). *Second*, religious ignorance will prevail. *Third*, there will be prevalence of open illegal sexual intercourse. *Fourth*, women will increase in number and men will decrease in number so much so that fifty women will be looked after by one man (al-Bukhari 2001, 27).

In statehoods with great numbers of women, illegal sexual intercourse, and ignorance, Shaikh projects a prevalent religious anthropology which

is shaped in Islamic scholarship of a binary gender biased configuration. While women are identified with irreligious realm, ignorance, and sexuality, in contrary men are associated with religious authority, knowledge, and spirituality. This anthropology also posits a qualitative split between the body which represents a woman and the soul which represents a man. In this anthropology, the text of *hadith* above will easily be interpreted to reinforce male religious authority and disregard female capacity to reach religious realm. Women are not only seen as subordinating person, but also having a half of humanity, incapable to maintain moral religious, full of ignorance and incompetent to lead society.

In her interpretation, Shaikh begins with reviewing this religious anthropology which is pervasive in Muslim thought. Such anthropology implies “a divided human self –sexuality and knowledge are seen as contrary facets of human experience” (Sa’diyya 2004, 102) which is, according to her position as a feminist Muslim, in contrary to the very essence of Qur’anic teachings and the prophetic traditions. She presents the traditions of the Prophet (Pbuh) and the notion of Muhy al-Din Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) which are associated to spirituality and sexuality in a conversation with those Islamic materials that reinforce the anthropology of a divided human self. In this conversation, Shaikh establishes hermeneutical ground work of interpreting the traditions. The ground is “the unearth and construction of a religious anthropology in which humanity, male and female, is presented in ways that are holistic, non-hierarchical, egalitarian and, I dare to say, Islamic!” (Sa’diyya 2004, 107)

The Concept of Understanding as a Fusion of Horizons

Shaikh’s understanding of the texts, according to Gadamer, takes place in her horizon which is formed by history of personal and socio-cultural of her ‘being-in-the-world’ as a woman. Although horizon generally is always in motion, but horizons of individuals who are isolated

only with familiarities of their religion, race, culture, and social class may remain stationary, closed, narrowed and unexpanded. However, as Shaikh has experienced difficulties of the otherness of being a woman in pervasive patriarchal norms of Muslim society in multi races and religions of South Africa, her horizon is expanded.

The hermeneutical task in this respect, according to Gadamer, is not to ignore the dissonance or discount the different, but to encounter the texts that bring us unfamiliar difficulties. Comprehension or understanding “is not awakened whilst the individual is surrounded only by the known and familiar. In order for there to be comprehension, it is necessary that there be an encounter with that which is strange” (Rees 2003, 3). In regard to Shaikh’s interpretation, it is because an encounter with the dissonance of certain Islamic texts, there is an emerging interpretation based on her ‘feminist horizon’. However, at the moment that there is an interpretation, Gadamer speaks of the fusion of horizons.

“In our analysis of the hermeneutical process we saw that to acquire a horizon of interpretation requires a fusion of horizons. This is now confirmed by the verbal aspect of interpretation. The text is made to speak through interpretation. But no text and no book speak if it does not speak a language that reaches the other person. Thus interpretation must find the right language if it really wants to make the text speak. There cannot, therefore, be any single interpretation that is correct “in itself”, precisely because every interpretation is concerned with the text itself. The historical life of a tradition depends on being constantly assimilated and interpreted. An interpretation that was correct in itself would be a foolish ideal that mistook the nature of tradition. Every interpretation has to adapt itself to the hermeneutical situation to which it belongs” (Gadamer 1995, 397).

“Indeed, as Gadamer tries to show in two fine pieces of phenomenological analysis, the process of understanding that culminates in the fusion of horizons has more in common with a dialogue between persons of with the buoyancy of a game in

which the players are absorbed that it has with the traditional methodologically controlled investigation of an object by a subject” (Linge 2004, xix-xx).

“This fusion is dynamic and self-transcendent, and creates new perspectives and rules that are used to make up a new horizon. Fusion is not the same as empathy for the other, nor is it synthesis with the other. It occurs as a result of the strange, for it is exactly what is different that causes a new comprehension. The different or, in other words, the voice of the other is respected in the fusion of horizons. In empathy, one speaks for the other; in fusion one speaks with the other. Synthesis based on a one-voiced discourse; the fusion of horizons is based on a multi-voiced discourse. The fusion of horizons is continuous. It is not a progression through various steps to a complete knowledge, but it is a state of being open to new experience” (Rees 2003, 3-4).

The horizon, whereby Sa’diyya Shaikh is situated in a relation with the prophetic traditions, is pictured in her personal and social cultural background. She is Gujarati Muslim woman who was born and lives in multi religions, races, cultures, and social classes of South Africa. In specific as a woman, she experiences a painful of being “the Other” even among Muslim community while she reads Islamic materials (Sa’diyya 2002, 93-110). Within this horizon, she is aware enough of her prejudices and brings them into account in her work of interpreting the tradition. In the process of understanding the text as a hermeneutical experience, Shaikh communicates the binary of ‘the familiar and the strange’ of Islamic norms prevailing among Muslim society, each to other in a conversation.

In the following text of the *hadith* for instance, according to Shaikh, there are senses of empathy to women and senses of reducing their roles which need to be mediated in a dialogue of hermeneutical experiences to reach a fusion of horizons.

“Abu Said al-Khudriyy narrated: Some women requested the Prophet to fix a day for them as the men were taking all his time. On that he promised them one day for religious lessons and

commandments. Once during such a lesson the Prophet said, “A woman whose three children die will be shielded by them from the Hell fire.” On that a woman asked, “If only two die?” He replied, “Even two (will shield her from the Hell-fire)” (Al-Bukhari hadith number 101 2001).

On the one hand, it is clearly stated in the text above that women is not pictured as those who accept the situation passively in Islamic tradition but on the other hand the obedient women are those who articulate their dissatisfaction to the highest human authority, the Prophet. It is not only an empathic position of the Prophet and the tradition toward women, but rather a hermeneutical ground for feminist perspective. From the lesson addressed to women in the text above, many Muslims argue that women are associated with the role of motherhood and their spiritual salvation depends on their role as reproductive agent and nurturer. In the process of interpretation, Shaikh puts both voices in a dialogue. Nevertheless, she inclines to refer the previous meaning as the basis to reinterpret the latter.

“It could be argued that the Prophet (Pbuh) was relating to the women in terms of their dominant reality. Motherhood was the general experience of most women, and the Prophet (Pbuh) was elevating this experiential realm in the profoundest metaphysical terms, that is, spiritual salvation. The attribution of spiritual value to what is a primary bodily female may also be seen to break down the traditional dichotomies of body and soul” (Shaikh 2004, 105).

Such interpretation of the text is a kind of a fusion of horizons in the term of philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer. The new interpretation emerges in the multi-voices sphere of meanings of the text. The interpreted text is presented to express what it wants, in the state of otherness or difference, and the opposite of interpretation. However, for the fusion of horizons to take place, it is necessary that prejudices of the present should also be questioned and challenged. We should open our biases to be challenged by the past of the text, put them at risk, and can

be valued. Horizons of the present have a limitation. The concept of understanding as a fusion of horizons makes it possible to experience the other's claim of the true meaning of the text (Rees 2003, 4).

“In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we continually have to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves” (Gadamer 1995, 306).

So, understanding is not a fix result of a certain process which could be obtained correctly and objectively by certain methods. It is, in the hermeneutics of Gadamer, rather a long lasting of dialectical of the past and present and never be an ending dialogue between the text and its interpreter. It is, indeed, rather a communicative event than a methodic exercise. “The central relationship of this event is the question and answer” (Rees 2003, 4).

“Even in the most careful attempts to grasp that the past “in itself”, understanding remains essentially a mediation or translation of past meaning into present situation. Thus Gadamer's specific emphasis is not on the application of a method by a subject, but on the fundamental continuity of history as a medium encompassing every such subjective act and the objects it apprehends. Understanding is an event, a movement of history itself in which neither interpreter nor text can be thought of as autonomous parts” (Linge 2004, xvi).

Shaikh's understanding of the *hadith*, from philosophical hermeneutics perspective, is not referring back to its past life, but rather participating in her present for what is spoken from certain standpoint of the horizon in which her prejudices are shaped. Her understanding, as a fusion of horizons, occurs among multiplicity of horizons of the text in

the past, of other readers along its history, and of its interpreters in the present and future. According to philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer, her understanding is not only a new emerging understanding but rather a part of the whole history of the *hadith* or the tradition. It is an event of participation to the history of tradition understanding. It makes the *hadith* belongs to the history of feminism, and her feminist perspective becomes an integrated part of the history of the *hadith*. The act of understanding Shaikh, according to Gadamer, is a moment of life and the tradition itself, in which Shaikh as the interpreter and the texts are the subordinate parts of the whole history of the understanding world (Linge 2004, xxviii).

It can be said that Shaikh's understanding is a hermeneutical experience of *hadith* text historicity because it does not tell the true meaning from the text itself or "a meaning-in-itself" which is repeated by the correct method of interpretation. It is rather a dialectical participation of the interpreters –Shaikh is one of them– along of the history of the text. It is a dialogue of equal entities; the text itself and its interpreters. The interpreter should be aware of her present prejudices and biases that limit her act of understanding as a part of the whole understanding of the tradition. She should be open to listen to the otherness of the texts of the *hadith*, to be questioned by the texts, and to be provoked by it to risk involvement in a dialogue that carries her beyond her present position.

There is a subject matter shared between the interpreter and the text which leads them into a real dialogue. It is the principle of justice in male-female relation in the context of Shaikh's interpretation on selected texts of the collection. Hence, the task of philosophical hermeneutics is essential to understand the text within the concept of temporal distance between the interpreter and the text, and to emphasize on meaning of the text in historical understanding. The text is understood because the participation of the interpreter in subject matter which is communicated by the text.

Conclusion

In this paper, the writer shows the work of interpreting the tradition above affirms Gadamer's notion. Shaikh, as the interpreter, lives inevitably in her prejudices that motivate her to interpret the text which she cannot step outside of it at the same time. In the process of interpreting, there is no merely subjective or objective knowledge. She is rather participating in the structures of self-understanding which reveal "the truth" for her within a horizon. There is a shared subject matter between Shaikh the interpreter and the text as the understanding forms of 'the truth' within historicity of a fusion horizon. The fused horizon is then continually modified as it encounters the texts or traditions, but there is no final and objective interpretation. Shaikh's interpretation, as hermeneutical experience, is also not fixed but rather changing and always indicating for never ending new perspective.

It can be concluded that our prejudices are not necessary barriers in understanding religious texts. In contrary, we rather need them in order to make our understanding in the context of intelligibility. However, we should be aware of our prejudice in the state of quality that 'the texts' may tell what they want to say even within certain of our horizons. The meaning of the text derives from the ontology of being in the world. It does not come from the objectivity of the text or the subjectivity of its interpreter. It rather comes from a dialectical understanding within horizon of the past, horizon of the present, and the fused of horizons. The act of interpreting the text involves a fusion of horizons where the interpreter finds the ways that the text's history is articulated with its own background. Understanding appropriately is mediated through conversations with others in which reality is explored and an agreement that represents a new understanding is reached. In order to do that hermeneutically, we should open to 'otherness' of the texts and we make a dialogue to or participate in them within our prejudices in the sense that the act of our participation is hermeneutically representing multiple possibilities of meanings of the traditions.

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