THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS: INTERPRETING "THE LOST GARDEN OF IMMEDIACY"

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Contemporary hermeneutics has turned from the art of textual interpretation to the world – constitutive functions of language and symbolic representation. It is stressed that all understanding takes place within horizons constituted by history and language. Building on the ultimate religious foundations of divinely revealed truth, theological hermeneutics reflects upon theology as the site of a circular mediation of Scripture, tradition, and culture. The guiding question of this article is: can a theological hermeneutics retranslate philosophical sources into the language of theology? For these purposes we must at first situate the theological phenomenon of Verbum at the center of philosophical hermeneutics. Secondly, it is necessary to give a brief account of how symbols (all in general and some in particular) function in religious language. Also, we can see that in the face of the dawn of some traditional religious symbols, we can find new ones emerging from new strategies of theological hermeneutics in the face of new ontology. The analysis of symbolic nature of theological hermeneutics directs us to the question of analogy. Eventually the subject of investigations turns to be "validity" of analogical language in theological hermeneutics, which have some paradoxical consequences. On the other hand, it is clear that these paradoxes are not simply about formal matters. It is amazing that the basic symbol functioning in analogical language for expressing the proper language of God-talk (theology) is the language itself.

Introduction

The contemporary analysis of religious language is above all aware that its construal requires some understanding of life and practice, and above all location within religious traditions and symbolisms a part of which it is. Theology still claims to express universal significance answering the fundamental questions posed by human condition. Yet religious language also still possesses big philosophical problems, because the language of Scripture is replete with metaphors. And the language of philosophical abstraction, while apparently more indicative, contains its own layered complexity. In this respect no matter if we say "God made the world" or "God caused the world" we speak of an action quite different from that proper to human agents.

From the beginning Jewish and Christian texts, as most influential for Western philosophy, concerned themselves with words. God is represented as speaking the world into being and Christ (in already Platonized prologue to John's gospel) is said to be incarnate Word (*Logos*), while the idea of a lost original grammar which faultlessly matched things was to have fascinated Jewish, and after that European philosophers (both are the instances of longing for the language which could have the status of ultimate reality, and which is called "the lost garden of immediacy").

Many theologians used different strategies of reverent agnosticism as a corrective against the human presumption to speak about that which cannot be named, but also to complement the positive and revealed knowledge of God. With Hume and after him Kant there were most devastating critiques of religious language in modern period, stating that religious language is meaningless. In the twentieth century philosophy was preoccupied with questions of language, concerned with what we might reasonably and meaningfully say.

After raw years of logical positivism new era has down for the philosophical reflection of religious language. It was deeply felt that religious texts are highly metaphorical, but these metaphors have some cognitive status, asking whether the fact that expression is metaphorical mean that it is not referential. Regarding this Janet Soskice maintains that "from an interest in metaphor must soon follow interest in the interpretation of texts" (Soskice 2000: 201), that is hermeneutics.

On the other hand, the discipline known as "theology" has its roots in hermeneutical attempts to make intelligible the multiple meanings of the Holy scripture. All readings of scripture texts are, as a well-known hermeneutist Garry Madison states, "necessarily interpretive, demanding something more than mere repetition or "recital" (Madison 2002: 31). The language of religious myth is designed to perform a different function than science. This function is not "epistemological", but rather "existential". Myth makes no claim to impart empirical or quasi-empirical information about the world. Its purpose is rather "interestedness" (Kierkegaard) or "care" (Heidegger 1962) or an expression of human existence (R. Bultmann). Therefore, according to religious perspective, not all things can be "known" in the modern, scientistic sense of "being controlled", taking for true being what is actually called a method (Husserl). A question arises whether the situation of theology eliminates any cognition.

The ultimate implication of philosophical hermeneutics is that all being is interpreted being. There is only one world, the lifeworld – but the lifeworld can be interpreted in many different ways (science being one of these). These varying interpretations will be "correct" or "valid" depending on their usefulness with regard to the legitimacy of the purposes they serve (epistemic, technological, aesthetic or existential). In this respect we can productively relate hermeneutical consciousness to religion.

Hermeneutic priority and universality of language

Hans Georg Gadamer presented as the essence of his language – oriented hermeneutics as the "verbum interius", the word that is not the subject of the philosophy of language or linguistics, but the inner word, the core of Augustine's philosophy. H. G. Gadamer's hermeneutic principle opens up the horizon of mediation between the manifestation of Being and human understanding. In the interplay of that which is understood and that which is veiled and in need of being disclosed we realize that our access to that which wants to be disclosed is *in* and *through* language. On our way to being, language is both a bridge and barrier; it reveals Being, but only as a being. And the correlation of the manifestation of Being and the understanding of *Dasein* exposes the fact that "they both belong together in language" (Wiercinski 2002: 2).

Ontological relationship between Being and a being is hermeneutically expressed as relationship between the self-manifestation of Being and *Dasein's* understanding of Being. Disclosure and understanding constitute the hermeneutic dimension of ontological difference. In language Being uncovers itself and makes itself understandable. Being that can be understood is language (Gadamer 2000: 474). The dialectic of understanding in which the same is always understood differently originates in the infinite constellations of meaning

characterizing human thinking. Every lingual expression is grounded in that totality, which encompasses all individual expressions. That statement might be understood as participation in that totality of meaning, and not as lingual idealism. If thinking is not possible outside language, that which is thought is experienced as lingual being and is expressed in language, thus not only revealing Being, but also placing Being within a relationship with *Dasein*.

According to M. Heidegger, language has no outside in the sense that the meaning of Being in its self-manifestation is not something that lies outside *Dasein*, but it constitutes *Dasein's* understanding of Being. The *prima facie powerlessness* of language brings us to hermeneutics. We have to mediate the limitation of experience with all that we have said and all we wish to say. It is not that we are surrounded by things we cannot name, we are beings held out into the unsaid. When Being comes to be it appears as a word in us, it is always accompanied by a word.

H. G. Gadamer, starting his hermeneutical project, discusses the forgetfulness of language which began with Greek metaphysics[1]. Plato's diatribe against sophism and conventionalism distinguishes truth from language – the locus of truth is vision not speech – and leaves unthematized language as the house of Being, so "that was Plato that assigned priority of thought over language" (Wiercinski 2002: 3).

H. G. Gadamer traces the hermeneutic priority of language to medieval Trinitarian theology. Logos is not a temporal spirit, but event; an emergence of the word from the act of understanding. Therefore, H. G. Gadamer moves from the concept of Greek *logos* to Christian *Verbum*. For H. G. Gadamer the Christian idea of incarnation does more justice to the being of language, and so prevents the forgetfulness of

language in Western thought from being complete. The identity of Father and Son figures the identity of expressing and expression, and this grasps the processual character of language, in which language is fundamentally an event.

This inner mental word is not formed by a reflective act and calls for a multiplicity of external words. As the inner unity of thinking and speaking, the inner word indicates a direct and spontaneous character of thinking. This prereflectiveness expresses the thing that has been thought. This word is not exhausted in lingual expression; the unsaid belongs to what is said. H. G. Gadamer's understanding of the word goes beyond significative function to the word as an enactment of thinking. As such it is never a final word, for thinking is always thinking further. The processual character of language makes it possible for H. G. Gadamer to think *Dasein's* finitude in relation to divine infinity: "Christology prepares the way for a new philosophy of man, which mediates in a new way between the mind of man in its finitude and the divine infinity" (Gadamer 2000: 428).

Thereby H. G. Gadamer interprets the limits of language positively. As a consciousness of the parameters of historical being in the world (forgetfulness of language implies forgetfulness of historicity, that means truth becomes independent of lingual contexts), the confines of language bring us to crucial recognition of the temporality of our being, the difference between the human and the divine. Thrown into language, we find our way through language, yet, we realize, that words cannot express the complexity and richness of our experience. The static nature of words is inadequate to temporal existence, which is open – ended and never finished. But this experience not only points to the powerlessness of language, but also awakens a particular awareness toward what is unsaid. As participation in shared meaning, verbally mediated understanding depends equally on that which is not and cannot be said.

Hermeneutics does have a universal appeal (as theology does) because language exists in

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[1] *While M. Heidegger accused modernity forgetting the question of being, latter hermeneutic philosophers and postmodernists stressed that it was "language that has actually been forgotten" (Vanhooser 2003: 12).*

all human modus of communication. The word testifies what calls to be understood, it witnesses not only to the inner experience of an individual, but to the encompassing constellation of meaning, to *a – lethea*, and in this way language acts on human person. The Cartesian model that language proceeds from within appears to be false, because it is destroyed by the heideggerian passivity of *Dasein*, which presupposes that language itself speaks. And if language speaks to us, namely invites to share its deepest mystery, it is our primary (though told by M. Heidegger) duty to respond, and these responds constitute the very self of a human being.

The essential incompleteness of the human word is the expression of his finitude. There is always more to be thought more to be said. This "always" is the ontological indication. So no human word can express his "mind" completely, ontological (not technical) mind, which never is presented to itself but always thinks "this" or "that". So it follows that unlike the oneness of divine "Word" there must be many human words, because we "do not really know what we know" (Wiercinski 2002: 7). Consequently, mirrored in the infinity of language Being is never manifested as a whole.

Ontology of finitude in a lingual mode

This incompleteness of language, search for a speech in the struggle for Being was deeply sensed by various poets – the guardians of language, that, like Czeslov Milosz, were lamenting about a river, suffering because reflections of clouds and trees are not clouds and trees. In turn Umberto Eco (Eco 1995) dedicated a whole big study to state that the project of "search for a perfect language" marks the whole history of humanity.

The poet attempts to fulfill his metaphysical desire to put into words the epiphany of Being experienced in the facticity of human life. The word is not the expression of thinking that thinks itself, but the disclosure of a thing. The

limitedness of the human word is not so much a question of inability to express, that which is thought, but the primordial limitation of *Dasein*. The human is left with the powerlessness of language, that means the powerlessness of being, but this finitude conveys his openness to the ever-new. It is not because of the powerlessness of language that being cannot be expressed, but because Being does not allow itself to be definitively articulated, that is why, according to H. Wiercinski, "we are always on the way to being and therefore on the way to language" (Wiercinski 2002: 10).

M. Heidegger begins his famous quest for Being with an analysis of *Dasein*, the entity human beings are. Robert Ross notices that, "according to M. Heidegger, we are onticaly instinctive in that we are "ontological" (Ross 1978: 37). That is, we already possess some interpretation of being, we are responsive to being. Thus, if we can find out what we are responsive to, we find out what Being itself, the object of our concern, is. This circularity is important because, for M. Heidegger, the first step in any ontological inquiry is to remember what has passed into forgetfulness, i e to remember what has become hidden from ourselves. What is at stake for us is also the question of being itself, the question of God. But this can only mean that we are already moved, stirred by ultimate concern. This means that we already belong to God, power of being from which we were estranged, but is also already presented in us.

Obviously, there are plenty of benefits of bringing heideggerian ontology to philosophical (and moreover, to theological) hermeneutics. Firstly, by overcoming the "bad metaphysics" of the subject-object schema that results in a definition of language as a tool, we see language with new eyes. Secondly, by bringing into play the being of the "verbum", we see that thinking is not only a psychological process centered and directed by the motives of a human being, but directed by seeing language as a temporal-ontological process in which we grow in self-understanding.

Thirdly, to speak of the linguisticality of experience is also (as P. Ricœur[2] has shown even more explicitically) to speak of its textuality. All being, i e our whole experience of the world, is as it were a text the meaning of which calls for interpretation. Practically speaking, everything is a text or quasi-text, a text analogue. In other words, understanding is never merely reproductive (Romantic hermeneutics), but "is always productive or transformative" (Madison 2002: 38). The meaning of the text is not something that exists "out there", like the "external" world of modern philosophy, and is timeless and invariant; a textual meaning is nothing substantial in itself, but exists in the form rather than event, the act of reading. In the final analysis the meaning of a religious (or any other) text is (as again P. Ricœur underlines) existential transformation and heightened self-understanding that it produces in the reader.

The essential linguality of understanding calls for ongoing search for the primal words, in which Being is always already expressed. Though, language is the mirror of finitude, that is, the mirror of temporality, on the other hand, Being discloses itself through language, and we *must* speak, Being speaks to us. Expressing what has not yet been said and what is yet to be said represents our ongoing search for a language, more than externalization of inner experience, primordial expression of Being. The *verbum interius* is the ground and *modus experiendi* of Being. No particular constellation of words can definitely articulate hermeneutic experience and yet we cannot but constantly search for a more meaningful form.

The belief that there exists a literal, univocal meaning of sacred Scripture – or, indeed, any

text is, as St. Augustine says, "foolish" (Augustine 1961). As an instance of the metaphysical quest for certainty in belief, it is a rebellion against the finitude of the human condition: "the cultivation of hermeneutical consciousness is, in contrast, as with Augustine, more truly religious" (Madison 2002: 44), while literalism being one of the most fundamental strains in religious consciousness.

Therefore, if theology is faith in search for understanding, this understanding must be rational. For hermeneutics the rationality of an interpretive understanding is a function of its reasonableness, and to be reasonable means to provide arguments for one's interpretations. Being reasonable or behaving in a rational way does not mean adhere to method that guarantees the truth. It means rather keeping oneself open to views, which challenge one's own. The unavoidable hermeneutical fact of the matter is that the ultimate arbiter in any conflict of interpretation is not revelation (which always needs to be interpreted) but reason (which does the interpretation). Concerning the problem of revelation and interpretation, Karl Jaspers says: "what criterion of truth is given for the direct revelation of God? According to orthodoxy (fundamentalism), the revelation is its own criterion. But in actual fact, whatever is said and done in the name of revelation, it is said and done in a wordy form at the same time we become aware of subjective conditions governing our awareness of everything objective." (Jaspers 1958: 43). But what is meant by "subjective" here? Is it an equivalent to "non-cognitive"? We will stress that the only possibility for hermeneutics to become theological and, at the same time, to claim a certain degree of cognition, is to become a sort of analogy.

Analogy as the content of theological hermeneutics

It is known that true nature of God transcends human knowledge. It is the essence of transcendent notion of "God" and it was stressed

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[2] *P. Ricœur is convinced that even in the usage of language, that appear to be the least referential as in the case with metaphor and narrative fiction, language expresses Being, even if this ontological aim is as though postponed, deffered by the prior denial of the literal referentiality of ordinary language, therefore, "ontology implicit in hermeneutics renders linguistic analysis" (Ricœur 1992: 301).*

throughout the tradition of Christian theology from patristic era till Tomas Aquinas doctrine. Yet knowing this, can't we say anything meaningful about God or Holy and it's relation to the world and particularly with man? This question is more serious after various deconstructions not only of God's existence but even the validity of this particular notion "God".

Religious language as expressed in myths and symbols not only demands hermeneutical consciousness but also concerns the question of analogy. According to J. Macquarrie, "analogical language differs from other ways of talking about God, exactly by it's positive content which is (surprisingly) so important aspect of negative theology" (Macquarrie 1967: 112)[3].

First we must keep in mind that analogical language has nothing to do with literalism. On the other hand, there isn't one monolithic method of analogical language. Especially in contemporary protestant tradition we have wide variety of the notion of analogy from Barth's stressing upon the "Word of God" and "God's grace" in hermeneutical process (*analogia gratiae*) through Tillich's employment of ontological, heideggerian categories (*analogia entis*) in talking of God's nature untill Bultmann's project of demythologization where language of Scripture should be translated in existential terms. Each one of these positions has strong and weak points.

Analogy comes from a long theological tradition (i e the Dominican) of Thomism and Albertism. If Aquinas does allow a certain kind of "knowledge" of God, then in order to avoid the admission that he simply contradicts himself, the knowledge of God he grants cannot be in a way of God's essence.

But in that case, remarks that look as if they are claims about divine nature must be about something else: the world or the effects of the divine nature. Therefore, Aquinas believed it was possible to hold both to the radical difference between God and the human mind, yet also retain the demostrability of some knowledge of God.

It is interesting that the exponents of Rome's Catholicism though strongly supported the analogical language, was very skeptical about what we can call "symbolism". Now we need to distinguish this symbolism from doctrines grounded in analogical thinking. The hostility of catholic thinkers to symbolism is supported by belief that "symbolic" knowledge of God is nothing more than a reduction to the "pure" subjectivity. In this respect symbols are worthy as much as they are affective (if positively) upon the life of the believer. Therefore, usually this emotional character of symbols is confronted with conceptual content of analogical language. The answer to this reductive conception of symbols is compound.

Firstly, religious symbols can be regarded as cognitive in a broader sense, while staying noncognitive from scientific rationality. Religious symbols (mediums of ecstatic experience) are not cognitive if cognition means explanation of the structures of existence, because symbols (or language operating with them) points beyond these structures. From the point of view of scientific knowledge, ultimate reality is not intelligible, but the point is that religious symbols (which should be reinterpreted alongside with the history of secular culture) can awaken qualitative experience of Being's mystery.

In avoidance of mysticism let us look at one simple example of "noncognitive" symbol ("cognitive" symbol should be rather called sign). Reference to a lover or a child like "dear" does not describe such a form of existence which can separate the object of reference from other forms of existence, but points to the wholeness which is the uniqueness of child's or lover's individuality. As in this case indi-

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[3] *It is worth noting that traditional theological method which protects the question of God from being fully (heretically) exposed through finite categories, particularly via negationis, always was supplemented by the other ways of talking concerning question of God because the negative theology without any positive import comes dangerously close to atheism (or maybe anti-theism).*

viduality is something that transcends all the structures of existence, which we can capture by cognitive signs (like age or color of hair) we must use "noncognitive" symbol. Therefore, "noncognitive" does not mean "not intelligible", it refers to the questions of meaning (quantitative "moods"). This approach lets comprehend the mystery of Being actively, negating that this mystery is only the matter of temporal lack of information.

Secondly, J. Macquarrie acknowledges that symbols do produce subjective effects, but this does not prove their purely subjective and emotive character. He emphasizes that the feeling (or mood), which conducts some concrete situation in which we participate, presupposes certain cognitive awareness of these situations. Therefore, it is proper to talk of "existential" not "subjective" aspects of symbols. In other words, the experience is an experience of something objective, even though the knowledge it reveals is primarily about the situation of the person having experience.

Today we may speak of rehabilitation of analogy within hermeneutics. If we accept that analogy implies that one thing has different forms, and can be expressed in different ways, the analogical hermeneutics provides a warning that interpretation has many levels and approaches. Yet, according to M. Beuchot, "we must keep in mind that given that analogy means proportionality, an analogical hermeneutics would be a hermeneutics of proportion, a difficult yet not simple equilibrium, since in analogy the difference remains predominant" (Beuchot 2002: 178).

In recent debates of philosophy of religion we may find at least one common denominator – the proposition stating that "God can't be thought of as entity". This fundamental proposition foresees the fundamental question: on what grounds (after *krinein*) is it valid to establish an analogy between God and finite being?

The master of revealing *krinein* is no doubt Martin Heidegger. But the thinking of this philosopher *prima facie* doesn't leave any possibil-

ity of analogy, considering that being is "wholly other" (as strictly formulated by R. Otto). Although to look closer, M. Heidegger informs that there is no Being without entities, through which the former is conceived. Therefore, Being is not transcendent but immanent to entities.

The theological understanding of M. Heidegger's established immanence of Being says that God left traces all over the world, and it enables the analogical language. So the problem is *how we can validate analogical language in the face of new ontology*. What background for the already mentioned likeness between Being and beings can be extracted from heideggerian philosophy? Also, we can depict some concepts (not traditional symbols) which can function as new symbols for a new theology under demands of a new ontology.

Hermeneutic *in between*: ontological concepts or religious symbols?

As already mentioned, usually an answer (to the above question) is the horizon of understanding constituted by language and time. All beings exist in time, but although a human being is also temporal, his relationship with time is special. In opposition to things a human being does not exist in the flux of time but includes time in itself. This inclusive mode of being is stronger according to the degree of personality: the higher the degree of personality, the more it resists the effects of time, the more time becomes his constitution uniting the past, presence and future. In this respect, a person transcends time like flux, because she/he is not an object of change, expanding monolitic self (as we will see, not in aristotelian sense).

This relationship between a human being and time can serve for constructing an analogy concerning Being itself. As J. Macquarrie notices, "at the very beginning of "*Being and Time*" M. Heidegger stresses that time presupposes the horizon for Being's understanding" (Macquarrie 1967: 225). But pure Being, unchangeable and

monolithic, would be inseparable from nothingness. We could not utter anything meaningful about it, being experientially tied up to the category of time (Kant). This perspective is in a direct opposition to an aristotelian view, according to which the stability of human soul could serve as background for the likeness to God.

Analysis of time as the background for an analogy between Being and beings directs only to a being, in relation to which it is appropriate to talk of analogy, i e a human being. Theologically he is the image of God, but we must ask philosophically what feature of temporal finite human existence reveals the likeness to God, kinship with Him.

Throughout the history of philosophy this feature was held to be rationality, but recent (especially continental) philosophical debates explored the notion of human "substance". A human being not only is, but he is responsible for his being and the whole world. For J. Macquarrie, this indicates that a human being not only has being but also "lets be" and in this respect cooperates with divine creation. Analogically, when talking about God after negating the speculation about his being, we can say that he "lets be" not that "he is". This "lets be" here is used in an active sense, like opening nonactualized potencies. This activity is mostly "divine" in man and finds expression in demand to let your neighbour fulfill his being. But what is it if not an ontological description of uninterested love – *agape*, told in the Bible?

Therefore, although Being is presented and thus potentially manifests itself in every particular being, some manifest it more fully, depending on the level of participation in Being. Personal beings participate more than impersonal, and that's why personal symbols are so common in religious language. It is that way because "personal beings not only "are" but also "let be" (Macquarrie 1967: 132).

Now we can see how contemporary philosophical discussions direct to Christian notion of God without violating dogmas and rationality. For further substantiation of this thesis, we should turn our attention to some basic symbols of this sort which constitute hermeneutic consciousness analogically rather than purely symbolically.

For example, the symbol of light is an excellent case of immanent relationship with that which is symbolized. J. Macquarrie calls this kind of relationship "openness", which indicates the "likeness" of the structure which can be found in various entities, symbolized by the light – God, Jesus Christ, a human being. However, this "likeness" dismantles the affective powers of a concrete symbol and transforms it to analogy.

Therefore, despite emotive import, symbols do have a cognitive character because they point to such structures which can be apprehended conceptually. Our world exists because of light in contrast to people's naivety to cherish a delusion that they themselves constitute the basis of existence – their activity, industry and will of power. However, there is something transcending in the world created by civilization and every human consciousness. It is the basis of the universe, and light takes a special place in it. It manifests itself both as a part of the world of nature, as the most essential phenomenon shared by all living beings. Light exists in the physical nature and is created as a human condition; it is also perceived in a symbolic context as a metaphor of light and requires a special phenomenological approach to be transformed into meaningful phenomenon to symbolize and let speak of completely different things.

Besides that, the Christian doctrine of the word followed the platonic and neoplatonic metaphysics of light. The light of a word is basic for comprehensibility. According to R. E. Palmer, this light as truth was very important for H. G. Gadamer, because "there is close relationship between the shiningforth (*Vorscheinen)* of the beautiful and the evidentness (*das Einleuchtende)* of the understandable is based on the metaphysics of light" (Palmer 2002: 121). It is important that for H. G. Ga-

damer it is precisely this relation that guided hermeneutical inquiry (especially analysing the nature of the work of art). It suggests the deep roots of philosophical hermeneutics in ancient and medieval thought, a hermeneutics unafraid of the language of metaphysics.

That is why we can detect conceptual content in religious symbols, though this knowledge is indirect: the comprehension of light by the terms of "openness" reveals fundamental characteristics of God's being, but the exact "openness" of God transcends the limits of human comprehension.

This analysis shows that to defeat the charges of empty, subjective language, symbols must become analogies, i e be able to find out an ultimate "likeness" between a symbol and that which is symbolized in this becoming. But finally, what exactly do we mean by this "likeness"? We are not talking here about the correspondence theory of truth – symbols do not picture reality of God like, let's say, symbols of physics "picture" nature. Despite this on both occasions there must be necessary a likeness *of some sort* between a symbol and reality in view.

The problem is that the term "likeness" often means "looking alike". This latter connotation of "likeness" is not the only one, and must be laid aside when talking about likeness between God and a finite being (the demand of proportion in analogical thinking in fact means the negation of this "looking alike").

Amazingly, the relationship, which is presupposed by this kinship (between human and divine), is expressed most adequately by the phenomenon of language itself. How should we treat language considering a person who uses it? We can say that language is "like" that person or *vice versa*, but by this we don't mean that language is "only" the analogy or symbol of a person. On the other hand, and this is most important, language reveals what the man essentially is. Language expresses a person or a person expresses himself through language. Therefore, a person is "like language" not because language is "like him", but because it participates in the personal character

of a human being. Language has a personal dimension, and this is the background of a human being. A human being is *zoon logon echon* – a kind of entity whose "essence" is language. So we can grasp a deep kinship between a person and language, without evoking any "picture-like" likeness.

From these examples we can deduce that the content of hermeneutic consciousness from theological perspective is an analogy rather than a symbol. Moreover, as J. Macquarrie argues, that "religious language does not merely express some abstract analogy, but arises out of a person's existential response to some kind of concrete experience of being itself" (Macquarrie 1966: 126). But along with this doctrine of analogy can also have an objective legitimate meaning, provided the language reflects an existential response to a shared experience of the disclosure of Being in a given religious community. Consequently if words in which dogma is expressed are no longer relevant to the kind of existential response to Being experienced by the members of a given religious community, then the dogma has lost its meaning, and ought to be discarded or expressed in a fresh form.

Therefore, the doctrine of analogy simultaneously warns that any "God-talk" thereby is inadequate, but, on the other hand, helps to look for fundamentals of "likeness", which makes analogical language meaningful. This again shows that analogical language has a paradoxical character, yet theology as an intellectual discipline cannot rest on the negative side of paradox and show that different symbols, namely because they are symbols (not concepts) do not exclude each other but constitute horizon of endlessly appearing meanings. Thereby oppositions in theology come from a paradoxical character, not from destructive contradictions.

Conclusions

1. The twentieth century hermeneutics of finitude, regardless of the theological inten-

tions of the authors of this project, can be read as a meditation on human createdness or creatureliness and that in principle nothing stands in the way of its incorporation into theological hermeneutics. Even if it were surprising for some great hermeneutic philosophers (M. Heidegger, Derrida), the case is that hermeneutics of finitude can be fruitfully appropriated in a theistic context. The theistic affirmation of God as a personal creator may be the best horizon for understanding human finitude.

2. Accomplished by H. G. Gadamer retrieval of *verbum interius* renews the young M. Heidegger's project of a phenomenological and hermeneutic rehabilitation of medieval theology. Hermeneutics must never forget that the remembering of language was effected through the retrieval of a theological insight. Hermeneutic philosophy must engage theology which grounds and permeates Western tradition. Conversely, theological tradition is incomprehensible without philosophy. The subject-matter of hermeneutics is theological, and even if hermeneutics is not theology, it must be open to it, if it is to be receptive to the voices that constitute the tradition that human beings are.

3. H. G. Gadamer's hermeneutic principle opens up the horizon of mediation between the manifestation of Being and human understanding. H. G. Gadamer's contribution to the analysis of the *Verbum* has to do with universality of hermeneutics and its theological horizon. The *verbum interius* is the primordial horizon of understanding within which a meaning occurs. On the other hand, the lingual structure of *Dasein* elevates language to ontology and hermeneutics to universal theory of understanding. Unlike the supra-temporal universality of metaphysics, philosophical hermeneutics is grounded in the historicity of language, retrieving temporality as the forgotten horizon of the being that we are.

4. If thinking is not possible outside language, that which is thought is experienced as lingual being and is expressed in language, thus not only revealing Being, but also placing Being within a relationship with *Dasein*. The limitedness of language demands from *Dasein* faithfulness to that which calls to thinking. The externalization of language is the struggle to respond to the call of Being. The externalization of meaning analogically indicates *Dasein's* likeness to God, who in the Kenosis of the Incarnation manifests and externalizes Himself. Similarly, the human word externalizes thinking, but isn't perfect and complete. The hermeneutical turn involves the claim that there is qualitative not merely quantitative difference between human and divine knowledge.

5. Interpretation is carried out primordially not in a theoretical statement but in an action of circumspective concern. So interpretation is never merely cognitive. At the core of this broader rationality is a deeply-felt fact that human existence (and human understanding) is essentially finite. This fundamental finitude constantly obliges us to completely revise our notions of reason and truth. Philosophical hermeneutics in opposition to both modern scientism and religious fundamentalism is hermeneutics of finitude.

6. The essential linguality of understanding calls for ongoing search for the primal words in which Being is always already expressed. Though a situation when interpretation does not seek any *substantia/ousia* indicates that the only procedure of verification is to compare the interpretation in question with the others, philosophical hermeneutics move away both from dogmatic scientism and interpretive anarchism and offers deeper understanding of reason, that is that the epistemological and calculable conceptions of reason do not exhaust its fullness. That was only one form of rationality, and this has important implications for the understandings of religious texts.

7. On the other hand, the only possibility for hermeneutics to become theological and, at the same time, to claim a certain degree of cognition, is to become a sort of analogy. Therefore, despite emotive import, symbols do have a cognitive character because they point to such structures which can be apprehended conceptually and reveal immanent relationship with that which is symbolized. Therefore, we can depict some concepts (not traditional symbols) which can function as new symbols for a new theology under the demands of a new ontology. Now we can see how contemporary philosophical discussions direct to Christian notion of God without violating dogmas and rationale.

8. Today, when it is said so much about how misguided it is to expect "objectivity" or "truth", analogical hermeneutics presents itself to us as a means of sustaining truth and objectivity in a new way. But it will not fall into extreme relativism found so often in recent philosophy. Hermeneutically approaching the God of Christianity as a performer of speech acts which through the mediation of human writers inscribes those speech acts in a holy book may be understood in a context which acknowledges that different hearers (readers) will understand the same speech act differently by virtue of being in different hermeneutical circles. Conversational approach to hermeneutics has an enormous potential in an ecumenical and multicultural context.

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TEOLOGINĖ HERMENEUTIKA: INTERPRETUOJANT „PRARASTĄ BETARPIŠKUMO ROJŲ"

Mindaugas Briedis

Straipsnyje analizuojami filosofinės hermeneutikos ir teologijos sąveikos aspektai. Viena vertus, filosofinės hermeneutikos metodai ir turinys atliepia šiandieninės religijos filosofijos problematiką. Kita vertus, teologija kaip racionali disciplina šiandien negali neatsižvelgti į hermeneutikos atveriamus probleminius horizontus. Viena tokių problemų pasirodo esanti pati kalba, kurios užmarštis ir yra tikroji Heideggerio iškeltos būties užmaršties priežastis. Analizuojant žymiausių filosofinės hermeneutikos teoretikų (Gadamerio, Heideggerio, Ricœuro) idėjas ir pasitelkiant autoritetingų kritikų (Wiercincki, Madison, Macquarrie) interpretacijas, straipsnyje siekiama parodyti, kad nėra principinio filosofinės hermeneutikos ir šiuolaikinės teologijos keliamų uždavinių nesutarimo. Kita vertus, ši tezė numato, kad ir tradicijos simboliai neišvengia filosofinės hermeneutikos interpretacinio horizonto. Kartu parodoma, kad tokios filosofinės hermeneutikos sąvokos kaip „kalba", „laikas", „savastis", ... suteikia teologiniam diskursui naujų impulsų. Atsakymu į klausimą, kaip galima teologija naujos ontologijos (baigtinumo hermeneutikos) kontekste, tampa analoginio mąstymo, suteikiančio subjektyviai paveikiems simboliams konceptualumo, reabilitacija.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kalba, hermeneutika, teologija, ontologija, analogija.