

**UDC 14:801.73**

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## **ROLE OF HERMENEUTICS FOR DEVELOPING THE HUMANITIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

***Abstract.** The article analyzes the logic of the development of linguistic philosophy from hermeneutics to modern poststructuralism. The authors consider that the heuristic value of hermeneutics lies not so much in developing the general theory of understanding and interpretation, but in substantiating the need for dialogue as a communicative structure of modern scientific and humanitarian discourse. The connection between hermeneutics and linguistic philosophy which has significantly expanded the applicability of the hermeneutic method for the analysis of communication problems seems to be important. The article describes the contribution of linguistic philosophy to the development of the problem of “understanding”. The article presents*

*L. Wittgenstein's ideas concerning his concept of "language games" to expand the space of "understanding". "Understanding" as a hermeneutic problem is of communicative and pragmatic character. The article also describes R. Barthes's views on the problem of poststructuralism as one of the most essential trends of the philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is poststructuralism that converts the problem of language into the field of text analysis. Nevertheless, hermeneutics remains the leading methodology for research since the problem of understanding and interpreting the text retains its significance.*

**Keywords:** *communication, hermeneutics, interpreting, linguistic philosophy, text analysis, poststructuralism, understanding.*

**Introduction.** The twentieth century posed several important problems for philosophy of language, the solution of which is associated with the dynamics of the development of modern philosophy. This is partly due to the development of analytical philosophy, partly to the expansion of postmodern methodology of the text analysis, but the impulse that was given to philosophy of language by hermeneutics as a general humanitarian practice of the 20<sup>th</sup> century plays a decisive role.

**The purpose** of the study presented is to trace the logic of the development of linguistic philosophy from hermeneutics to modern poststructuralism. **The novelty** of the presented research lies in the assumption that the connecting link here should be analytical philosophy of language, in particular, some ideas by L. Wittgenstein. One more assumption is the idea that the heuristic value of hermeneutics lies not so much in developing the general theory of understanding and interpretation, but in substantiating the need for dialogue as a communicative structure of modern scientific and humanitarian discourse. It is the communicative aspect of linguistic philosophy that includes its (seemingly) particular problems in the broad context of discussions about the development of scientific knowledge.

**Statement of the main material.** H.-G. Gadamer, arguing about the need to legitimize philosophical discourse in the issue of truth, emphasizes that it is the problem of understanding that allows using the “hermeneutic phenomenon” as such a legitimizing principle for philosophy of origin. “The relevance of the hermeneutic phenomenon is based, from my point of view, on the fact that only a deepening into the phenomenon of understanding can lead to such legitimation” (Gadamer, 1988, p. 39). It should be also noted that H.-G. Gadamer not only actively uses phenomenological argumentation, speaking about the “phenomenon of understanding”, but also paving a bridge to the theory of communicative action by J. Habermas and his attempts to substantiate the legitimizing function of philosophy in the issue of truth (Habermas, 1981).

H.-G. Gadamer argues that the problem of hermeneutic experience as a criterion of scientific significance turned out to be the link in the development of the humanities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was necessary to update the methodological foundations of humanitarian knowledge: “Understanding and interpreting texts is not only a scientific task but obviously refers to the totality of human experience as a whole” (Gadamer, 1988, p. 38). The characteristic feature here is the fact that the understanding of the text and its interpretation are considered not only objective structures of human experience but also criteria for the verifiability of knowledge. This given circumstance can be regarded as a kind of anticipation of the attitude of structuralism and poststructuralism to consider human experience as textually conditioned structures.

H.-G. Gadamer, following W. Dilthey and M. Heidegger, recognizes language as the only environment to realize hermeneutic experience. It is quite obvious that understanding is possible only thanks to language. The language is problematized by H.-G. Gadamer as a kind of spatial structure. Here one can speak both about the “space of dialogue” (M. Bakhtin) and about the space of understanding, the tense relations between the text and its interpretation. Another important context indicated by

H.-G. Gadamer is that a person, due to the diversity of his/her own activities, is inevitably included in a kind of “hermeneutic conversation” (Gadamer, 1984).

Summarizing H.-G. Gadamer’s views, then one can imagine a picture in which language as a medium of communication and any possible interaction turns out to be primary in relation to the emerging dialogue. In turn, the dialogue, being a derivative of the various living conditions in which the interlocutors find themselves, creates a common semantic space of understanding. The interlocutors do not understand each other directly (although the possibility of ontological pre-understanding, following M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer is also admitted) but through the text of their conversation (speech). On the same plane, there is the dialogue between the reader and the text, which is essentially a dialogue between two people separated in time.

To describe this situation, H.-G. Gadamer introduces the special concept of “hermeneutic conversation”: “Thus, one can rightfully speak of a hermeneutic conversation. From this, it follows, however, that hermeneutic conversation, like a real conversation, must develop a certain common language and that this process of developing a common language, as little as in oral conversation, is the preparation of some kind of means serving the purposes of mutual understanding, but coincides with the very process of understanding and mutual understanding. The text gives language expression to a certain matter, but the fact that it succeeds is the merit of the interpreter. Both parties are involved” (Gadamer, 1988, p. 451). Hermeneutic conversation, understood in this way, anticipates discussions about the essence of communicative processes in the modern information society, when the instrumental component of language is overcome, it and is asserted, following M. McLuhan, that “a means of communication is a message” and “intermediaries are translators” (McLuhan, 2014, p. 9).

If to speak of the “common matter” of understanding and interpreting the text, then it is remembered V. V. Bibikhin’s recall,

urging to “read philosophy” carefully (Bibikhin, 2009). Reading philosophy, according to V. V. Bibikhin, is a real “matter” of philosophy, a true event of human thought. However, it is necessary to abandon “correct interpretations” in advance, since the process of thinking fundamentally admits delusions, mistakes, and misunderstanding. This makes thought eventful, that is, commensurate with the disorder of the world and language: “... A philosophical event becomes not less, but more an event when it is not understood. Philosophy is not an intellectual matter; no one knows yet what it is. It (philosophy) is a big matter. An event of thought always remains an event even when no one understands it when all interpretations are wrong” (Bibikhin, 2009, p. 31). This conscious “misunderstanding” is the manifestation of the communicative nature of language, which was developed within the framework of analytical philosophy.

The development of analytical philosophy of language cannot be imagined without the “Philosophical Investigations” (Philosophische Untersuchungen (1945)) by L. Wittgenstein, who also believed that language is a mystery that requires understanding and interpretation. Some researchers point quite rightly to the connection between the ideas by the late L. Wittgenstein and M. Heidegger: “The methodological secret of Heidegger’s (hermeneutic) phenomenology is based on the secret of language, also noticed by Wittgenstein, according to which we, in essence, cannot talk about its internal form, and ultimately we can only reveal this form, repeating its sketch and by listening can move immanently to it “energy”. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Heidegger’s phenomenology approaches to a certain extent the therapeutic-linguistic philosophy by the late Wittgenstein ...” (Apel, 1991, p. 58). The authors seem that the connection between the linguistic approach to language by L. Wittgenstein and the postulates of hermeneutics is insufficiently developed, therefore they offer to dwell on some key points of this situation in more detail.

“Understanding” for L. Wittgenstein is not identical with “understanding” in hermeneutics. For L. Wittgenstein, “understanding” has a context associated with a person’s life experience, moreover, with a situational, one may say, applied aspect of language expression. Modern linguistics calls this approach to speech pragmatic semantics, and some researchers speak of a “pragmatic turn” in linguistic philosophy of M. Heidegger and L. Wittgenstein (Borisov, 2009, p. 38).

The late L. Wittgenstein introduces the concept of a “language game” (Wittgenstein. 1990, p. 238), and this means that for any language expression, the context of its use is primarily important. If for hermeneutics the context only helps to see the broad semantic connections of the text, then for L. Wittgenstein’s theory of language games, the context is a description of human activities in its pragmatic and situational manifestations. The broad interpretation of this provision allows saying that the world around us is subjected to hermeneutic interpretation to the extent that it is included in the necessary context of the individual’s understanding of himself/herself.

To explain the situation of an individual’s understanding of himself/herself in the context of language games L. Wittgenstein introduces the concept of “life world”, especially when he tries to understand the ideas by F. M. Dostoevsky or L. N. Tolstoy. However, L. Wittgenstein’s “life world” differs from E. Husserl’s approach to substantiating this concept in phenomenology and is closer to M. Heidegger’s concept of “being-in-the-world” as the fundamental concept of Dasein-analytics (Heidegger, 1992).

Summarizing L. Wittgenstein’s contribution to the development of hermeneutic problematics, it should once again be focused on the active, pragmatic nature of philosophy itself. The objective of philosophy is not to create confusing situations of thought, but to clarify the text logically. Such clarification is thought to be the hermeneutic understanding in the proper sense of the word. “The goal of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy

is not a dogma, but an activity. Philosophical work essentially consists of clarifications. The result of philosophy is not a “philosophical proposition,” but the clarity of propositions achieved. Thoughts, usually some kind of vague and indistinct, philosophy is called upon to make thoughts clear and distinct” (Wittgenstein, 1973, p. 24).

Thus, L. Wittgenstein’s theory of language games managed to connect the hermeneutic problematics of understanding and philosophy of language, developed within the framework of the analytical tradition and had a great influence on poststructuralism as a direction of modern philosophy.

The development of linguistic philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the crossing of language (hermeneutic) problematics with the ideas of structuralism led to the emergence of such a movement as poststructuralism. Structuralism in one way or another has always been associated with the problems of language, starting with the concept by F. de Saussure and R. Jakobson and ending with the ideas by K. Levi-Strauss or J. Lacan. However, some ideas by R. Barthes are of interest, since he, being a linguist and literary critic, felt more subtly the changes that philosophy of language underwent in its movement towards philosophy of the text. In his program work “The Death of the Author” (“La mort de l’auteur” (1967)) R. Barthes speaks of the emergence of such a language form as writing, which is becoming dominant in modern discourse: “Writing is that area of uncertainty, heterogeneity and evasiveness where traces of our subjectivity are lost, a black-and-white labyrinth where all self-identity disappears, and first of all the bodily identity of the writer” (Barthes, 1994, p. 384). Since R. Barthes postulates the “death of the author” through the development of the function of writing in modern culture, the resulting text of writing acquires a completely different interpretation. “The text is not a linear chain of words expressing the only, as it were, theological meaning (“message” of the Author-God), but a multidimensional space where various types of writing are combined and argue with each other, none of which is

the original one; the text is woven from quotations referring to thousands of cultural sources” (Barthes, 1994, p. 388). R. Barthes says that the traditional techniques of production and interpretation of the text, which were unshakable for the humanities of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (including hermeneutics) have exhausted themselves. They are being replaced by the postmodern reality of writing and text, which not only calls into question the figure of the author as the creator of this or that text, but also the text itself as a permanent semantic structure. Proceeding from this, “understanding” of the text is impossible if under “understanding” it is meant the disclosure of secret essences and meanings that the author has laid in the text using the codes of his/her cultural landscape. A dialogue with the author is also impossible since the author himself/herself is nothing more than a cultural function within the framework of this or that discourse.

R. Barthes answers affirmatively as to how then one should handle the text, whether the situation of its understanding is possible, but we must admit the existence of a special space – the reading space, in which the reader, not the author, will play the key role. It is the reader who generates the meanings of the text, interprets them, and provides a genuine justification: “The text is composed of many different types of writing, originating from different cultures and entering into relations of dialogue, parody, dispute with each other, but all this plurality is focused at a certain point, which is not the author, as has been argued so far, but the reader. The reader is the space where every single quotation is captured, from which the letter is composed; the reader is a person without history, without biography, without psychology, he/she is just someone who brings together all the strokes that form a written text ...” (Barthes, 1994, p. 390).

In this situation, hermeneutics of the text receives a different space of measurement, it becomes singular, that is, it proceeds from the extremely localized point of the individual consciousness of the abstract reader, without history, biography and psychology. Then the



text ceases to exist in its traditional meaning and in its place comes textuality as a manifestation of modern information and communication culture. It can once again be recalled M. McLuhan, who argued that “the content of the message is the message itself” (McLuhan, 2014, p. 9), that is, for the text, it is simply the very fact of its production in the process of constant self-generation and repetition is important.

Despite the difference in understanding the text by the representatives of poststructuralism, they agree that the text is plural and therefore requires many ways of reading it, as well as strategies for its interpretation. Moreover, this set is due both to the plurality of reading strategies to which J. Derrida calls (Derrida, 1993) and to the plurality of “possible worlds” of readers, their models, which U. Eco speaks about (Eco, 2005). This gives an impulse to hermeneutics as an established methodology for working with this set of texts to develop its own techniques and practices, which is especially important for a modern information society permeated with texts.

**Conclusions.** Summing up, it should be said that hermeneutics as a universal methodology of humanitarian research has had a decisive impact on both philosophy of language (the analytical tradition) and philosophy of the text (poststructuralism). This became possible due to the fact that hermeneutics was able to make a complex movement of returning to its own origins solely because of its initial goal to recognize the primacy of interpretation in relation to any text, the value of understanding as the only genuine human experience and the use of language not in the instrumental, but ontological value. After searches in the field of philosophy of language that took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it can be confidently spoken of the emergence of philosophy of the text, which is a worthy continuation of the best traditions of the hermeneutic movement.

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**Анотація.** У статті проаналізовано логіку розвитку лінгвістичної філософії від герменевтики до сучасного постструктуралізму. Автори вважають, що евристична цінність герменевтики полягає не стільки у розробці загальної теорії розуміння та інтерпретації, скільки в обґрунтуванні необхідності діалогу як комунікативної структури сучасного наукового та гуманітарного дискурсу. Важливим видається зв'язок між герменевтикою та лінгвістичною філософією, яка значно розширила застосовність герменевтичного методу для аналізу комунікативних проблем. У статті описується внесок лінгвістичної філософії у розробку проблеми «розуміння». У статті представлені ідеї Л. Вітгенштейна щодо його концепції «мовних ігор» щодо розширення простору «розуміння». «Розуміння» як герменевтична проблема має комунікативний та прагматичний характер. У статті також описуються погляди Р. Барта на проблему постструктуралізму як одного з найважливіших напрямків філософії 20-го століття. Саме

постструктуралізм перетворює проблему мови на поле аналізу тексту. Тим не менше, герменевтика залишається провідною методологією дослідження, оскільки проблема розуміння та інтерпретації тексту зберігає своє значення.

**Ключові слова:** комунікація, герменевтика, інтерпретація, лінгвістична філософія, аналіз тексту, постструктуралізм, розуміння

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**Аннотация.** В статье проанализирована логика развития лингвистической философии от герменевтики до современного постструктурализма. Авторы считают, что эвристическая ценность герменевтики заключается не столько в разработке общей теории понимания и интерпретации, сколько в обосновании необходимости диалога, как коммуникативной структуры современного научного и гуманитарного дискурса. Важным представляется связь между герменевтикой и лингвистической философией, которая значительно расширила

применимость герменевтического метода для анализа коммуникативных проблем. В статье описывается вклад лингвистической философии в разработку проблемы «понимание». В статье представлены идеи Л. Витгенштейна касательно его концепции «языковых игр» для расширения пространства «понимание». «Понимание» как герменевтическая проблема имеет коммуникативный и прагматический характер. В статье также описываются взгляды Р. Барта на проблему постструктурализма как одного из важнейших направлений философии 20-го века. Именно постструктурализм переводит проблему языка в поле анализа текста. Тем не менее, герменевтика остается ведущей в методологии исследования, поскольку проблема понимания и интерпретации текста сохраняет свое значение.

**Ключевые слова:** коммуникация, герменевтика, интерпретация, лингвистическая философия, анализ текста, постструктурализм, понимание.

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