

## Hassan Hanafi's Interpretation of Qur'an through Phenomenological Hermeneutics: An Analysis

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### Abstract

*Interpretation of the revelation to bring it at par with the modern times has always remained a live issue in the world of Islam. It has gained more prominence and significance in our age due to rise of political Islam and its repercussions. However, Muslim thinkers right from al-Kindī to Mohammad Iqbal have paid due attention to the matter of interpretation in their respective eras as per situation. This challenging effort is still underway; this paper intends to discuss laudable input made by renowned Egyptian philosopher Hassan Hanafi (1935-2021). His contribution is worthy of discussion, nevertheless, in the field of method of exegesis. Hanafi has devoted almost all of his academic and philosophical life in the pursuit of this question. In this paper it will be discussed in the larger ambit of his prestigious project titled Heritage and Renewal which deals with the thorny and delicate subject of Tradition and Modernity in Islam. Hanafi has dealt with all these topics not only with phenomenological method but also has employed Hermeneutics. Hanafi's main aim, to convert Theology into Anthropology is claimed to be achieved at the end of the discussion with the help of Phenomenological Hermeneutics.*

**Keywords:** Interpretation, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Theology, Anthropology, Revelation, Tradition, Modernity.

### Introduction

To begin with, Hassan Hanafi wishes to replace Conservative Hermeneutics while interpreting the holy text; because it is formal, void of content, mystic, dogmatic, theocentric and historical. Instead he is in favour of Progressive Hermeneutics which is material, full, social, open, anthropocentric and meaningful. His attempt to convert Theology into Anthropology is also discussed in the paper as the part of his method. Hanafi intends to reconstruct all Islamic disciplines including revelation with fresh interpretation. For this purpose, Hanafi has chosen the Foundation of Jurisprudence that is, *'Ilm Uṣūl al-fiqh*. He is of the view, "As the principle discipline concerned with meeting the legislative needs of the new Islamic community, *'Ilm Uṣūl al-fiqh* is a method for studying revelation with a teleological orientation towards the outward aspects of human reality. This makes it a most important discipline because the current situation in the Muslim World has a more acute need for a descending revelation into the world than in an upward movement towards God" (Hanafi, H, 1980).

The task is not easy; it would at first need two steps:

- i. To study the contemporary Muslim World and its historical legacy, and,
- ii. To reinterpret and re-evaluate the same legacy and heritage in the light of current situation

### The Method

Following method is to be employed at the preliminary stage:

"Extrapolating from the transposition of the traditional terminology of *'Ilm Uṣūl al-fiqh*, the wider Islamic heritage must be rephrased in what is now called *manṭiq al-tajdīd al-lughawī* 'logic of linguistic renewal' of the other disciplines of traditional Islamic learning. Taken as a 'field of reflection', Hanafi said that heritage is open to multiple readings because the texts corpora of traditions are in them do not have fixed meaning. While these earlier readings were not wrong at the time, clinging to archaic interpretations leads to an anachronistic understanding of the Islamic tradition" (Kersten, 2011).

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But how can such a gigantic task be accomplished? Ḥanafī has started from phenomenological method and used the familiar terms of reduction or bracketing to be applied to all civilizational flaws obscuring the first meaning of the text. Ḥanafī has elaborated it as under:

### **a- Phenomenology as the Lived Experience**

In the easiest words, Phenomenology is the *lived experience*. Without lived experience, nothing could be understood, even the meaning of any text. Therefore, before determining the meaning, Ḥanafī wishes to convert revelation into a lived experience by human beings. This approach, he declares as conversion of Theology into Anthropology. *The* fixation of meaning may be deferred until ‘the limits of meaning have been transcended’ and consciousness can reconstruct the original meaning (Ḥanafī, Ḥ, 1980). Again the question is how to do it? Hanafi has proposed as under:

- i. To Stipulate neologisms using radical transposition from Modern Western Philosophy;
- ii- To apply metaphorical and allegorical studies;
- iii- To retrieve knowledge from the folk-wisdom (Kersten, 2011).

Some more approaches in the similar connection are as follows:

- i- We should shift from the phenomenological to the existential method because being-in-the-world may discover and present new meanings of the text;
- ii- We should reconstitute new formulation since consciousness is reconstrued if we strip archaic ways of thinking and ‘Spirit of the age’ must be highlighted and kept in view while doing so;
- iii- We must compare the both above (i and ii) with each other; this comparison will deliver the required and essential result. First analysis would lead to the second in accordance with the strains of the age or era. (Demands of the era will be determined through the second exercise).
- iv- This third scheme is actually the real objective of Ḥanafī, that is, the reconstruction of all Islamic disciplines including revelation (Ḥanafī, 1980).

Carol Kersten has appreciated Ḥanafī’s technique very generously:

“These approaches are based on the premise that all Islamic disciplines have emerged from unmediated, philological, intuitive or allegorical readings of revealed texts. By identifying the negative and positive aspects of the fields of traditional Islamic learning, they are then transposed into a language better equipped to deal with contemporary circumstances.” (Kersten, 2011).

However, the hitherto proposed solution of this problem is not very substantial or even respectable. This is simply to borrow phrases, terminologies, expressions and vocabulary from the West and the Europe to deal with the requirements of the modern time. Ḥanafīs determined to bring the Muslim World out of this quagmire and to overcome their sense of inferiority. He is confident enough of his method and declares courageously that the logic and language consequential of the *Ilm Uṣūl al-fiqh* are better and improved than those of the dogmatic theology of the West.

“So whereas European philosophical jargon offers a richer language, the schema developed in *The Method of Exegesis* provides the Muslim World not only with a home-grown general method of philosophical investigation but also with a methodology which, thanks to its inherent coherence, stability and integrity, can find general application beyond the Islamic tradition” (Kersten, 2011).

### **b- Phenomenology as a Theory of Oriented Action**

Ḥanafī added a new dimension in the use of Hermeneutics and expanded its scope since in Christian thought it is considered generally a religious science like other religious disciplines. In Christianity it has never been recognized as a principle tool which may lead to new forms of reflection including linguistic analysis, historical critique and practical realization (Kersten, 2011).

Ḥanafī asserts that Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation; whereas interpretation actually means to understand and to execute. For instance, the violinist is an interpreter and the text is like a musical note, which needs to be understood and realized. As per Ḥanafī Hermeneutics was the earlier form of Phenomenology, and afterwards became its fulfillment; hence it has the capability to reorganize Phenomenology, as a practical science. Hence Phenomenology not only becomes a Theory of Knowledge

or a Theory of Being but also a Theory of Oriented Action just like Behavioural Sciences. Ḥanafī has not only defined Hermeneutics but also has explained its mechanism of interpretation under the “Text and Meaning”. According to Ḥanafī, any text itself is unfilled. Its meaning comes from the living experience of the present. The text that originated in the past in a retrospective vision is filled with content from the present, in a prospective vision. Hermeneutics is a procedure by which homogeneity in time, a continuous flux from the past to the present to the future is realized. Thus the text itself is formal. It needs material content coming from the living experience of the present. The text needs a passage from the Formal to the Transcendental, as Husserl did for Logic (Kersten, 2011).

### c- Text as seen in Meta-history

Ḥanafī wishes to see the text free from the clutches of history. He admits that verily the text primarily originates in a specific historical background but with the passage of time it becomes an independent source of value. Though it (text) is born in history but it lives and survives in meta-history. According to Ḥanafī, the text carries its own reduction and constitution (in Phenomenological sense) within itself. Therefore, the text starts in the historical contingency but ends in ideational necessity. It moves from the relative to the absolute and from the particular to the universal (Kersten, 2011).

All these premises are correct but the reader may raise the question about the methodology of interpretation. Ḥanafī answers very precisely that to interpret is to make a double movement:

- ❖ From the text to the reality;
- ❖ From the reality to the text.

The first is realized through the amphibological principles of language and the second through the *Zeitgeist*. *Zeitgeist*, the famous German term means, Spirit of the Age. Because language without reality is void and reality without language is blind. “*Die Sprache ist dass Haus des Siens*” (*Language is the house of being*. Martin Heidegger) (Kersten, 2011).

This is a dense paragraph wherein the phrases and expressions used need further elaboration. The very first is amphibological principle. An amphibological phrase or sentence is that which can be interpreted in two ways: usually because of the grammatical construction rather than the meanings of the words themselves. For instance, the phrase, “the boy on the chair with a broken leg” is an amphibology. “John is a poor student” too, is amphibology. Ḥanafī further states that the double structure of text and of society generates two similar trends in the Hermeneutics. The one is conservative and the other is progressive. The conservative Hermeneutics treats the text as literal and independent. It is considered as a model or yard-stick against which reality is measured. Whereas in progressive Hermeneutics reality is taken as fundamental and text is adjusted in accordance with the reality. Conservative Hermeneutics considers the text a value *per se* and an end in itself, while the progressive Hermeneutics considers the text only a tool....” (Kersten, 2011).

### d- Technique

The very next question which occurs to us is about the technique, methodology, premises, rules and regulations of this cherished method. Ḥanafī has narrated these very meticulously and in detail in the *Islam in the Modern World*. We would try here our best to be comprehensive as well as very precise and concise.

### e- Premises

These are prior to the rules of the method; actually they formulate the philosophical foundations of the method, which in the case of Ḥanafī are based on Phenomenology. The premises are as under:

- 1- Revelation is put between brackets.
- 2- There is no true or false interpretation, right or wrong understanding. There is only variety of interpretations made due to multiple interests. An interpretation primarily reflects the social, political and economic interests of its interpreter.

- 3- There is not a one and single interpretation of the text, there may be, rather there are many interpretations based on the different approaches of the different interpreters. An interpretation of the text is essentially pluralistic.
- 4- The conflict of interpretation is fundamentally a socio-political conflict, not a theoretical one. Theory provides only an epistemological cover. Interpreter, nevertheless, expresses his personal ideological leanings in the interpretation. Different powers or interest-groups use the interpretation either to transform or to sustain the status-quo (Ḥanafī, 1989)

#### f- Rules

Rules of phenomenological interpretation have been described as under, brevity, however, has been kept in view.

- 1- An interpreter may never be impartial; he does have socio-political commitments. He struggles for a cause. He is simultaneously a reformer and revolutionary. He has dedicated his life for the uplift of the underdog. *Sitz im Leben* (setting in life) is not only for the text but also for the interpreter.
- 2- Interpreter does not know in the beginning what does he seek for? But definitely he is a seeker after some concrete idea. He is not dispassionate but has associations. His effort is based on finding the solution of the problems. *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* is based on the same principle that reality is prior to text.
- 3- Linguistic forms are paid special attention since language as a form of thought that leads towards the meaning.
- 4- After linguistic analysis, the interpreter concentrates on building the structure of a thing going from meaning to the object, from *noesis* to *noema*. The meaning and the object are the same thing, two facets of the same intentionality.
- 5- The further stage is the analysis of the real and genuine condition. The interpreter studies ground realities, that is, poverty, oppression, violence of human rights, disparity in power and unjust distribution of wealth. He collects quantitative and statistical data, because social diagnostics of reality is another way to understand the meaning through dynamic application and test of the text in the external world.
- 6- The interpreter than compares the Ideal with the Real and identifies the gap. The interpreter survives between the two poles of the text and reality, between the faultless and the existent, between *dassein* and the *das sollen* (gap between reality and expectation). Hegel has expressed the same by saying that the Becoming emerges with the interaction of Being and Nothingness.” (Ḥanafī, 1995).
- 7- In the end, the decision is to be made about, what is to be done? Once the gap is identified between the Ideal and the Real, between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of Earth, action surfaces as the final step in the course of interpretation. The interpreter moves from manuscript to deed, from concept to act, and from comprehending to altering. *Theoria* and practice combine with each other in order to materialize the Divine on the Earth. The complete realization of the Ideal and the idealization of the Real are the natural processes of Reason and Nature (Ḥanafī, 1995).
- 8- There are three basis of interpretation: Being (*Sein*), Being- with –the- others (*Mitsein*) and Being-in-the-World (*Aussein, In-der- Welt-Sein*). Being is the individual consciousness. Being- with -the- others is the society which consists of interacting human beings. This phenomenon is known as Inter-subjectivity. Being-in – the- World means the relation of individual consciousness with nature including external world and its things (Ḥanafī, 1995).

#### Possible Objections

Ḥanafī has also answered some possible objections on this interpretation, the brief description of which is as follows:

- 1- Thematic interpretation concentrates primarily on the fact that text was revealed in a specific territory having particular culture, language and history. Its purpose was the moral elevation of that society. Besides that, every other factor is a part of Theology and not of the Thematic Interpretation (Ḥanafī, 1993).
- 2- No interpretation may claim finality or absoluteness. It cannot be declared valid till eternity (Ḥanafī, 1993).”
- 3- Phenomenological interpretation is based on Western Philosophy and its phrases; hence cannot be called original (Ḥanafī, 1993).
- 4- Ḥanafī’s interpretation may be accused of promoting Marxism, given the high and clear commitment for the poor, the oppressed and the wretched of the earth. Social justice, labour as a source of value, rejection of surplus value, common ownership of means of production; all are Marxist components. According to Ḥanafī, such elements are not due to Marxism, but appeared in it because of conditions of workers in Germany during 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas in the Arab and the Muslim World, colonialism, oppression, social injustices, mal-distribution of wealth, poverty, ignorance, dictatorship, tyranny, autocracy are given socio-political conditions paving the way for Marxist ideology. Early Islam was also accepted by the marginalized and the poor of the Mecca.

Ḥanafī has explained his mode of interpretation in detail, very clearly, univocally, without any ambiguity or fear of any sort. He is novel, fresh, energetic, bold, and courageous and not afraid of his conservative compatriots and fellow-believers spread across the world. He is confident of his views and able to state them categorically. He faces the problems with steadfastness, and does not withdraw or retreat immediately in case of pressure and criticism from the traditionalists. These are all his merits and plus points. However, his outlook and approach are not totally free of flaws and some valid and serious points of difference may be raised regarding them. Most of the objections he himself has enlisted above and tried to address them. However, a reader may notice that he is not replying the observations, rather is insisting on them forcefully. If we go back to his premises 2 and 4 above, we find some astounding statements, for instance:

- *There is no true or false interpretation, right or wrong understanding. There are only different efforts to approach the text from different interests, for different motivations.*
- *The conflict of interpretation is fundamentally a socio-political conflict, not a theoretical one. Theory provides only an epistemological cover. Interpreter, nevertheless, expresses his personal ideological leanings in the interpretation. Different powers or interest-groups use the interpretation either to transform or to sustain the status-quo.*

#### **a- Ḥanafī’s Response**

Now we come to those answers which Ḥanafī himself has given in response to these very tangible objections. Ḥanafī, like Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938) is very much inspired by the French philosopher, Henry Bergson (1859-1941). Bergson has asserted very audaciously that, “There is right or wrong religion, but only a static and dynamic religion” (Bergson, 1935). Ḥanafī considers Islam as a dynamic religion in line with Bergson; however, neither right nor wrong. It will be made so by the interpreter. Ḥanafī himself has acknowledged that (his) interpretation carries within it the Marxist elements. He is absolutely right since he has unconditionally declared that thematic interpretation is an ideological weapon in the conflict of power; and an interpreter is a human being with particular inclinations and passions who fills the text with meaning of his own preference. Since he has a very soft-corner for Marxism, and is the founder of Islamic Left in Egypt, he has seen the Qur’an too in the same perspective. He further adds that the Qur’anic text has a context, but not within the text, but in reality. In the classical expression it is called *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. The revelation was sent on request and appeal when there was a question within the society. The question was raised by a person or by a group, the solution proposed by the revelation was known by simple reason. *Revelation, reality and reason are identical. If revelation is sacred, reason and reality are also sacred* (Ḥanafī, 1993). For him, praxis or action intertwined with reality is the actual essence of the Holy Scripture. This view of Ḥanafī’s was endorsed by Herbert Marcuse too,

the famous German philosopher of Frankfurt School. Marcuse saw in Marx, also a demand for “radical action” (Wolin, 2001). For Marx, “praxis is a revolutionary and practical-critical activity” (Marx, 1844). Contemporary scholar and thinker Sheldon S. Wolin too has affirmed this view that *Dasein*, demands a radical response to the realities of alienated social existence (Wolin, 2001).

Like Hanafi, Mohammad Mojtahid Shabestari (b.1939) is an expert of Hermeneutics and a scholar and admirer of Christian Theology. Shabestari is a proponent of modern Islam and in Hermeneutics; he has founded and established a new science which offers a novel view on Islamic thought. He is confident that by the application of Hermeneutics on Qur’anic exegesis all problems may be resolved. He has written a valuable book on the topic under the title of *Hermeneutik, kitab va sonnat* (Hermeneutics, the Book [the Qur’an], and the *Sunnah*). He has taken inspiration from both Gadamer and Dilthey (Shabestari, 1996). Shebestari has also explained in detail the concept of “epistemological interest”; it is a very significant concept of hermeneutics with the help of which one may reach close to objectivity while reading the texts or to the possibility of dependable cognizance in the words of Habermas. Habermas, however, categorically concludes that no text may be fully understood. Shabestari extends the Habermas’ doctrine of epistemological interest to the interpretation of Qur’an and holds the views that all interpreters have their definite epistemological interests while reading and explaining the text; hence he too, stands very close to Hanafi.

Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd (1943-2010), the well-known Egyptian philosopher was not only a compatriot but also the pupil of Hanafi. He, too agrees with his mentor and teacher and has written that a number of relevant problems arise in interpretation when the Qur’an is treated as a text; it would remain susceptible to multiple interpretations, each reflecting the personal outlook of the interpreter (Abu-Zayd, 2006).

The Qur’an refers to religions in Arabian Peninsula before Islam such as Judaism, Christianity, Sabeanism, Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism and idolatry. If revelation is sacred, history of religions in Arabia is also sacred. *If the final lesson is sacred, all the previous lessons till the final one are also sacred*. That is why there is no distinction of sacred and profane in history as per Qur’an. History of prophecy is itself a history of various peoples as expressed in the prophetic narratives of the Qur’an; *Nūh* and his people including his son, Abraham and his people including his father, Moses and the Pharaoh, Jesus, the Scribes and the Parisians, Mohammed and the tribal history of Arabia. (Hanafi, 1993).

Hanafi says that before reaching an ordinary reader, Qur’an has passed through several levels of concretization:

- i- First of all, it was identical with divine essence and was meaning without words; which in Husserlian terminology is called, *vorpredicative Erfahrung (experience or understanding without word)*;
- ii- Then it was brought outside the divine essence and preserved in the *Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz* (preserved tablet), presupposing words in some language;
- iii- From preserved tablet it was carried to respective prophets by the angel **Jabrā’īl**in definite language;
- iv- Its insertion in the mind and heart of the Prophet (*Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) is another level of concretization;
- v- Then its utterance in life-sound by the Prophet (*Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) is the next level;
- vi- Then Qur’an as heard, written and learnt by heart by the companions makes the sixth stage of concretization;
- vii- The seventh stage is its compilation and standardized single version by the third pious caliph, ‘**Uthmān** Ghanī (Hanafi, 1993).

In the end Hanafi concludes excellently and emphatically, “The sacredness of the Qur’an is not the idolatry of the text but the implementation of its meaning in the real world, transforming revelation as an ideal system to a world system. Revelation and reality are two sides of one sacredness. A Qur’anic text

which is not implemented in the world and the world that is going to the opposite direction is a profane text. The sacredness of the Qur'an is the realization of its potentiality to reality. The Qur'an printed in silver and gold, covered by lane, kissed by the lips, touched by the hand to have a *baraka*, exchanged by the heads of states as a gift, put in the salon as a nice piece of decoration and exposed in Museums is a new form of idolatry. *Liberating occupied territories, freeing the citizens, implementing social justice, unifying the Ummah, preserving its identity, making it self-reliant with a higher cause are sacred. Reality may be the real sacred text. The sacred text is only its phantom* (Ḥanafī, 1993). In this sense of the word Ḥanafī means that Qur'an is content not a form, an action not a text. The sacred is intention, not the text; not the word but human intentionality.

Another argument regarding the text is quite pertinent and it is a good place in the discussion to mention it. There are some terms which have lost their previous meaning and have opted for the new ones. For instance, freedom now does not mean liberation from slavery of an owner, now it stands for the access to information, right to express, move, believe and choose etcetera. Some phrases and related issues no longer exist in the modern world such as spoils of war, concubines, slaves, and *Dhimmī* (non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic state). Similarly, some new phrases have been added to dictionary, which were previously non-existent, such as, human rights, democracy, parliament, national liberation, mass-culture, cloning, organ transplantation, stem cell therapy, assisted fertility and surrogate mothers etcetera. Some terms have either become obsolete or quite vague and ambiguous like *Jihād*, *Dār al-Ḥarb* and *Dār al-Islām*. These need either complete review or at least reinterpretation in terms of resistance against foreign occupation, war of liberation and colonization.

#### **b- Hermeneutics as Axiomatics-An Islamic Case**

As we know that Hermeneutics has occupied Ḥanafī's attention since long; he has analyzed this subject in detail in one of his earlier works, *Religious Dialogue and Revolution*. The first chapter of the same, that is, "Hermeneutics as Axiomatics-An Islamic Case" is worth reading. It is actually a paper of Ḥanafī which he presented in the International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion (The Society of Scientific Study of Religion) at Los Angeles, 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> September 1972. Its entire content may not be quoted here due to the paucity of space; however, a few passages would definitely enrich this paper and would add to the clarity of old concepts besides introduction of a few new phrases.

In the very essay, Ḥanafī describes Hermeneutics not only as a science of interpretation but also a discipline that describes the passage of revelation from the stage of words to the stage of the world. It is the science of the process of revelation from the letter to reality, from Logos to Praxis, and also the transformation of revelation from the Divine Mind to human life. He enumerates here three stages of Hermeneutical understanding:

- i- Historical criticism: It assures the legitimacy and validity of the text in history.
- ii- Interpretation of the Scripture in rigorous sense, dealing essentially with the language and historical circumstance from which the Scripture originated;
- iii- Realization of this meaning in human life, which is the final goal of the Divine Word (Ḥanafī, 1977).

These three steps may be explained in phenomenological terminology as well. Phenomenological parlance Hermeneutics ascertains the truth and indisputability of the text. Its explanation is as under:

- i- Historical consciousness: It defines the genuineness of the text and the grade of its certainty;
- ii- Eidetic consciousness: It makes the text rational and assigns meaning to it;
- iii- Practical consciousness: It adopts the meaning as theoretical foundation for action and propels revelation to its ultimate objective in human life and in the world. It acts as an ideal arrangement and configuration wherein in which the entire creation realizes its meaning and discovers perfection (Ḥanafī, 1977).

While explaining Hermeneutics as Axiomatics, Ḥanafī says that it means the description of Hermeneutical process as a rational, formal, objective and universal science. “The relation between Hermeneutics and Scriptures is like the relation between Axiomatics and mathematics. Like Axiomatics, Hermeneutics has to put in advance all its axioms and try to solve in advance all the Hermeneutical problems without any reference to **data revelata** (Ḥanafī, 1977)”. There are two types of Hermeneutics: general Hermeneutics and the special Hermeneutics. The special one is called **Hermeneutics Sacra**, which deals with the interpretation of the sacred texts in accordance with the rules mentioned above (Ḥanafī, 1977). [Emphasis original].

Hermeneutics as Axiomatics traces out its way between two common extremes: the **practical exegesis** and the **Philosophical Hermeneutics**. Practical exegesis is a pure philological analysis of the text very near to **philologia sacra**. Hermeneutics as Axiomatics eliminates the distinction between Hermeneutics and exegesis. It is simultaneously a theoretical and applied science. Now the very next question is if Hermeneutics as Axiomatics deals with the revelation, what is the **data revelata**? Is it history, some exceptional event, an act, certain person or any word? The answer is that revelation is neither history, nor event, nor act, nor any person. Revelation is not something tangible; it is rather acoustic, that is, words with sounds and meanings. **Logos** does not mean Event or Persona, but only a Word, that is, language (Ḥanafī, 1977).

Let us see, how do the three above-mentioned branches of Hermeneutics, that is, Historical, Eidetic, and Practical work? A brief account is as under:

**The Historical:** Historical criticism must be completely independent of all kinds of theological, philosophical, mystical, spiritual or even phenomenological criticism. It deals with two kinds of words. First kinds of words are those which are transmitted to the prophet by God through the Holy Spirit and dictated by the prophet to the scribe. This is called the verbatim revelation. First kind of words is only the prerogative of the prophet not to be shared by anyone else. These are divine words in origin. Second type of words is by the prophet himself not dictated by God. These may be words, deeds and consents but not dreams, night visions or ecstatic states (Ḥanafī, 1977).

**The Eidetic:** After determining the degree of historical authenticity of scripture, follows the second problem of interpretation. Like historical criticism, interpretation is not a matter of religious or institutional authority, church, synagogue or councils etcetera; but only according to the grammatical rules and historical situations from which the text originated.

The linguistic analysis of a scripture is a simple means leading to the meaning. For instance, phonology belongs to the language as such to control the reading of the text, but it is still below the meaning, while morphology, lexicology, and syntax introduce us directly into the problem of meaning. Morphology describes the forms of the words, the verb, the noun, the article. It can give us the significance of tenses of the verb regarding time, the meaning of different forms of nouns regarding things and persons referred to, and the shade of meaning given by different usage of article. The use of verbal nouns may indicate realities in action, in transformation as a process, and not fixed as facts (Ḥanafī, 1977).

Ḥanafī further elucidates the eidetic interpretation by telling us that every word has three meanings:

- **Etymological:** Which guarantees the reality of revelation and prevents the metaphysical, theoretical and formal interpretations of the text;
- **Usual:** It binds revelation to particular community in time and space and adjusts it in a specific situation;
- **New:** It is the sense that revelation confers upon the word. It is the *raison d'être* of the revelation. It gives a new direction to human thought and action. It provides a push for the human progress (Ḥanafī, 1977).

**The Practical:** The Process of understanding is succeeded by the problem of the realization of the revealed word into actual life. It is the accomplishment of Logos through praxis. This is possible through Positive Theology, which does not study facts or institutions but the transformation of revelation from theory to practice. The positivity of the revelation does not lie in its foundation on material facts but in the



realization in the actual world. The realization of revelation in the world and human life occurs through the realization of the divine precepts. A divine command defends human interests and prevents evil and damages. Every command is based on reason; it expresses not only divine will but also positive foundations. Revelation intends to realize Kingdom of Heaven on earth through an ideal world-structure (Hanafi, 1977).

Mohammad Haddad paid tribute to Ḥanafī, for his contribution in such a difficult task besides approving his views. In the words of Haddad, by launching the Heritage and Renewal Project at the start of the fifteenth century of Islam, Ḥanafī has proved himself *Mujaddad* or ‘renewer of his age’ (Haddad, 1998).

## Conclusion

Ḥanafī has tried his best to show that interpretation is the device, apparatus and mechanism to bring tradition at par with modernity and heritage in consonance with the contemporary demands. He has elucidated that tradition and heritage have a larger connotation as compared to the believed. Moreover, the scope of cultural heritage or tradition is wider than creed since it includes social, political and historical elements as well. Hence to interpret it, we should concentrate on the less tangible manifestations of a culture’s ethos which express themselves through popular ways, Sufi practices, axioms, maxims, and proverbs in jurisprudence and other accepted manners to articulate religious sentiments. The novelty and strength of Ḥanafī’s method lie in its theoretical foundation. This is based on the ascending and descending lines of analysis. Both methods complement each other in Ḥanafī’s exposition. Therefore, we may say without the fear of contradiction that of Ḥanafī’s Phenomenological Hermeneutics is a landmark contribution to the study of the interpretation.

It is hoped that the paper has remained successful in fulfilling its claim made in the beginning (see Abstract) that Hanafi has converted Theology into Anthropology through Phenomenological Hermeneutics. We have seen how he has emphasized the human element in the revelation and has made the process horizontal instead of vertical. He has conclusively shown that Theoria can be turned into praxis through Phenomenological interpretation assisted by Hermeneutics. Definitely some of his ideas may not be fully agreed to; however; every reader’s right to disagree and constructive criticism is fully respected by the authors.

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