

IMPLEMENTATION OF GRACIA'S HERMENEUTICS IN QUR'ANIC STUDIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INDONESIAN MUSLIM SCHOLARS

Implementasi Hermeneutika Gracia dalam Studi Al-Qur'an dari Perspektif Sarjana Indonesia

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Abstract

The issue of time and space distance between author and reader, which is the key to hermeneutic philosophy, is often not read well by the audience. The purpose of this study is to describe the details of Gracia's hermeneutics and the efforts of Indonesian Muslim scholars to apply Gracia's interpretation theory in studying the Qur'an. Using a qualitative approach, this literature research shows that Gracia's moderate hermeneutic, which emphasizes the balance between the search for the original meaning of the text and the role of the reader in interpretation, can be applied to both Qur'anic and Hadith studies. Appropriate use of Gracia's theory of the function of interpretation can help understand the Qur'an inclusively and can work harmoniously with the rules of interpretation that have been established in the study of Qur'anic interpretation.

Keywords: Gracia's hermeneutics, Indonesian Muslim scholars, interpretation, Qur'anic Studies

Abstrak

Persoalan jarak ruang dan waktu antara pengarang dan pembaca yang menjadi kunci filsafat hermeneutika seringkali tidak dibaca dengan baik oleh pemerhatinya. Dari situlah pemikiran Gracia lahir. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mendeskripsikan detail hermeneutika Gracia serta upaya para sarjana muslim Indonesia untuk menerapkan teori interpretasi Gracia dalam mengkaji Al-Qur'an. Berangkat dengan pendekatan kualitatif, dari penelitian pustaka ini dipahami bahwa hermeneutika moderat Gracia yang menekankan pada keseimbangan antara pencarian makna asal teks dan peran pembaca dalam penafsiran bisa diaplikasikan pada kedua kajian al-Qur'an dan hadis. Penggunaan teori fungsi interpretasi Gracia secara tepat dapat membantu memahami Al-Qur'an secara inklusif dan dapat berjalan harmonis dengan kaidah-kaidah penafsiran yang telah mapan dalam kajian tafsir Al-Qur'an.

Kata kunci: hermeneutika Gracia, sarjana muslim Indonesia, interpretasi, kajian al-Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

Hermeneutic problems always question the distance in time and space between the author and the reader. Within this distance, it is likely that the reader cannot clearly understand the words, terms, and sentences made by the author. Error is something that always looms in every interpretation process. Because of this distance, a person can have the opportunity to manipulate the meaning of the text according to their subjective desires.¹ Among the hermeneutic scholars who pay special attention to the above problem is Jorge J.E. Gracia. The simplicity of his theory, which is very technical, seems to attract the hearts of Qur'anic scholars in Indonesia. This paper aims to describe the theory of interpretation initiated by Gracia and the efforts to apply his theory of interpretation in the interpretation of the Qur'an by Indonesian Muslim scholars. This literature research uses descriptive method. Data is taken from Gracia's master book and scientific papers in the form of scientific journals, theses and dissertations related to the purpose of this research. The novelty of this research can be proven through offline and online searches because to the best of the author's knowledge no other researchers have studied the same topic because Gracia's thought itself has only been studied intensively in Indonesia in recent years.

DISCUSSION

Jorge J. E. Gracia (July 18, 1942 - July 13, 2021) was a Cuban-born American philosopher who was the Samuel P. Capen Chair, SUNY Distinguished Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Department

of Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Gracia was educated in Cuba, the United States, Canada, and Spain, and received his Ph.D. in Medieval Philosophy from the University of Toronto. Gracia has authored or edited more than forty books. His areas of specialization include Metaphysics/Ontology, Philosophical Historiography, Philosophy of Language/Hermeneutics, Ethnicity/Race/Nationality Issues, Hispanic/Latin Issues, Medieval/Scholastic Philosophy, and Hispanic/Latin American Philosophy. While Gracia's previous work was mainly in the areas of Medieval Philosophy and Metaphysics, most of his recent work focuses on issues of race, ethnicity and identity. His contributions to the philosophical study of race and ethnicity have been groundbreaking. It is in this field that Gracia proposes his family-historical view of ethnicity and his genetic view of race. These views on race and ethnicity have helped shape the field and answered many issues that were left unanswered by previous theories. Gracia is the founding chair of the APA Committee on Hispanics in Philosophy, former president of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy, former president of the Society for Iberian and Latin American Thought, former president of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, and former president of the Metaphysical Society of America.²

Gracia's writings related to philosophy are the following:³

1. A Theory Of Textuality: The Logic And Epistemology (1995)

¹ Syamsul Wathani, "Hermeneutika Jorge J.E. Gracia Sebagai Alternatif Teori Penafsiran Tekstual Alqur'an," *Al-A'raf* 14, no. 2 (2017): hal. 200, <https://ejournal.uinsaid.ac.id/index.php/al-araf/article/view/945>.

² "Jorge J. E. Gracia," *Wikipedia.Org*, n.d., accessed April 10, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_J._E._Gracia.

³ Nablur Rahman Annibras, "Hermeneutika J.E. Gracia (Sebuah Pengantar)," *Al-Bayan* 1, no. 1 (2016): hal. 73, <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/Al-Bayan/article/view/1669>.

2. Text: Ontological Status, Identity, Author, Audience (1996)
3. Texts and Their Interpretation (1990)
4. Can There Be Texts Without Historical Authors? (1994)
5. Can There Be Texts Without Historical Audiences? The identity and function of audiences, review of metaphysics (1994)
6. Can There Be Definitive Interpretations? (1994)
7. Author and repression, contemporary philosophy (1994)
8. Textual identity, sorties (1995)
9. Relativism and The Interpretation Of Texts, metaphilosophy (2000)
10. Borges Pierre Menard: Philosophy Of Literature (2000)
11. The Ethics of Interpretation
12. A Theory of Author, dalam The Death and Resurrection of the Author (2002)
13. The Uses And Abuses Of The Classics: Interpreting Interpretation In Philosophy
14. Meaning, dalam Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of Scriptures
15. History/Historiography Of Philosophy
16. From Horror To Hero: film interpretations of stoker's Dracula
17. The Good And Bad: the quests of sam gamgee and smeagol (alias Gollum) for the happy life (2003)

Gracia's Hermeneutical Theories

According to Gracia, the word interpretation has three possible meanings and three definitions and involves three factors in the text, each of which may have five forms. Interpretation is of two types, namely (1) textual which aims to get three specific results and (2) nontextual which aims to find the meaning behind the textual

meaning.⁴ To put it more simply, textual interpretation looks for the explicit meaning, while nontextual interpretation looks for the implied meaning. Text itself, when connected to the function of language, means that it also has five general categories, namely: (1) informative text; (2) directive text; (3) expressive text; (4) evaluative text; and (5) performative text.⁵

Regarding the three possible meanings, as quoted by Annibras from Gracia, the word interpretation apparently does not only mean an interpretation, but also has several terms that can be adjusted to the problem at hand. The word interpretation sometimes means (1) meaning, or giving meaning to everything that is interpreted. Sometimes it can mean (2) translation, or translating something from one language to another. Interpretation can also be interpreted as (3) explanation, or explaining everything about what is behind a text or so on from vague to clear, from disorganized to neatly organized, or from global to detailed.⁶

The three definitions of interpretation are: (1) understanding, which is a person's understanding of the meaning of the text. In this case Gracia adds that the truth in this interpretation can be plural (many understandings); (2) Decoding, which is the process or activity in which a person develops an understanding of the text that involves coding the text to understand its message, and that understanding is not necessarily identical to the message itself; and (3) Interpretation refers to a text that involves three things, namely: the text being interpreted (interpretandum), interpreters (interpreters), additional information (interpretans).⁷

⁴ Sofia Aulia Zakiatun Nisa, "Hermeneutika Romantic: Jorge J.E Gracia," unpublished paper, 2017.

⁵ Jorge J.E Gracia, *A Theory of Textuality: The Logic and Epistemology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), hal. 87–88.

⁶ Annibras, "Hermeneutika J.E. Gracia (Sebuah Pengantar)," hal. 74.

⁷ Nisa, "Hermeneutika Romantic: Jorge J.E Gracia."

Meanwhile, three different factors are playing their respective roles in an interpretive activity namely: a) The text or whatever is being interpreted, b) An interpreter who with his ability produces a product of interpretation about a text, c) Additional information for something that is being interpreted.⁸ The additional meaning (interpretans) which is the creation of the interpreter, which in the end the combination of interpretandum and interpretans is called interpretation.⁹

Three specific outcomes as the main goal in textual interpretation, or commonly known as Gracia's theory of interpretive function, are: (1) historical function, finding the understanding of the author of the historical text and the historical audience (the audience in which the text appeared); (2) meaning function, creating new meanings for contemporary audiences (today's society) that have been processed by interpreters in their time; (3) implicative function, capturing the implications (conclusions) of the meaning of a particular text.¹⁰ This implicative function aims to bring about understanding in the minds of the audience, so that they understand the implications of the meaning of the interpreted text. The meaning of a text can be understood from the actions taken by the audience. This action is later understood as the application function. However, the distinction between meaning and application must still be made even though meaning and application look the same, but in essence these two categories are very different. Meaning is only in the conceptual

realm while application has gone further than the concept into an audience action.¹¹ The five forms of text referred to by Gracia are: (1) actual text, (2) intermediary text, (3) contemporary text, (4) intended text, and (5) ideal text. The purpose of dividing the text into five forms is a kind of interpretative process that an interpreter goes through, not separate from one another.¹²

Unlike his predecessors - including Schleiermacher - who focused on the objectivity of the text, Gracia came up with a theory that tries to balance the objectivity and subjectivity of the text. Gracia's hermeneutic school is often classified as objectivist-cum-subjectivist. This can be proven from the three theories of interpretation functions he built, namely historical function, meaning development function, and implicative function. Unlike Gadamer who gives a touch of hermeneutical thinking to his concept of pre-understanding, Gracia explains in detail how an interpreter goes through the process of interpretation by facing five different types of texts. In addition, it seems that Gracia also pays attention to the psychological side of the interpreter when interpreting a text. His concern about this is evidenced by his analysis of the dilemma faced by interpreters when interpreting texts. A dilemma that stems from the interpreter's lack of understanding of the function of interpretation itself.¹³

The similarity, as quoted by Nisa from Zunly Nadia¹⁴, is that Gracia's theory of the historical function of interpretation is similar to Schleiermacher's hermeneutics

⁸ Annibras, "Hermeneutika J.E. Gracia (Sebuah Pengantar)," hal. 74.

⁹ Syamsul Wathani, "Paradigma Sintesis Tafsir Teks Al-Qur'an; Menimbang Hermeneutika Pemaknaan Teks Jorge J.E Gracia Sebagai Teori Penafsiran Tekstual al-Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 5, no. 1 (2016): hal. 38, <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/journal-of-quran-and-hadith/article/view/13418>.

¹⁰ Nisa, "Hermeneutika Romantic: Jorge J.E Gracia."

¹¹ Wathani, "Paradigma Sintesis Tafsir Teks Al-Qur'an; Menimbang Hermeneutika Pemaknaan Teks Jorge J.E Gracia Sebagai Teori Penafsiran Tekstual al-Qur'an," hal. 45.

¹² Annibras, "Hermeneutika J.E. Gracia (Sebuah Pengantar)," hal. 75.

¹³ Annibras, "Hermeneutika J.E. Gracia (Sebuah Pengantar)," hal. 77.

¹⁴ Nisa, "Hermeneutika Romantic: Jorge J.E Gracia."

because he also emphasizes the search for the original meaning of an object of interpretation. Not much different from Gracia, according to Schleiermacher, the function of historical interpretation here is an effort to reconstruct what the author of the text meant based on language analysis and psychological analysis of the author. This is because the text is bound and dependent on the author of the text, so an interpreter must understand the intricacies and background of the author. Gracia's theory of the historical function of interpretation not only corroborates Emilio Betti's opinion that interpretation is basically intended so that the idea of something is understood as it is in accordance with the owner of the idea (author) in harmony with the social environment that covers it, but also corroborates Hirsch's opinion that hermeneutics is a process to revive the author's intention so that the meaning will be valid.

Gracia's theory of meaning development is in line with Gadamer's opinion, which states that in the process of interpretation there is not only the horizon of the text, but it is necessary to recognize the horizon of the reader. Both horizons are communicated to overcome the tension between the two. In order for the text to be understood by a contemporary audience, it is necessary to develop meaning. Likewise, Gracia's theory of implicative function has similarities with what Gadamer calls application. Gadamer expects the meaning that has been obtained in the previous understanding process and has undergone development to be applied in everyday life. In this case, Gracia can be said to be in line with Ricoeur who emphasizes that the peak of interpretation is appropriation, which is the process of understanding oneself in front of the world projected by the text.¹⁵

Implementation of Gracia's Hermeneutics by Indonesia Muslim Scholars

If the term interpretation allows three meanings as analyzed by Gracia, the same is not the case with the word tafsir. Tafsir in Arabic only refers to interpretation. Meanwhile, translation refers more to tarjamah in Arabic. Interpretation has three interrelated factors: the text to be interpreted - the interpreter - the text (information) added to the interpreted text. However, what is meant by 'additional information' cannot be said to be a product of interpretation if it stands on its own. The added information can only be said to be an interpretation if it is combined with the 'original text' which is the source of the study material. An example is Imam al-Thabary's interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an. Additional information from Imam al-Thabary explaining the verses of the Qur'an cannot be said to be 'Tafsir al-Thabary' if it does not include the original text of the Qur'anic verses. His interpretation can only be said to be a product of interpretation when he embedded the original text which became the focal point of his study.¹⁶

The two axes of thought that defend and challenge hermeneutics clash on two fundamental points: (1) the basic elements of hermeneutics as a discipline of understanding religious texts (al-Qur'an) and (2) on the incompatibility of some elements of hermeneutics with the sciences of tafsir as an official tool for understanding the Qur'an. These two points are the ontological side of hermeneutics and its relation as an episteme in understanding the Qur'an which is still being debated. Responding to the dispute, some people consider Gracia's moderate hermeneutics which emphasizes the balance between the search for the original meaning of the text

¹⁵ Nisa, "Hermeneutika Romantic: Jorge J.E Gracia."

¹⁶ Annibras, "Hermeneutika J.E. Gracia (Sebuah Pengantar)," hal. 74.

and the role of the reader in interpretation is possible to be applied in the realm of developing the science of al-Qur'an and tafsir. Moreover, in the study of hadith, Gracia's theory of "textual authorship" is used in the study of hadith, especially the issue of tahrif (reduction), which is to find out from where a hadith's wording begins to change and is narrated in a different wording up to the last sanad (mukharrij).¹⁷

As quoted by Wathani from Nadia¹⁸, the Qur'an is a revelation from God, God here as the author. As the author, of course, has certain intentions and goals when sending down the Qur'an to mankind, but limiting the meaning of the Qur'an by limiting the intentions of the author is something that is impossible. Because the Qur'an is written in human language (Arabic) which has its own grammatical rules. Likewise, the process of revelation is gradual and often in response to events that occur in the context at that time, this makes the meaning and understanding of the written verses will also be limited to the context at that time. Thus, the author does not have full authority over the meaning and understanding that will be produced, but the author still has influence over it.

In Sahiron's explanation cited by Annibras, by explaining the three functions of interpretation so that interpreters can be free from the dilemma they experience, Gracia wants to call for the importance of respecting the diversity of interpretations among interpreters. Gracia wants to emphasize the relative value of truth owned by interpreters. Thus, there is no absolute truth claim to an interpretation. In Annibras' opinion, the possibility of applying Gracia's

hermeneutic theory to the Qur'an leads more to the historical function of interpretation itself, although it is not absolute one hundred percent. However, in practice, this concept can work if it is supported by various disciplines that surround the sacred text, such as linguistics, Qur'anic sciences, ushul fiqh, and so on.¹⁹

The relevance of J. E. Gracia's hermeneutics related to historical function and asbab an-nuzul theory implies that knowledge of asbab an-nuzul will help one understand the context in which a scripture was revealed. The context will provide an explanation of the implications of a word, and provide material for interpretation and thinking about how to apply a word in different situations. As for the meaning function whose first stage needs to present objective meaning, if it is associated with the interpretation of the Qur'an, it can be referred to through the rules of interpretation of the Qur'an at a macro level. The rules have certainly been established by scholars, both classical and contemporary. Among these rules are the rules of the Qur'an, the rules of the sunnah, the rules of language, the rules of ushul fiqh, and the rules of science. Meanwhile, the effort to interpret the Qur'an by linking other sciences, both modern and classical, which is usually done by contemporary mufassirs by referring to the development of science is a form of implicative function. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that Gracia's theory of interpretation function is very relevant and linear with the interpretation of the Qur'an.²⁰

In At-Thoriq's research, which used the three-stage analysis of Gracia's

¹⁷ Wathani, "Paradigma Sintesis Tafsir Teks Al-Qur'an; Menimbang Hermeneutika Pemaknaan Teks Jorge J.E Gracia Sebagai Teori Penafsiran Tekstual al-Qur'an," hal. 31–32.

¹⁸ Wathani, "Paradigma Sintesis Tafsir Teks Al-Qur'an; Menimbang Hermeneutika Pemaknaan Teks Jorge J.E Gracia Sebagai Teori Penafsiran Tekstual al-Qur'an," hal. 41.

¹⁹ Annibras, "Hermeneutika J.E. Gracia (Sebuah Pengantar)," hal. 77–78.

²⁰ Khoirul Imam, "Relevansi Hermeneutika Jorge J. E. Gracia Dengan Kaidah-Kaidah Penafsiran Al-Qur'an," *Esensia* 17, no. 2 (2016): hal. 258–260, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/ushuluddin/esensia/article/view/172-07>.

interpretation function theory (historical function, meaning development function and implication function), the following results were obtained: First, through the historical function stage, it was found that the People of the Book was a designation of the Arabs before the coming of Islam to the Jews and Christians only. In addition, it was also found that the Jews and Christians opposed the arrival of Islam because they were afraid of losing their dominance in various aspects that they controlled at that time. Secondly, through the meaning function stage, it was found that the People of the Book had various bad traits and attitudes that were immortalized by the Quran. Their bad traits are oppression, selfishness in accepting the truth, betrayal, arrogance and hypocrisy, while their bad attitudes are changing the word of Allah, trading in religion, detractors, feeling the most knowledgeable, deniers, mixing the right with the wrong, like to do a strategy of doubt, obstructing people from the path of Allah, like deceit, exaggeration in religion and boasting. Their characteristics and attitudes will live on in them until the end of time. Third, through the implicative function stage, it is found that the Quran teaches us how to interact with them. We are allowed to cooperate with the People of the Book as long as it is related to worldly affairs, but we are prohibited from cooperating with them when the cooperation is related to religious affairs. The cooperation in worldly affairs here is like cooperating in business, sports, education, politics and other worldly fields.²¹

²¹ Dinar Syihabuddin At-Thoriq, "Konsep Ahli Kitab Dalam Al-Qur'an: Perspektif Hermeneutika Jorge JE. Gracia" (Bachelor thesis, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2019).

²² M. Dani Habibi, "Interpretasi Al-Qur'an Surat Al-Maidah Ayat 51 (Aplikasi Teori Penafsiran Hermeneutika Jorge J. E. Gracia)," *Substansia* 21, no. 1 (2019): hal. 26, <https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/substantia/article/view/4455>.

²³ Mohamad Yahya, "Al-Qur'an Dalam Kebudayaan Hikmah: Pemaknaan, Performasi-

The application of Gracia's interpretation function theory in Habibi's research²² provides the result that the substance of the meaning in surah al-Maidah verse 51 is not a prohibition to choose the leader of the country or tribe. Historically micro surah al-Maidah verse 51 was revealed in a condition where the Muslim community will do war. However, macro it turns out that this verse was revealed while in Medina. At that time the Medina charter as a form of interfaith tolerance was formed. So that it aims for the benefit of humans who always prioritize life in harmony and peace. In language, the basic meaning of the word *awliya* is not a leader but close or affectionate. This means that the message and moral idea in this verse is the command of Allah swt to humans to be able to live in harmony, peace and always be careful to choose a friend.

Finally, it is interesting to link Gracia's thoughts on the five categories of text (one of which is performative text) with the study of the Living Qur'an. Although Mohamad Yahya does not explicitly use Gracia's theory, his dissertation²³ has described well the culture within the *pesantren* based on the performance of the Qur'an. If according to Gracia, the performative function takes place when language is used to perform an act²⁴, and Sam D. Gill states that human interaction with the holy book on the performative side will produce traditions or cultures that vary from one person or community to another²⁵, then it is clear that hermeneutics (especially Gracia's theory) can help us get to know the

Diskursif, Dan Produksi Kultural" (Dissertation, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2021).

²⁴ Gracia, *A Theory of Textuality: The Logic and Epistemology*, hal. 88.

²⁵ Muhammad Alwi, "AL-Qur'an Dan Budaya (1): Kemunculan Tradisi Al-Qur'an Pada Islam Awal," *Alif.Id*, March 24, 2021, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://alif.id/read/mahs/al-quran-dan-budaya-1-kemunculan-tradisi-al-quran-pada-islam-awal-b236683p/>.

Qur'an better, both in the textual and nontextual realms.

CONCLUSION

Based on the efforts to apply Gracia's hermeneutics to the Qur'anic text by Indonesian Muslim scholars, including Annibras, Wathani, Imam, At-Thoriq, Habibi, Yahya, Nadia, and of course Sahiron as a pioneer, it can be understood that Gracia's hermeneutics, which is famous for having a technical concept in text interpretation, is very helpful in understanding the Qur'an inclusively and can work harmoniously with the rules of interpretation that have been established in the study of Qur'anic interpretation.

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