**The "Pre-judgments influencing one's interpretations, and the**

**"Fusion of horizons" in your learning experiences"**

**COM 803-12: Hermeneutics and Communication**

**Peter Abraham Airewele**

**Omega Graduate School**

**August 24, 2023**

**Professor Dr. Kenneth Schmidt, Ph.D.**

**Assignment #1 Core Essential Elements**

1. Write a three-paragraph essay responding to the following question:

When have you noticed your pre-judgments influencing your interpretations? How have you experienced a "fusion of horizons" in your learning experiences?

**The "Pre-judgments influencing one's interpretations, and the**

**"Fusion of Horizons" in one's Learning experiences."**

           As challenging as the American Culture may look initially to immigrants and naturalized citizens, you cannot easily discount nor overlook it. The American culture is rich, pervasive, dynamic, and easily ensnaring for its robust social, acculturation, and multicultural diversity worldviews. Utilizing the context of hermeneutics will help create a broader picture to engage a spectrum of interpretive methodologies and analysis of some misconstruing notions, actions, symbols, or culture based on prejudging the American culture and the people. Upon arriving in the States in the 20s, initially, there was this belief that the American people have a mixed culture of social materialism, capitalism and yet a nation of 'spoiling looking liberty, and freedom' reflecting contemporary, historical, social, and cultural posturing: i) the Machismo characterizations of the Cowboys' gun totting stunts, the dangling, chewing fat Cuban cigars at the edge of the restless-looking lips, and the trendy swaggers of the old Western icons like, Jim Brown, John Wayne, Giuliano Germa, Charleston Heston. ii) The violent climate of criminality and gun ownership due to the 1st and 2nd Amendment of the US Constitution. iii) The era of Calvin Klein blue Jeans seems to rock the world's nations to nuts, even as copious copycats. iv) Moreover, there is the religious, political evangelicalism desperate to right or wrong abortion. v) The landscape with dotting colorful, flamboyant newbie celebrities prideful, and parading some deliberate crawling, bouncing Oldsmobile, Cadillacs, and Broncos. vi) The rock n Roll and Hip Hop legendary artistries, the gyrating music frenzies of the young and old. In the process of settling down to work and study, you find the likes of James Brown, Kool and the Gang, Earth, Wind, and Fire, Michael Jackson, Dr. Dre, 50 Cents, Ludacris, Snoop Dog, Busta Rhymes and Usher dominating the entertainment airwaves, radios, and TVs in the US. Moreover, groups like Jimmy Hendrix, Kiss, Prince, Queen, Grand funk, Deep Purple, Metallica, foreign bands like ACDC, Rolling Stones, David Bowie, and others sometimes overwhelm or even appeal to the guys in the block. To the author, a US citizen from a purely traditional Pentecostal Christian background, the American culture is seen as racy and too fast. To compound this are the scantily dressed people engaged in sexual scenes in movies. At first, the American culture looks utterly opposite to one's cultural belief systems. The tendency to prejudge America and tag it as a modern culture lacking some fundamental ethical, moral, and traditional values of Christian righteousness begins to rise by the day. The cowboys' characteristic, pugnacious mannerisms, the rundown ghettos, and the harshly spoken slang, and expletives on the streets, cafes, and bars like, hey, F-You, Mother-F, Shtt, begin to bombard, orient, and drain one's cultural and ethical values attached to America and the people. For once, America is wrongfully prejudged as a culture of promiscuous behaviors, angry-talking neighbors, perverting sex, and argumentative communities.  Initially, these social, cultural factors seem to create suspicion based on cultural domination, over-contextualization, tantamount to prejudging, unrighteous, ethnocentric categorization. Here, the first commandment, “Love your neighbor as self”, Matthew 22:37-40 begins to resonate with well defining moments, Kingdom leadership and service, alongside lines of cultural evaluation, and interpretation.

           Gradually, you find a healthy contextualization "Fusion of Horizons" creeping into the fabrics of one's Christian ethical morality, and worldviews that reflect America in its true pluralistic, multicultural identity, diversities, inclusive context, and civility (avoiding ethnocentric persuasions). This mirrors the “Contemporary Options for equity, honor, and mutual respect for cultural differences without diluting the gospel”(Buckner et al., 2015). Respecting cultural education and embracing factual evaluation and interpretation, a broad range of American socio-political, economic, and religious cultural values begin to take shape. Undoubtedly, one finds common grounds in healthy American cultural contextualization (thereby avoiding under-contextualization and over-contextualization). Some scholars embrace the "fusion of horizons" based on practicable cultural, intelligent principles. "It is proposed that a liturgical hermeneutic of Scripture be considered alongside other approaches used by biblical scholars" (Schwantes, 2023). To buttress this, Barak, A. (2022) writes to "explore the intersection between Hans Georg Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons and interpreter's 'prejudices,- the concept of cultural resonances, - the researcher's different cultural associations and connotations (e.g., myths, legends, popular media references), emerge in an interpretive encounter with a text; - with regard to reflexivity, power, rigor, and cultural sensitivity." The results indicate the importance of cultural intelligence, sociocultural adaptation, and cultural intelligence (Arli et al., 2023). Moreover, there is the innovation for change within the context of effective communication and historical and cultural education (Dean et al., 2022; De Bruin et al., 2022; Cumming, Bettini, & Chow, 2023; Thorsen, 2023; Yeganeh, 2023). While Schwante seems to profess to share common biblical truth, Barak's cultural "sensitivity," Arli et al., DeBruin, Thorsen, and Yeganeh, and the author's cultural intelligence seem to intersect at the level of sociocultural change. However, the contrary thread in this situation is that "there is unmediated access to a Divine Will. - a range of coercive actions (including violence) to force others into submission to the perceived Will of God is seen as justified by some of these groups" (Nixon & Nixon, 2017). In the absence of cultural coercion, one finds the option of common ground contextualization intriguing.

It is crucial to echo this, "One of the key concepts in hermeneutics is referred to as the "horizon of understanding. This idea suggests that interpreters bring their horizons of experience to the interpretation process. When encountering a cultural text or practice, individuals engage with it by merging their horizons with those of the creator or the cultural context, leading to new insights (OGS, Edu, 2023). To create a sustainable fusion of horizon of understanding and cultural education: i) There is the interplay of the elements of the subjective function and perspectives. "Hermeneutics acknowledges that interpretation is a subjective process influenced by the interpreter's background, experiences, and biases. In culture, individuals from different backgrounds might interpret the same cultural artifact differently based on their unique perspectives. This recognition of subjectivity encourages a richer understanding of culture" (OGS, Edu, 2023). ii) The objective process and function identify with the facts, truth, and common ground and are designed to overcome prejudice, misconception, the prejudging of American culture and their ways of life, systems of governments, and political climate as too extreme or excessive despite the social liberty and freedom that exist. iii) In the evolving process and evaluation, American multi-culturalism reveals that the "fusion of horizon can be accomplished, through accommodation, and the coming together, the mutual tolerance one has for American social, Christian cultural values and other nationalities and peoples despite the cultural differences. "Nearly every generation of Christians has reinterpreted the Scriptures (with varying degrees of awareness) to make the Bible relevant to their concerns. This interpretive task is precisely what the hermeneutical enterprise endeavors." (Kling, 2022, p. 2 and 3). The concept of multicultural mutuality this author ascribes to does not change his Christian worldviews. Rather, it finds a credible space in the "fusion of horizons' as a by-product of rational, healthy contextualization (Anderson, 2017), that fits squarely in the puzzles. That which indicates individual and community respect for American cultural values, and to express common ground for co-existence of the author's cultural, Pentecostal, Christian worldviews. It is a fact that, “we learned as much from our failures as our successes (Herrington et al., 2020, p.2. para 1). This enables one to avoid inappropriate contextualization and syncretism (Häde, 2023; Arli et al., 2023; & Berding, 2022). Nearly every generation of Christians has reinterpreted the Scriptures (with varying degrees of awareness) to make the Bible relevant to their concerns. According to Zimmer, L. (2006), “Gadamer's concepts of the hermeneutic circle, the fusion of horizons, and dialogue with the text are explored for the insight they provide into the place of qualitative inquiry”. Moreover, this “interpretive task is precisely what the hermeneutical enterprise endeavors” (Kling, 2022). Amid these seeming multi-dimensional levels of interpretations, sometimes secular conflicting contentions, and diverse philosophical thoughts (Behan, 2020; T., & Craib, 2023; Bonnette, 2023), there is the fusion of understandably interpretive horizons coming together to form a healthy contextualization of the American culture not subject to any prejudging, nor prejudice, to uphold the beauty and practice of human rights, cultural diversity, and inclusion.

**Works Cited**

Anderson, A. H. (2017). Contextualization in Pentecostalism: A multicultural perspective.

 *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, *41*(1), 29-40.

Arli, D., Pekerti, A. A., Kusumansondjaja, S., & Sendjaya, S. (2023). The mediating effect of

           Sociocultural adaptation and cultural intelligence on citizens and migrants impact perceptions of country images. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *92.*

 Behan, S. P. (2020). Exegeting Scripture, Exegeting Culture: Combining Exegesis to Fulfill

           God's Calling. *The Asbury Journal*, *75*(2), 4.

Benton, T., & Craib, I. (2023). *Philosophy of social science: The philosophical foundations of*

*social thought*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Bonnette, D. (2023). The Church, the State, and National Heritage: Contentious Debate. In

           Redundancy, Community, and Heritage in the Modern Church of England, 1945–2000: Closing the Church Door (pp. 43-75). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Branson, M. L., & Martinez, J. F. (2023). *Churches, cultures, and leadership: A practical*

*theology of congregations and ethnicities*. InterVarsity Press.

Bruckner, L, Ward, D, Reichard, J, & Omega Graduate School (2015). Contextualization For

           Social Change. Supplemental Study Guide.

Cumming, M. M., Bettini, E., & Chow, J. C. (2023). High-Quality Systematic

           Literature Reviews in Special Education: Promoting Coherence, Contextualization, Generativity, and Transparency. Exceptional Children, 00144029221146576.

Dean, M., Moreau, S., Russell, S., & Scheuermann, R. (2022). Communication in Mission: Global Opportunities and Challenges.

De Bruin, A., Roy, M. J., Grant, S., & Lewis, K. V. (2022). Advancing a contextualized,

           community-centric understanding of social entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Business &*

*Society*, 00076503221121820.

Foran, L. (2018). Gadamer and Ricoeur. In *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Philosophy* (pp.90–103). Routledge.

Häde, W. (2023). Contextualization or Syncretism? The Use of Other-Faith Worship Forms in

           The Bible and Insider Movements, written by Derek Brotherson. *Mission Studies*, *40*(1), 177–178.

Herrington, J., Bonem, M., & Furr, J. H. (2020). *Leading congregational change: A practical guide for the transformational journey*. Fortress Press.

Henfrey, T., Feola, G., Penha‐Lopes, G., Sekulova, F., & Esteves, A. M. (2023). Rethinking the

           Sustainable development goals: Learning with and from community‐led initiatives.

Kling, D. W. (2022). *The Bible in History: How the texts have shaped the times*. Oxford University

Nel, M. (2023). The Prosperity Message as a Syncretistic Deviation to the Gospel of

1. *Religions*, *14*(3), 346.

Nixon, J., & Nixon, J. (2017). Educational Imaginaries. *Hans-Georg Gadamer: The Hermeneutical imagination*, pp. 53–66.

Schwantes, C. V. (2023). A liturgical hermeneutic scripture.

Thorsen, J. E. (2023). Catholicism in the Changing Religious Field of Latin America: A

           `Mapping. *Religions*, *14*(4), 461.

Yeganeh, H. (2023). Culture and innovation: a human emancipation perspective. International

           Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, (ahead-of-print).

Zimmer, L. (2006). Qualitative meta‐synthesis: a question of dialoguing with texts. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *53*(3), 311-318.