Hermeneutics and Critical Hermeneutics: Exploring Possibilities within the Art of Interpretation

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Abstract

Hermeneutics has much to offer those interested in qualitative inquiry, and is especially suitable for work of a textual and interpretive nature, yet writings in hermeneutics are frequently viewed as dense and impenetrable, particularly to North American audiences and those unfamiliar with the Continental Philosophical tradition. Drawing on Hans Georg GADAMER, as well as other hermeneutic thinkers, an introductory overview of five characteristics of a hermeneutic approach is offered in this paper. Further, it is suggested that hermeneutics can fruitfully be partnered with a critical approach. In this regard, a critical attitude and a metaxological approach are explored and a conceptualization of critical hermeneutics is proposed. It is suggested that hermeneutics and critical hermeneutics implicitly underpin qualitative inquiry, both of which emphasize the interpretive act of understanding, and a dialogue on this subject is invited.

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Keywords

hermeneutics; critical hermeneutics; interpretation

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