

## Gadamer, McDowell, and the Phenomenology of Understanding

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“The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand, how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term”  
– Wilfrid Sellars<sup>1</sup>

### The Background

My aim in this paper is to critically evaluate the debate between John McDowell and Michael Friedman on the nature of understanding and relativism. McDowell in his magnum opus *Mind and World*, has argued in favour of the view that the way we are open to reality is constituted by concepts. According to him, our openness to reality is placed in the space of reasons which is nothing but space of concepts. Friedman in his critical and detailed review<sup>2</sup> of McDowell's book has taken McDowell's project in his book in particular and in his philosophy in general as the project of not constructing philosophical theories but of exorcising the philosophical traditions. It is indeed so as McDowell himself has acknowledged, because he closely follows Wittgensteinian quietism in his approach to various philosophical problems. While explaining how our knowledge and perception of the world among other things are situated in the rational space, towards the end of his book, McDowell relates space of reasons to language and tradition. Space of reasons, in his opinion, can be understood, in terms of initiating ourselves into language and inheriting the tradition. He thus says, “...the sort of language into which human beings are first initiated, serves as a repository of tradition, a store of historically accumulated wisdom about what is reason for what.”<sup>3</sup> And here he is invoking Gadamer in a significant sense.

### The Problem

According to Friedman, McDowell's notion of space of reasons cannot be but many because each of us is situated in our own cultural tradition and initiated into a particular natural language. The historical situatedness of

our cultural tradition in a significant sense constitutes our space of reasons. But if there are many spaces of reasons and each of them is associated with a particular cultural tradition and particular world which leads to conceptual divergence among them, then, Friedman argues – McDowell along with his ally Gadamer who is from a different philosophical tradition could fall into cultural and linguistic relativism. In this context, the question arises, how can we think of a space of reasons which involves the perspectives of others? If it cannot involve the perspectives of others – other traditions and cultures, then there cannot be a genuine space of reasons in the sense that it is just a product of one's own conceptual construct possibly rooted in his or her tradition.

Friedman, in this context, asks – “One might wonder, accordingly, how McDowell himself would respond to the threat of cultural and linguistic relativism. Are we not faced, in particular, with the threat that there is not one space of reasons but many different ones – each adopted to its own cultural tradition and each constituting its own “world”?”<sup>4</sup>

Since there are different worlds corresponding to different cultural traditions and languages, thus the question arises, how the world of an alien subject, a subject from other tradition, is open to our view? Or how can we be available to one's view? It is in this context, the issue of understanding others comes into the picture. As we saw, since space of reasons is understood in terms of our situatedness in a specific cultural tradition, there must be many spaces of reasons as there are many cultural traditions. But the seeming contradiction is present in McDowell's position because, for him, the realm of conceptual, on the other hand, is unbounded. If space of concepts is unbounded, then how can we recognize that there are different spaces of concepts, other cultural and linguistic traditions outside the boundary of one's own space of concepts? Or should we take other linguistic and cultural traditions as only a conceptual construction out of one's own space of concepts? Answers to these questions partly depend on whether space of concepts is to be understood at the local level or at the global level. Unboundedness of space of concepts at the global level can be thought in the line of Hegelian absolute consciousness which does not acknowledge anything outside of it. At the local level, if different spaces of concepts are mutually exclusive to each other and each of them is formed in a specific horizon, then how will fusion of horizons be possible which McDowell along with his philosophical companion Gadamer from continental philosophy aimed at? Friedman, thus, alleged that both

McDowell and Gadamer fall into linguistic and cultural relativism. If our traditions are conceptually divergent from each other, both linguistically and culturally, then how can we actually avoid falling into relativism?

Friedman in this context asks, "...in what sense, however, is the world with which the alien thinker is engaged open to our view? For McDowell ... the realm of conceptual is unbounded ... if the conceptual contents of an alien thinker's engagements with the world are not yet available to us, therefore, how can the world corresponding to these conceptual contents be so? Are we not faced – before a fusion of horizons – simply with two different conceptual systems together with two different "worlds" constituted by these systems?"<sup>5</sup>

So, we can take into consideration three related charges that Friedman is leveling against the position of both Gadamer and McDowell, and see how, taking sources from both of them, we can avoid these charges.

### Three charges leveled by Friedman

1. Falling into relativism – Both Gadamer and McDowell are vulnerable to relativism. Since a specific space of reasons is situated in a particular tradition, our understanding of the world of others would be relative to that space of reasons. Tradition and history can also be viewed as obstructions in our way of understanding other because we understand others always from a perspective which is inbuilt into one's tradition and history. The further problem it leads to is that corresponding to different space of reasons there are different worlds. And since there are different worlds, understanding, in a particular context, is limited to one of these worlds but not in relation to the world as such. The upshot of this problem is that we cannot say that our understanding is about one and the same world.
2. Falling into a bad form of idealism – How can we even talk about different worlds if space of concepts is unbounded? And if there are different space of concepts and corresponding to them we have different worlds, then how can we talk about fusion of horizons or fusion of space of concepts for that matter? If the space of concepts is unbounded, then the world seems to be taken as nothing but the mere conceptual construction. Our understanding of others could also be a conceptual construction on our part. In this context, it is not even possible to talk about the world of others, let alone the fusion of

horizons and fusion of different world views. And these, i.e. relativism and bad form of idealism, take us to the third problem.

3. Impossibility of the fusion of horizons – If we are talking about different worlds as we are from different traditions, then how these worlds or world views are connected to each other? What about the objectivity of the world? Are we not living in the same world? Since we are talking about different worlds on the basis of different space of concepts we are in, it is not possible to talk about the world and in the absence of the objective world; the fusion of horizons would not make sense. Moreover, merely understanding other does not generally lead to a fusion of horizons and perspectives because in many cases it seems that we understand other but really not so.

In order to avoid these above charges, we can start by asking – how other cultures or people of other cultures are given to us in our experience? This question is significant because experiences of our selves and of others, in a way, constitute meeting points of different cultures. When we say that others are given to us in our experience, it is presupposed that we need to apply our concepts which are, as previously seen, from our tradition in order to understand that which is given to us. This givenness of other cultures needs to be understood in a better perspective for many reasons. Other cultures are not given to the people of one culture in a way which would put the other culture at the outer conceptual boundary of one's own culture. The way other culture is given to us should not be a case of myth of the Given where it is given to us in such a way that in making sense of what is given to us about the other culture, we do not have any role to play as a linguistic or conceptual being. Conceptual contents or elements of one's own tradition are operating in terms of conceptual capacities when one is trying to understand the other culture from a different horizon. This could be one of the reasons behind the critique of scheme/content dualism purposed by many philosophers, like Donald Davidson.

In his critique of scheme/content dichotomy, Davidson should not be understood as someone who is trying to abandon the world; rather what he is rejecting is the notion of world which is placed outside of all conceptual schemes. Our talk of various conceptual schemes is not directed towards detaching ourselves from the world as such, but, as Davidson says, it is "to reestablish our unmediated contact with the world..."<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, when McDowell is talking about the conceptually mediated openness to reality, it is interpreted by Friedman as not openness as such

but as something which is conceptually constructed. This is a wrong interpretation because, for McDowell, the world is not the creation of our concepts, but in experiencing the world our space of concepts is drawn into operation. McDowell is a realist in a significant sense. One can extend this by saying that in our engagement with others, in our understanding of others, our space of concepts is drawn into operation. The world as such is not the creation of space of reasons as the repository of tradition. When we engage with the world or when we have the world in view, reasons from our historically situated tradition are coming into operation.

In understanding the other world view, our own worldview gets its new meaning when our worldview is available for fusion with other worldviews. It is in this sense we can talk about the independence of the world from a conceptual boundary or from a particular tradition. McDowell, thus, says “the horizon constituted by a specific situatedness in tradition is not closed. On the contrary, it is always open to “fusion” with horizon constituted by a different specific situatedness.”<sup>7</sup> Here a seeming contradiction is present in McDowell’s position because he, on the one hand, is trying to maintain unboundedness of the conceptual and on the other hand, he is saying that specific situatedness is not closed. This contradiction will be effective if we place other culture and other spaces of reasons at the outer boundary of one specific culture or a precise space of reasons. The contradiction will also be effective if we think that our understanding of other is just a construction of the conceptual elements present in our culture. So, other worldviews are available to our own as the subject matter of their worldviews is not constituted by our thoughts about the world. We are not talking about different world views or different traditions in opposition to the world as such.

Gadamer, in this context, would say – “those views of the world are not relative in the sense that one could oppose them to the “world in itself”, as if the right view from some possible position outside the human, linguistic world could discover it in its being-in-itself.”<sup>8</sup> To the contrary, for Gadamer, “in every world-view, the existence of the world-in-itself is intended.”<sup>9</sup> Gadamer states, “each worldview potentially contains every other one within it – i.e. each worldview can be extended onto every other.”<sup>10</sup>

The fact that we have different worldviews does not lead to a point where understanding among different worldviews is hampered because imagery of different worlds gives us the differences among different

worldviews which are accessible to each other and these worldviews are about our world which is one for all of us. The pure subjective realm of one’s own worldview, I think, is put to scrutiny here because the worldview of one’s own is not radically different from the world we live in. The Cartesian notion of disengaged subject and its view which in a significant sense is the source of the problem of understanding can be put to rest if the worldviews are open to each other in the sense that these views are of the same world. “The imagery”, McDowell says, “is not making unavailable the point that there is one world.”<sup>11</sup>

When Wittgenstein said “the limit of my language is the limit of my world”, he was not limiting the world in itself and one’s own limited world is of course not, because of its own historical consciousness, radically different from the world in itself. My teacher Prof. S. P. Gautam always used to remind us that it is the limitation of some one’s world, not the limitation of the world as such when we talk about the limitation of language.

McDowell writes, “our worldview includes its own receptiveness to the possibility of correction, not only by efforts at improvement that are internal to our practices of inquiry, but also through coming to appreciate insights of other world views in the course of coming to understand them.”<sup>12</sup>

One’s worldview is open to others in the sense that it is self-critical and involves appreciation of other worldviews. In the process of understanding other, our own worldview gets its new meaning. Understanding among people of different linguistic and cultural traditions gives each of the traditions new meaning and brings out different dimensions. Each tradition with itself is also self-critical and there rests the possibility to be corrected by others. The possibility of rectification within each tradition, I think, is much more nuanced than just replacing one worldview by the other. Being self-critical and appreciating others in understanding ourselves as well as others go hand in hand because it seems one is not possible without the other. It is possible that within a particular tradition, a perspective may be available which makes that tradition superior in relation to other traditions. But even in that case there are also other perspectives in that tradition which oppose this kind of attempt. So, a tradition even in this case remains self-critical and open to others.

### **Sideways-on picture of understanding**

Bringing McDowell’s critique of sideways-on picture of understanding into this context would be of considerable importance in avoiding falling into

relativism. In understanding other's world views, one should not adhere to the sideways on picture of our relationship with the world. Sideways on picture of understanding, I think, would superimpose a metaphysical boundary between one's space of concepts and the world of others. McDowell writes, "We find ourselves always already engaging with the world in conceptual activity within such a dynamic system... It cannot be a matter of picturing the system's adjustments to the world from sideways on: that is, with the system circumscribed within a boundary, and the world outside it. That is exactly the shape our picture must not take."<sup>13</sup>

McDowell's view on our engagement with the world is strikingly phenomenological when he says, "we always find ourselves always and already engaged in the world." But what about our engagement with an alien thinker who is from a different cultural and linguistic tradition? How to make sense of the space of concepts and the corresponding world of a thinker for ourselves? The world with which the opaque thinker engages is already available to us in some way when we engage with that thinker. Our practical engagement with that thinker would be of considerable importance in understanding her world view. The world of an alien thinker should not figure as something outside of the conceptual system that we are in. In understanding an alien thinker, we are not adjusting our conceptual system to the world in which the alien thinker is situated. He says, "Of course we can initially find another thinker opaque. It may take work to make the conceptual contents of someone else's engagements with the world available to us. And in the meantime, the world she engages with is surely already within our view. I have said nothing that threatens the obvious fact."<sup>14</sup>

To understand an alien thinker is not to take that thinker as a part of our own conceptual system. It is not to say that we can construct the worldviews of other out of the elements present in our worldview. Doing this would, on the one hand, essentialize one's own world view, and would give a dominating picture of our worldview over and above other worldviews. Recognizing that there are different worldviews would not lead to the impossibility of fusion of horizons. It happens when we take our worldview as the dominating worldview about the world.

McDowell, following Gadamer's notion of "fusion of horizons", says "When the specific character of her thinking starts to come into view for us, we are not filling in blanks in a pre-existing sideways-on picture of how her thought bears on the world, but coming to share with her a standpoint

within a system of concepts, a standpoint from which we can join her in directing a shared attention at the world, without needing to break out through a boundary that encloses the system of concepts."<sup>15</sup>

A conceptual framework or space of reasons which is historically situated can be understood in a better way by taking into consideration the practices of a particular tradition. But that does not make it fall into relativism. Relativism would come to the picture if our world view which is historically situated in a tradition is not open or receptive to other traditions. McDowell's talk of space of reasons is not indifferent to the practices that we go through and which shape the contents of space of reasons.

### Gadamer's view on Understanding

I think McDowell's view in this context has to be significantly supplemented by the phenomenological tradition particularly by the work of Gadamer and Heidegger in order to avert Friedman's charge of relativism.

In order to engage with Gadamer's phenomenology of understanding, one can take his view on conducting a conversation into consideration. For Gadamer, in conducting a conversation and if it is a genuine one, the conduct of the conversation is not under the control of the partners engaged in conversation. Partners of the conversation are led into the conversation rather than leading it as he says, "a genuine conversation is the one into which we fall. It is not the one which we wanted to conduct."<sup>16</sup> The phenomenological notion of conversation tells us that falling into the conversation rather than leading it constitutes the essence of conversation. The essence of the conversation should not be prioritized against the nuances of actual conversation. Though we are coming from a particular tradition as participants of a conversation, this does not make us the leaders of the conversation. The very fact that we fall into a conversation ensures we are receptive to other horizons. Phenomenology of a conversation resists any attempt, on the part of the participants of a conversation, to essentialize the meaning of conversation. Participants of the conversation are not leaders of the conversation in terms of having a fixed set of beliefs, preconceived – before falling into it, about the conduct and the possible outcome of the conversation. On the contrary, by falling into the conversation without having preconceived notions about its possible outcome, we find meanings in it. The phenomenology of our experience of the conversation would give meaning to the conversation.

Gadamer is of the opinion that understanding is an event which happens to us rather than we making it happen. Partners of the conversation do not know about the possible outcome of the conversation before entering into a conversation. A genuine conversation, following Gadamer, one can say, is not scripted like the way some people give interview to the press. Meaning of the conversation is not preconceived or fixed by any of the partners of the conversation. In this context one can say that understanding in conversation is what happens when one horizon meets or encounters other horizons. It is necessary, for a genuine conversation, that all the partners of the conversations should be regarded as equal partners. A partner in the conversation should find himself as one among others and with others. Her own language and situatedness in the world should not be a barrier among other things in having a conversation with others. These factors should not also be manipulated for getting advantage over the others in conversation. Of course a particular partner of the conversation is entering into the conversation from the perspective of the particular horizon where she is situated, but the meaning of the conversation is revealed and open to all the partners when their horizons fuse into each other. Meaning of the conversation takes its turns as the conversation itself takes different turns. In this context Gadamer says, "Understanding is not based on transposing oneself into another person. To understand what a person says is... to come to an understanding about the subject matter, not to get inside another person and relive his experiences." Understanding a person is not like the story of the movie 'Inception' where one enters another person's mind in order to know the ideas in her mind. It is rather through our existential engagement we can understand a person.

J. N. Mohanty, emphasizing on Gadamer's view on understanding says, "...understanding which itself is an ontological process – namely, a process of primary openness to the world and the other. Such an understanding is not the result of intellectual operations which one applies to a given object, it is rather the dynamic outcome of concrete engagement and dialogue, of a fusion of perspectives and horizons. What is important here is that an authentic understanding cannot arise from an intentional strategy, but only from a willingness to give oneself over to the facts themselves."<sup>17</sup> Participants of a conversation reach at an understanding where language works as a medium. There must be conditions of understanding operating in every conversation that take place. Now the question arises, are we, as the partners of the conversation, always conscious of the conditions of the

conversation while having the conversation? If we always become explicitly conscious of the conditions of the conversation, then it might disrupt the understanding in the conversation. Gadamer in this context says "in situations where coming to an understanding is disrupted or impeded, we first become conscious of conditions of understanding."<sup>18</sup> So when the flow or immersed nature of understanding breaks, we become explicitly conscious of various conditions of it. But when we are already in the process of understanding, we are not conscious of the conditions of understanding. When there is a disruption in understanding, then the conditions of understanding consciously come to the picture. Heidegger, as we can see, made a similar point in a different context. According to him, when we are hammering, we are not thinking about the hammer or hammering. When we face some problems in hammering, then we become conscious of different properties of the hammer as an object. Heidegger made this point in the context of our practical engagement with the objects in the world. This can also be extended to the context of understanding others. Another point which should be taken into account is that the conditions of understanding should not be set by any partners of the conversation.

Gadamer's notion of understanding can be understood in a better perspective if we take into consideration his teacher Martin Heidegger's view on the notion of understanding. According to Heidegger, the way we get around the world, the way we find ourselves in the world, the way we encounter the world, are associated with a certain sort of "understanding." In his opinion, "my being in the world is nothing other than this already-operating-with-understanding."<sup>19</sup> There are so many ways in which the term "understanding" is understood by philosophers. Many philosophers these days call it "pre-reflective self awareness."<sup>20</sup>

The ontological distinction between our grasp of things and the things as has been traditionally seen is not even possible to construct. One can say that the ability to run and the ability to ride bicycles do not exist in our mind like our theoretical beliefs. It exists rather in our whole body. But this is not correct according to Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. One should rather say that the ability exists in moving-in-this-environment. The locus of this environment is not my body or mind, but my "body-walking-the-streets." It is a holistic engagement and is an embedding knowledge where our particular engagement with the world blends our "explicit knowledge" of the situation and our "unarticulated know-how" together in a coherent manner.<sup>21</sup> The traditional notion of mind and body which we have

inherited from the Cartesian tradition would not be able to give a better account of the way we engage with others and understand others. Our engagement with the things and people around us, according to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, is possible due to a kind of “understanding” which is also called “pre-understanding”. Objects show themselves to us not as mere objects. But they show themselves to us in their meanings or relevancies for our purposes, desires and activities. Objects are related to each other in the “nexus of their lived meanings.” We can understand the nature of different objects while engaging with them in different contexts.

According to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, propositions cannot capture the kind of world into which we are drawn into when we become involved in absorbed coping. We respond to various relevant affordances in the phenomenal field in our embodied coping. The world is directly lived by the absorbed subject as a shifting field of attractions and repulsions.

According to Heidegger, “human being (*Dasein*) is nothing but concerned absorption in the world.”<sup>22</sup> In his opinion “circumspection”<sup>23</sup> is the mode or way in which we became immersed in the world.

From Heidegger’s point of view when we go out of the room opening the door, we need not attend to the doorknob. We do not experience the doorknob as a doorknob. We just respond to the affordances it shows up to act on the basis of relevancies and meanings. Various affordances draw us to act on those at the opening of the door. We do not apprehend the door at all. In Heidegger’s opinion, we do not respond to or experience the door as affording to go out. The affording object, according to him, “withdraws”<sup>24</sup> and we just act on that. Heidegger explains this with the example of hammering – “When hammering is going well, the hammer is not what I focus on. The hammer simply affords hammering; the less I perceive it the better. If, however, the hammering is usually difficult, I may experience the hammer as having the situational aspect of being too heavy under these conditions. And should things go even more badly so that I have to abandon my activity; the hammer may appear as an object that was the context free property of weighing five ponds.”<sup>25</sup>

The above view of Heidegger, it is wrong to think, is only confined to our understanding of physical objects of the world. It can also be applied in various ways to our understanding of people, culture and language among other things because in our everyday life we engage not only with objects but also with people from other cultures and linguistic traditions.

Our ordinary coping which involves “pre-understanding” is understood by some phenomenologists as non-conceptual. It is non-conceptual in the sense that it does not incorporate the elements of our language in its locus. The explicit information which we constantly get from the environment draws us to act on that on the basis of lived meanings and relevancies in the level of “pre-understanding” without drawing any concepts. If it is non-conceptual, then the question arises, how can the elements of our language and tradition can play a role in understanding others?

It is in this context, Gadamer’s view on the nature of our engagement and as it is interpreted by McDowell might be placed in a possible confrontation with Heidegger’s view on the same. Dreyfus’ demarcating view of McDowell and Gadamer from that of Heidegger on the nature of our engagement says, “McDowell like Gadamer, overlooks Heidegger’s claim that our free experience of a world differs from an animal’s unfree experience in a way that is more basic than our capacity to step back and emancipate ourselves from our involvement. Heidegger sees as essential the fact that human beings are free to open themselves to be bound – a freedom that animals lack because they are constantly captivated by their current activity and can never step back.”<sup>26</sup> McDowell, following Gadamer, says that “thinkability” and “namability” as features of the world are always present in our experiential understanding of the world. For him, though it is true that we do not have a name or explicit knowledge already available to characterize or specify our understanding in experience, yet it has the conceptual content of certain sort, actually or potentially. The conceptual content of our experience is already available to us in a form which is implicit but this can be made explicit for us by “carving out an aspect of content from a world disclosing experience in terms of annexing a bit of language to it.”<sup>27</sup> McDowell holds, “...whether or not a bit of experiential content is focused on and brought within the reach of a vocabulary... it is anyway present in the content of a world-disclosing experience in a form in which it is already either actually is, or has the potential to be appropriated as, the content of a conceptual capacity. That the content of an experience has that form is part of what it is for the experience to be world disclosing, categorically unified, apperceptive.”<sup>28</sup>

He also exploits the way Gadamer has made the “difference between a merely animal mode of life, in an environment and a human mode of life, in the world.”<sup>29</sup> In his opinion, a non-rational animal is guided by “immediate biological imperatives”<sup>30</sup> and their behaviour is a response to various forces

born out of these imperatives. They do not exercise reasons and reflect on the situation when they are responding to the biological forces. A life of this kind, following Gadamer's view, one can say, "...is led not in the world, but only in an environment,"<sup>31</sup> whereas the life of a mature human being is lived in a world. A non-rational animal just copes with the environment when he faces various problems. The problems he finds and the opportunities he exploits are product of his "immediate biological imperatives." In the case of human being, even in responding to our biological needs, we are to be regarded as agents.

In McDowell's opinion, in Gadamer we find a "...distinction between being oriented towards the world and merely inhabiting the environment."<sup>32</sup> Gadamer says, "Man's relation to the world is absolutely and fundamentally verbal in nature."<sup>33</sup> The above view of Gadamer can be better understood along with Heidegger's view that "language is the house of being. In its home man dwells."<sup>34</sup> In Gadamer's opinion, our distinctively human relationship with the world is pervasively conceptual and is in the "space of linguistically expressible thought."<sup>35</sup> According to him, the similarity that we share with non-rational animals cannot exhaust the nuances of our embodied coping in the world. Instead of this, he insists that language facilitates us to a "free, distanced orientation" towards what would otherwise have been merely features of an environment."<sup>36</sup> Being-in-the-world cannot escape the contours of our language. Our experience and understanding of other cannot break away from "expressible" or "namable" features of our language. This is already inbuilt into our understanding of other. Emphasizing on the role of language in our understanding is not to say that our understanding of other is already linguistically expressed – a conceptually constructed understanding on the part of the subject.

For Gadamer, our language is instrumental to have unified experience which is at the same time opening the world for us. So, the content of our states of understanding is conceptual and at the same time have the worldly content. To say that our relationship with the world is verbal and linguistic is not to mean that we have always and already words available at our disposal when we engage with and understand people of our own as well as other communities.

McDowell in his critique of Dreyfus has also referred to the latter's phenomenological heroes – Husserl and Heidegger as somehow responsible for Dreyfus's position. But if we take a closer look at the works of Dreyfus's

phenomenological heroes independent of Dreyfus' interpretation of them, perhaps we will realize that they are coming closer to McDowell in their philosophical position than to Dreyfus himself.<sup>37</sup>

In this paper, I have not only tried to work towards providing a framework for the possibility of fusion of horizons in the context of language, culture and tradition, but also worked towards the fusion of philosophical traditions, particularly of analytic and continental traditions, which are very often seen as opposed to each other.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to address Friedman's charges which he has leveled against McDowell's position. In understanding other from the perspective of where one is situated need not necessarily take us to fall into relativism. Our engagement with others takes place in the domain of language. For genuine understanding to be possible we need to stress on the point that our conceptual frameworks are not mutually exclusive from each other. This goes in agreement with McDowell's point that conceptual does not have an outer boundary. In the process of understanding others, their world views are already available to us. Others' worldviews are not situated outside the boundary of one's own conceptual sphere. To say that the worldviews of others are not situated outside one's own conceptual boundary is not to say that those worldviews are constructed out of the elements of one's own conceptual framework. If we can maintain in our position that understanding the world from the perspectives of different linguistic and cultural traditions is the understanding of the same world, then we can avoid falling into relativism.

## Notes and References

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36. Gadamer, 1992: 445.
37. I am not discussing the details here.