Annotated Outline of Anthony C. THISELTON
New Horizons in Hermeneutics.
The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Indications on the contents of the chapters and advices on how to read the book.

INTRODUCTION
New Horizons

1. Aims and Concerns

The genre of the book is an “advanced textbook on hermeneutics”. Thiselton (T.) states the goal of this book by an analysis of the title. First, texts sometimes enlarge the horizons of the readers (→ new horizons). Second, new horizons also emerged since hermeneutics became an interdisciplinary area. Third, T. also wants to open new horizons, that is to go beyond the ones already explored by the discipline. Two other areas are part of T.’s book: speech-act theory and semiotics. One last concern matters to T.: “what effects biblical texts produce on thought and on life (…)” (p. 2).

2. Hermeneutics in the University, and the Bible and the Church

In this paragraph, through four examples, T. aims to show that fundamental issues in hermeneutical theory go hand in hand with central issues in Christian theology. Four examples:
- from Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Betti: importance of openness in hermeneutics, but danger of surrendering critical evaluation for credulity.
- from the work of Paul Ricoeur: hermeneutical aim of Ricoeur is to switch the focus of attention from what lies “behind” the text to what occurs “in front of” the text. Issue of metacriticism: “can we critically rank the different criteria by which we judge what counts as meaningful or productive effects of texts within this or that context in life?” (p. 6). Issue belongs to Church and University.
- from the hermeneutics of Gadamer: Gadamer insists on the importance of the particular case within human life (vs. method to access truth). This metaphor resonates for theology: “In theological terms, horizons which initially are centred on the individual or corporate self may expand in such a way as to de-centre the self” (p. 6). Heart of the message of cross and resurrection.
- from socio-critical hermeneutics and Habermas: necessity of a critical frame that can provide theoretical tools for liberation theologies.
3. New Horizons for Readers: Reading with Transforming effects:

In this paragraph, T. discusses the way in which texts can open new horizons for readers. He particularly analyzes the transforming potential of biblical reading. For a reading to be truly transformative, it matters to respect the difference between the horizons of the reader and of the text. It is also important to develop a space for interactive encounter with tradition.

4. New Horizons in the Development of Hermeneutics

After Gadamer, one can see four direction taken by hermeneutics. 1st, metacritical development of Gadamer’s work, based on Gadamer’s emphasis on practical wisdom(Pannenberg, Habermas, Apel, Ricoeur [?]). 2nd, socio-pragmatic hermeneutics, with importance on the context (Rorty and Fish). 3rd, socio-critical hermeneutics, its goal is to unmask social interest through critique, opening up possibilities for freedom, justice and truth (Apel, Habermas). 4th, option of turning back towards more traditional hermeneutics: danger of surrendering humanist paradigms (Hirsch). Further distinctive feature: “hermeneutic of suspicion”: the mind can deceive itself (Ricoeur). Three other developments: new phase in liberation hermeneutics; impact of literary theory with focus on readers; controversies about the nature of text (readers as co-authors of texts). Behind all these developments: concern about the nature of texts → what does it mean to read texts? The reading paradigm is changing.

5. The New Horizons of Fresh Argument and Transforming the Reading Paradigm

T. reviews the organization of his book. In chapter I, he anticipates claims about the speech-acts model, which is important for chapter VIII. One question T. addresses is whether speech-act theory can be employed for written texts. Speech-act theory allows T. to re-discuss the arguments of Sanders about the work of Christ in Paul (chapter VIII). T. offers words of caution about a new area he is taking up in his book (chap. II and III), it centers around the question of “what are texts?”. Chapter II discusses the nature of texts, and attacks statements that would have us believe that all written texts can be striped from authors and situations in life. T. will try to keep a theory of interpretation that carries neither a representational view of language, nor a postmodernist notion of language. Chapter III criticizes Barth and Derrida for garbing a post-modernist world-view in semiotic dress. His critique is based on Wittgenstein’s distinction between public-domain language and private language. Chapter IV offers a word of caution to people who claim a parallel between the Pre-reformation Church and post-modernism. The first difference is that the Fathers produced a hermeneutics of tradition. Chapter V presents the hermeneutics of enquiry in the Reformation. T. insists on Luther viewing biblical texts as clear enough to indicate the next practical step. Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics of understanding is the topic of chapter VI. T. values particularly one element of Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics: “the dual role which Schleiermacher establishes between creative, intuitive, immediacy of inter-personal understanding, and comparative, objective, distanced criticism still remains fundamental in hermeneutics” (p. 23). In Chapter VII, T. applies this hermeneutics of understanding to biblical
interpretation and biblical texts. He works on Pauline texts, with the approach of J. C. Beker. Chapter VIII goes back to speech-act theory, and tries to show that it offers a more balanced model of self-involvement than existential interpretation. Chapter IX treats Gadamer, around one central concern: trace the contours of the philosophical background which brought about the rejection of rationalism and the turn towards metacritical theory. Pannenberg helps T. in his critique of Gadamer. Chapter X is devoted to Ricoeur. Two concerns are addressed through a review of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics: the need to be critical, the need to be open. Ricoeur’s hermeneutics is critiqued for the minimal role it gives to the author. T. also wants to show that the distinction between history and history-like narrative is an old one (early Church Fathers). Chapters XI and XII are concerned with the best way to employ “liberationist” hermeneutics and avoid socio-pragmatic hermeneutics. The danger of socio-pragmatism is to “immunize the church against a theology of the cross which de-centres individual and corporate self-interest as a critique extended to the church itself” (p. 28). The problems related to literary and semiotic theory are discussed in chapters XIII and XIV. The danger is to forget that texts are not only semiotic processes of literary production but acts of communication. The last chapter takes up the fact that a truly Christian text transform person’s identities.

CHAPTER 1
Transforming Texts:
Preliminary Observations

T. starts this chapter by noting the ambiguity in the title. 2 meanings of transforming texts: texts can transform the understanding and actions of readers; texts can suffer transformations at the hands of their readers. Hermeneutics considers both.

1. The capacity of texts to transform readers

Texts have a potential to produce transforming effects. This potential is actualized only when a reader realizes that the signs constitute an intelligible system and interpretation can begin. It is also important to notice that processes of interpretation allow an event of communication to take place. This event takes place in the “temporal flow of a reader’s life” (p. 31). T. describes 4 models of textual activity: (a) speech-act: an operational text can do something, which changes the life of the reader. In the Bible: covenental context; (b) narrative-world: “a narrative may draw the hearer into a projected narrative-world in which a flow of events and feelings are imaginatively experienced at a pre-reflective level” (p. 32); (c) inter-personal understanding: “the reader must learn what it is to stand in the shoes of the author, also openness; (d) reception theory (Jauss): every reader brings a horizon of expectation to the text. The text can challenge this horizon of expectation (parables).

2. The capacity of readers and texts to transform texts: different notions of intertextuality

In this paragraph, T. shows how hermeneutics reflects on the way readers transform texts. Two issues in particular emerge in relationship to this discussion: what kind of transformation happens when a text is re-contextualized? Does its meaning change, or
only its significance? This question is connected to the other issue: what happens to the idea of “author”? Are we to find the meaning of a text in the term’s of the author’s intention, or is meaning only located in the texts themselves?

T. provisionally lists six levels at which readers can transform texts: inter-textual; situational or temporally contingent; horizontal; semiotic; hermeneutical; relating to theories of texts.

**Intertextual factors.** T. presents several ways in which intertextuality has been understood. Culler: “any ‘prior body of discourse’ in terms of which a given text becomes intelligible” (p. 38); Rifatère: “self-referring or intralinguistic relations between texts” (p. 38); in biblical studies: “texts function … as generative matrices of further meaning projected by other texts through a textual network or textual grid” (p. 39). T. then discusses several examples of Fishbane’s analysis of intertextuality in the OT. He then proceeds to make 4 observations: difficulty of distinguishing between resonances of familiar imagery and conscious quotations; distinction between representational or propositional content and function or illocutionary force: “when we speak of ‘re-using’ or ‘re-applying’ textual meaning are we speaking of transforming a propositional content, of re-directing an illocutionary force, or some change of meaning …?” (p. 41); extant of transforming effect of intertextuality depends on whether texts really provide a new frame of reference for interpretation; intertextuality can stand in opposition to intersubjectivity, as if texts operates wo/ references to persons or situations.

3. Situational and Horizonal Factors in Transforming Texts

**Situation or temporally-contingent factors.** Many biblical texts are specific to certain situations. Sometimes, the effect of language depends on temporal and situational factors (promises and warnings). Importance of cultural relativism.

**Horizontal factors.** These comments are intended to be preliminary. T. discusses what we bring to a text before we understand it and gives the following definition: “the horizon or pre-intentional background is thus a network of revisable expectations and assumptions which a reader brings to the text, together with the shared patterns of behaviour and belief with reference to which processes of interpretation and understanding become operative” (p. 46). Horizon is the term T. prefers.

4. Factors arising from Semiotics, Theories of Hermeneutics, and Theories of Textuality

**Semiotic factors.** Two developments of semiotics are important for biblical interpretation: (a) theories of textuality; (b) “‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ of biblical texts in terms of different semiotic systems … of meta-language, which … unmask what may otherwise seem natural … in the light of a text as a coded device for establishing or subverting some structure of power” (p. 47) → hermeneutics of suspicion.

**Hermeneutical factors.** Hermeneutics as a genuinely radical discipline: (a) hermeneutics reflects on the conditions that make interpretation possible; (b) hermeneutics evaluates
the possible hermeneutical models → in relation to interpretation, hermeneutics is a meta-discipline.

Factors arising from theories of textuality. Most radical question in hermeneutics: nature of texts. Nature of texts is no longer self-evident. Shift of interest from author to reader. Most radical shift in paradigms of textuality: deconstructionism: texts are endless processes w/o any final meaning (Derrida). Genuine radical hermeneutic (as meta-critical theory) starts with an assessment of theories of textuality. Next chapter looks at shifting paradigms of textuality.

CHAPTER II
What is a Text?
Shifting Paradigms of Textuality

1. Are Authors Part of Texts? Introductory Issues

Discussion of the nature of texts. When one discusses whether the author is part of the meaning of a text or not, what is at stake is the relation between text and context, and the approach one wants to take regarding the world “behind” the text.

2. Are Situations or Readers Part of Texts?

New Criticism (cf. Wellek and Warren): texts are autonomous; they speak on their own terms. The intention of the author cannot and need not to be found. Searle called this into question. New Criticism faced other philosophical difficulties: presupposition that readers could understand texts on their own terms. This objectivism has been called into question (Barthes, 20th century hermeneutics) → postmodernism: texts relate to other texts and readers. Also Reception theory (Iser, Jauss), reader-response criticism (Fish, Bleich, Booth). Move away from the classical world, Renaissance humanism and reformers.

3. Theological Claims about the Givenness and Actualization of Biblical Texts

Thiselton presents 3 considerations about theological claims of givenness and actualization of biblical texts.

First, traditional Christian theology finds a “given” in biblical texts and in the message which they convey, even if the role of interpretation in shaping what we count as a given is also duly recognized. But this emphasis on givenness does not negate the possibility and necessity of actualizing the gift through appropriate human response. Thus, the givenness of a text does not give rise to conflict between (a) the capacity of the text to communicate a message and (b) the actualization of the text as a particular act of communication within the time-horizon of a reader or a reading community.

Second, some biblical texts do function in ways which invite a reader-orientated hermeneutic. However, what reader-response model should be employed depends on the nature of the text in question.

Third, some texts cannot be up-anchored from the contextual setting in life and history. In such passages this setting imposes constraints on the range of interpretive options available to the responsible reader. For example, the meaning of Jesus’ use of
“Kingdom of God” must also be understood within the context of his own life and deeds as well as that of the larger verbal context of his teaching.

4. Further Theological Issues: Disembodied Texts or Communicative Address?

Christianity affirms that Christ himself is the Word made flesh. In Christ, the truth of God is spoken, embodied, and lived. But can the Word made flesh become “word” again when the oral message of Jesus, embodied in his life and deeds, take the form of a written text which can be transmitted independently of the life-context which is presupposes? Ricoeur suggests that when speech is transformed into written texts, written texts may become a disembodied voice, detached from the author and the author’s situation, and no longer constitutes an act of inter-personal communication. But can we draw such a sharp contrast between speech and writing? Thiselton suggests that there are theological and hermeneutical reasons for firm caution about accepting such a clear-cut distinction.

CHAPTER III
From Semiotics to Deconstruction and Post-Modernist Theories of Textuality

1. Code in Semiotic Theory: the Nature of Semiotic Theory

Generally, semiotics is the theory of signs. In practice, semiotic theory touches on two areas. The first area concerns the nature and status of codes through which texts communicate meanings. The second concerns those forms of non-verbal social behavior which become signifying messages. Since language operation depends on linguistic codes, Roland Barthes argues that language do not necessarily describe the external world but is culture-bound and arbitrary. Thus, the implication of modern semiotic theory is that the subject matter of language and texts remain intra-linguistic; they do not describe states of affairs about the external world; texts and meanings are endlessly fluid and plural.

But should the implications of modern semiotic theory be so radical? To answer this question, we have to examine the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Pierce.

Saussure insists on 3 fundamental principles: (1) The “arbitrary nature of the sign” as a key principle. (2) Language functions as a “system of interdependent terms.” (3) Saussure distinguished between concrete acts of speech (parole) and the language-system (langue) which represents a purely formal or abstract structure; a network of possibilities out of which concrete utterances could be generated. Langue does not ‘exist’ in the external world.”

The second important figure of semiotic theory is Pierce. There are 3 principles: (1) Pierce stresses the fallible character of all human knowledge, beliefs, and systems. Beliefs are largely habits of behavior. (2) Thoughts has to do with the use of signs, but signs point to other signs and sign-relations. (3) Meaning is primarily found in meaning-effects. Pierce is associated with the philosophy of pragmatism and he what is important about meaning is its bearing on the course of life.

Thiselton reexamines Saussure and Pierce.

Saussure emphasizes three principles. (1) Linguistic signs are arbitrary and represent abstract distinctions of habit, convention, and convenience. (2) Every linguistic sign that carries meaning does so by virtue of its being part of a system or structure which generates the meaning through the interplay of similarities and differences within the system. This lattice of system has both a vertical and horizontal axis. The vertical axis deals with paradigmatic relations while the horizontal axis provides syntagmatic relationships with other words. (3) Saussure makes a distinction between langue and parole. Langue represents the formal, abstract, structure of potentiality while parole denotes a specific, concrete act of speech.

Pierce distinguishes between three modes of relation between a sign and what it signifies. A sign can function as an index (a relationship primarily of a physical or quasi-physical cause-effect kind), icon (signs are related to objects by similarity of structure), or symbol (no causal, quasi-physical characteristics; the relationship is arbitrary). Although Pierce’s thought is complex, the most crucial implication drawn from Pierce is the contrast between a fundamentally pragmatic, behavioral and functional semiotics, and one which takes his concerns about logic and the place which he accords to the intersubjective judgments of the community.

The “semiology” of Saussure has been interpreted in various ways but three principles are key: (1) Since linguistics signs are arbitrary, linguistics remain a descriptive, not prescriptive, discipline. (2) The distinction between langue and parole remains fundamental. (3) Since language is a system of relations, or a set of inter-related systems, all linguistics is in principle structural linguistics.

Thiselton examines other varied semiotic or structural approaches but none of them demands the radical transformation of more traditional approaches which Barthes, Derrida, and other deconstructionists believe are necessitated by the work of Saussure. The conclusions which deconstructionists draws rest not simply on semiotic theory alone, but on an intermixture of semiotics and post-modernists, often neo-Nietzschean, worldview.

3. Roland Barthes: From Hermeneutics through Semiotics to Intralinguistic World, and to Text as Play.

Four factors shape the Roland Barthes’ theories of textuality: (1) The earlier Barthes is motivated by socio-political concerns. (2) Barthes’ work draws on Freudian and Marxist traditions in the formation of its socio-critical hermeneutics that war against hermeneutical “innocence.” (3) Barthes’ view of the relation between perception and language should be seen against the background of the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. (4) Barthes presses semiotic theory into the service of his political and literary concerns.

In his book Writing Degree Zero, Barthes unmasks texts which appear to have a relatively neutral objective as supporting interests in maintain given power-structures and power-relations within a society, culture, or religion. Neutral writing is impossible. According to Barthes, semiotics offer a model for de-coding, de-mystifying, or de-
ideologizing, not only language, but cultural phenomena. Semiotics perform two tasks: (1) a description of the semiotic process can unmask the illusion of objective innocence that traditional codes evoke; (2) semiotics offer a meta-language: a system of language-description which stood outside the language which it was describing. But if this is true, then a meta-language can in theory become a vehicle for new mythologies and new traditions, and there is no reason why one meta-language should not be scrutinized and “deciphered” by another. In principle there can be an infinite series of semiotic layers, in which no “final” reading or semiotic system can be reached. Meanings must therefore be infinitely plural.

Thiselton argues that such a move no longer involves matters of linguistic science but pushes us into the domain of philosophy. The constant movement in which each meta-language changes banishes the realities of the inter-subjective world, and places language, rather than the inter-subjective world, at the center of the system. Linguistic method has now become a linguistic worldview. To replace inter-subjectivity by intertextuality is a philosophical, not a semiotic or linguistic move.

In his book *S/Z*, Barthes goes further and distinguishes between “readerly” and “writerly” texts. “Readerly” texts project a view or some standpoint located in history whereas “writerly” texts allow the reader to participate in the *production* of the text. “Writerly” texts then is a sort of verbal carnival, a linguistic spectacle and the reader is required to enjoy that spectacle for its own sake rather than to look through language to the world.

4. Difficulties and Questions: the Inter-Mixture of Semiotics and World-View

Thiselton contends that these recent moves are all part of a heavily political agenda. Post-modern theories of literature and semiotics allows us to dispense with traditional codes of values and patterns. Texts do not convey messages; they are simply processes which cannot stop and in which anyone is invited to participate. They are cut off from authors, from situations, and from the extralinguistic world, to constitute an infinite open system of endless signification.

In this section, Thiselton examines five considerations and note that deconstructionist theories of textuality do not deliver biblical interpreters from the obligation to probe the substantial philosophical doctrines that are built into them. As a theory of texts, they are not demanded by semiotic considerations as such.

5. Jacques Derrida: an Endless Series of Signs under Erasure

Derrida’s view of textuality is similar to Barthes in that a text does not have a signature and a referential realm outside its frame. But the path by which Derrida reaches this view of textuality is an explicitly philosophical one.

Derrida builds on Saussure’s principle of *arbitrariness* and *difference*. In contrast to Saussure, Derrida argues for the priority of writing over oral speech. Writing calls attention to the absence of the writer and invites a greater plurality of interpretations of possible meanings. Since language is a differential network, we should dispense with logocentrism and focus on the difference between signs. It thus becomes a principle for Derrida that differentiation (*différence*) leads to and invites defer-ment (*différance*). The
difference between *différence* and *différance* is not noticeable in speaking. It is only evident when written. Derrida’s use of *différance* is then a critique against classical Western idea that writing is simply the representation of human speech.

According to Derrida, texts provide a space for an interdeterminate “whiter,” and seem to hold a promise to take us further. Texts are an endless series of “traces” or “tracks.” They are traces in the sense of being products of previous traces, and tracks in the sense of moving “on the way” to other traces. Derrida also borrows from Heidegger the methodological device of *erasure*. The order of the signified is never contemporary with the signified. Because the sign is a *trace*, it needs to be left alone. But because the sign is a *track* that encourages onward movement, the mark also needs to be erased. Thus, Derrida’s *trace* is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present. Derrida uses the sponge as a metaphor for this simultaneous erasure and preservation based on absence between the sponge and what is sponged.

6. Postmodernist and Deconstructionist Approaches in Biblical Interpretation

There are deep incompatibilities between deconstructionist approaches and the theological considerations about the nature of biblical texts. But this does not mean that deconstructionism is irrelevant to specific examples of texts within biblical writings. For example, J. D. Crossan views the texts of parables as setting in motion operative processes rather than as media through which a content or message is conveyed. Parables reverse reader-expectations. Metaphor founds and establishes a language-world. The emphasis falls on reader-effects on the part of the text.

7. Further Philosophical Evaluations and Critiques of Deconstructionism, Some in Dialogue with Wittgenstein

a. “The journey undertaken in this chapter has not been entirely negative” (124). Interpretations themselves can become too authoritative and even idolatrous. Our “illusions need to be dispelled” (124). If we accept “the metaphor of the text as movement or growing texture,” we acknowledge “the capacity of the Biblical texts to lead us ever further on” (124). However, even this metaphor must be limited by consideration of the early Christian tradition that considered Jesus Christ the final and definite fulfillment of Scripture. Also, the message is said to be eschatological, from outside, and not just a product of social history (125).

b. “We must distinguish here between world-view and *method*” (125). Even if we accept the semiotic notion of an arbitrary relationship between a sign and a signified, we need not transform this methodologically useful insight into a comprehensive world-view of a Freudian or Nietzschean sort. A “principle of suspicion” need not become a world-view (126).

1. Deconstructionist counter-move 1: “Since all our *perceptions are linguistic*, we cannot step outside of language; therefore language *constitutes* our reality” (126). While this proposition may be correct, it is not constructive, for it disregards how language engages and influences our social life.

2. Deconstructionist counter-move 2: Scepticism does not offer a world-view but a set of “perspectives and questions” passed on by Nietzsche through Heidegger
However, deconstruction so fundamentally dissolves the traditional schema of assertion-denial through its investigation of “layers of meta-languages,” that deconstructionism appears to represent a distinct position that generates the notion that texts are in flux. The notion of the text may derive from a world-view.

c. Thiselton argues that the death of the “speaking subject” in Derrida and Barthes... does not do justice to Saussure’s original model” (127). Drawing on numerous figures, esp. Wittgenstein and Kristeva, Thistleton observes that speech acts only come alive through the judgements and applications of conscious subjects. Even if a new network of language can only derive from existing language, one cannot dissolve everything into language, since the language only has force and meaning through judgements and applications a subject makes in social commerce. Language cannot be “abstracted from patterns of life and judgement in the inter-subjective world” (128).

d. Thiselton critiques the notion of “play.” Allowing such absolute polyvalence (oxymoron intended) would rob Biblical texts of referentiality, yet the parables do refer to a concrete historical world just as the prophets call for real actions. T. worries that the hegemony of the notion of “play” will result in all reading as being a function of pleasure. This universalism does not do justice to the variety of texts and their functions, and it is certainly not appropriate to most Biblical texts.

CHAPTER IV

Pre-Modern Biblical Interpretation: The Hermeneutics of Tradition

1. Relations between Pre-Modern, Modern, and Post-Modern Perspectives: Some Parallels and Contrasts

“In certain respects pre-modern perspectives represent a reversed mirror-image of some post-modernist concerns, where there are both parallels and radical inversions” (143).

a. Unlike Modernism with its emphasis on individual autonomy, both pre- and post-modernism recognize the individual as part of a community of beliefs and practices which “decisively shape the individual’s understanding” (143). However, in post-modernism, this community is to be suspected and questioned, while for the pre-modern Christian tradition the community is to be trusted.

b. “Pre-modernism and post-modernism both allow more room for the notion of texts as processes and variables than either the concern about didactic ideas in modern rationalism or the expressions of human experience in modern Romanticism” (143). However, pre-modernism differs from the post-modern preoccupation with play and pleasure. In pre-modern Christian thought, the boundaries are not wide open. A text may produce ever expanding horizons of meaning and progressing ultimacy, but this expansion is controlled by a tradition and by distinct understandings of the ways in which Scripture should function in a community.

c. “Both a hermeneutic of trust and a hermeneutic of suspicion equally recognize, as modernist individualism does not, the importance of the trans-individual frame within which understanding and interpretation operate” (146). However, pre-modern trust cannot be dismissed as naivete. The rule of faith that guides interpretation remains open to critique and revision from Scripture and the community experience. Furthermore,
putting trust in a communal tradition is a fully rational move that acknowledges that the individual self cannot know everything and that some will know more than we. As Heidegger, Husserl, and Searle have recognized, “in practice we have no choice but to approach what has to be understood from a given perspective,” so ultimately, reliance on some shared pattern of belief and practice is inevitable and necessary (147).

2. Tradition as Context of Understanding: the Two Testaments, Gnosticism, and the Relevance of Irenaeus

a. For the NT writers, the OT does not simply provide proof-texts for polemical purposes. The OT shapes the writers’ understanding of who Christ is and provides a framework for placing Christ in salvation history. Thus, Paul’s thought, for example, cannot be evaluated as the creative theological work of an individual, for it is grounded in OT and the Christian tradition thus far (149). At the same time, “Christ” becomes a lens through which the writers re-read and reinterpret the OT.

b. In the second century, Irenaeus responded to the threats of Marcion and the Gnostics. T. suggests that Gnostic interpretation makes a semantic error; it uses Biblical vocabulary while rejecting the inter-relations of this language as they exist in the Bible. Consequently, the vocabulary becomes free-floating and peripheral issues take center stage (153). Marcion challenges the unity of Scripture, a fact which itself suggests that the canonical Christian Scriptures present enough coherence that they will not support just any world-view. Irenaeus responds, esp. to the Gnostics, with the rule of faith which prioritizes the authority of the community, which extends in both time and space, and its context of shared beliefs and practices, over against the rampant individualism and idiosyncracy of Gnostic interpretation (cf. esp. 156). The rule of faith should be “seen as a context of understanding which has continuity with the earliest context of understandings, which in turn were focussed on Christ... Continuity operates with a frame of regular and repeated patterns of belief and practice. It entails inter-subjective judgement” (156).

3. Varied Issues in Allegorical Interpretation: its De-mythologizing Function in Pre-Christian and Philonic Interpretation

In order to assess the value of allegorical interpretation, one must consider “the purpose of interpretation” among other factors (157). In this section, T. compares the work of pre-Christian allegorical interpreters to draw out its function in these contexts. T. finds several parallels in Pre-Christian and Philonic allegorizing to Bultmann’s project of demythologizing. He notes the tendency among the Stoics to de-objectify. “What appears in the Iliad to be an objective description of Athene’s restraining Achilles by pulling his hair must be de-objectified in interpretation as portraying only Achilles’ subjective sense of restraint” (159). Philo tries to move beyond spatial and temporal particularity to open the Biblical text to universal, timeless, philosophical truths. He also uses allegory to deal with troubling contradictions in the text. For him, as for the Stoics, allegorical interpretation explains away anthropomorphisms that are unworthy of God or embarrassing. Philo never utterly disregards the literal sense and his concerns remain theological, but the literal sense is like the body, which should only be cared for because
it houses what is truly important – the soul. Bultmann’s program also demands de-objectifying, removing anthropomorphisms, and addressing contradictions in the text. However, Bultmann maintains that the Gospel is “proclaimed as a temporal event: it is not a timeless idea, but kerygma” (162). Secondly, Bultmann does not want to internalize Scripture to be a record of individual, psychological processes, as Philo does when he would have certain texts concern inner human transformation.

4. The Beginnings of Christian Allegorical Interpretation

T., focusing on Paul but drawing broader conclusions about the NT, argues that whether or not one sees certain exegetical moves in the NT as allegorical depends upon definition; Paul’s interpretation might better be described as typological or correspondence. However, regardless of terminology, NT exegesis remains concerned with the whole context of OT passages and gives attention to God’s work in history rather than imposing meanings from “some larger extrinsic system” (164). Except for The Epistle of Barnabas, the Apostolic Fathers also refrain from allegorizing. Allegorical interpretation begins in earnest with the Gnostics who argue that only those with gnosis can perceive the spiritual meaning that is actually the essence of the message of Scripture. The hermeneutic demands that the bodily meanings yield to the Gnostic spiritual truth “beyond ‘open’, public, or rational enquiry” (165). Similarly, Clement of Alexandria believes the tradition to be passed down by the true Christian gnostic who has access to wisdom the common believer does not. He is the first engage in “the more questionable and dubious goal of using allegorical interpretation systematically” (166). Hidden meanings now abound in Scripture. T. expresses suspicion that such allegorizing leads to “unlimited semiosis... a puzzling web” (166; Umberto Eco’s words) and becomes unduly privatized and individualistic when compared to Irenaeus’ corporate and public rule (166).

5. Allegory or Application? The Development of Pastoral Hermeneutical Consciousness in Origen and a Contrast with Chrysostom

T. observes that in Origen’s theory of Scripture, the body, the literal meaning, is foundational and Origen gives it close attention. Furthermore, following Torjesen, T. argues that Origen’s interpretation is driven by pastoral concerns. The deeper meanings of the letter must be teased out because mere words lack the capacity to transform the reader/hearer. Thus, Origen’s three levels of Scripture correspond to a congregation that “contains at least three groups with what Origen pastorally perceives to be ‘differing spiritual capabilities’” (168). The levels correspond to “progressive steps in spiritual growth” (169). T. acknowledges that in some cases Origen’s allegorizing gets out of control, but in general Origen does have constraints that govern his work. He stays in the biblical tradition and interprets Scripture with Scripture (170). However, Origen has altered the function of the text. Regarding Origen’s allegorizing of two Lukan parables, T. observes that whereas parables can challenge anyone, particularly opponents and outsiders, “at a pre-cognitive level,...allegory presupposes the possession of an interpretative key which can be used by insiders to unlock the code by a series of transpositional exercises on the individual components of the narrative” (170). Origen’s
method perhaps reflects sensitivity to the fact that he is dealing with a new audience. Nonetheless, T. argues that the Antiochenes, such as John Chrysostom, had more interest in history and had more controls against rampant polyvalence. Whereas Origen emphasized “reader-related intertextuality,” the Antiochenes were concerned with the author’s intent and the historical and contextual location of the author’s statements, or what T. calls “author-related intersubjectivity” (172; cf. 173).

CHAPTER V

The Hermeneutics of Enquiry: From the Reformation to Modern Theory

1. Three Polemical Contexts which Give “Claritas Scripturae” its Currency: Epistemology, “Higher” Meanings, and Efficacy

In order to understand Luther’s notion of the perspicuity of Scripture, one must consider the polemical contexts in which he formulated it. Whereas Erasmus argued for a conservative scepticism according to which one can know very little clearly and thus needs the Church for essential matters, Luther asserts that the Scriptures, taken as a whole, are sufficiently clear to be determinative for action. For Luther, one can make “truth claiming assertions on the basis of the biblical writings” (182). Furthermore, while Luther acknowledged the difficulty of interpretation, he did not think that the magisterium, so often self-interested, could pronounce on these issues. Luther recognized the importance of the tradition but fought the abuse of it (182). The conviction that Scripture can criticize and correct the tradition leads to a thorough-going criticism of levels of meaning, for one cannot build a critique from the plain sense if a member of the magisterium can always respond with a claim to esoteric knowledge that devalues this sense. But the perspicuity of Scripture is not simply a kind of obviousness, but a confidence in efficacy; “scripture provides a witness to Christ to which we may confidently respond” (185). Ultimately, Luther’s notion of perspicuity does not reject the need for careful, systematic, and hermeneutically sensitive exegesis. For Calvin, “Perspicuitas is... a rhetorical concept,” but he encourages the reader to seek the “natural sense” and disdains allegory (185). His notion of the effectiveness of Scripture is similar to Luther’s.

2. Questioning in the Service of Faith: Christ and Reflective Criteria in Luther

Truly critical theories did not occur until after Kant – before this time, thinkers operated under the assumption that there was a self-evident ground for all thought, usually theistic. Kant was the first to systematically question the limits and pre-conditions of knowledge. Principle of doubt – crucial to Descartes and Reimarus, was also formative for enlightenment notions of critical thinking.

Nevertheless, before this period, there were thinkers who looked at scripture critically, as much as possible within a system of a theological ground, putting ideas to the test, holding tradition to the light of scripture in order to confirm or abolish it. Three principles (located clearly in Descartes) were normative for reformation era biblical criticism 1. the subjective consciousness is the starting point of inquiry, 2. only the self-evident is not subject to doubt, 3. reason is the final criterion for firm knowledge.
Luther sought to free human judgment to determine whether or not the Church’s Christ was the same as that of the scriptures. Christ can only be the Christ of the Scriptures – the remembered Christ becomes the imagined Christ, subject to manipulation in interest of the church like a ‘wax nose.’ This is not the only reason Luther affirms for the need for interpretation – for one who believes in the Christocentricity of the bible, the scriptures must be interpreted in a way that unveils salvation history, etc. Luther was not always an iconoclast – he preferred tradition to cold rationalism or zealous enthusiasm (189).

3. Further Reflection on Interpretation in Calvin and in English Reformers

Tyndale, Calvin, and Hooker continued in the modernization of interpretation. Tyndale called for historical correspondence in interp to avoid self-interested methods such as allegory, while Calvin desired to leave dogmatic/doctrinal readings for his institutes, preferring to understand the “mind of the biblical author.” Calvin also stood at a distance from the individualist concerns of pietists to a concern for human society at large. Nevertheless, Hooker honestly noted that not every issue in life and society is addressed in the scriptures. The notion that the bible is still of supreme authority, while not providing advice on every issue, is a further indication of the move away from allegorization.

4. The Rise and Development of Modern Hermeneutical Theory

The term hermeneutics first occurs in Dannhauer’s 1654 work, however, Bullinger and Illyricus moved toward principled reading in the 16th c. as they both promoted an understanding of historical context and occasion. Bullinger also anticipated the hermeneutical circle (see Schleiermacher) with the notion that the particular must be seen in light of the general and vice-versa. Understanding a pericope requires understanding an entire argument. In 1728, J.A. Turretin further emphasized the necessity of knowing the surroundings of biblical authors, conceptually and historically. The most important theorists of the 18th c. were Chladenius, Semler, and Ernesti. Ernesti’s distinction was between the language of a text (hermeneutics) and the content (theology). Semler noted that both issues were at task in hermeneutics (meaning and truth), while positing that proper interpretation required independence from dogmatic concerns. Chladenius anticipates Kant in his admission that ‘different people perceive that which happens in the world differently…’

We have in this period the anticipation of Romanticism, namely in that comprehending the mind of the author is a chief goal for interpretation. There is also a move from the hermeneutics of enquiry to the hermeneutics of understanding. In the former, readers formulate interpretive criteria according to base presuppositions, while the latter examines the pre-conditions for understanding itself. Somewhere between these two approaches lie Ast, Wolf, and Boeckh, who desire not only to know the author, but to reconstruct the world of the author so that the modern interpreter understands the documents better than the author himself did. Such assumptions about the unconscious anticipate Freud decades earlier.
CHAPTER VI
Schleiermacher’s Hermeneutics of Understanding

1. Schleiermacher’s Most Distinctive Contribution to the Subject

In Schleiermacher, hermeneutics becomes a term that refers to comprehensive theories of understanding itself, not just interpretation of texts. Clearly located in the romanticist era, Schleiermacher is the first to clearly posit the notion of the hermeneutical circle. He ‘deregionalised’ hermeneutics from a field that studied language and grammar, to one that challenged presuppositions about language itself and the understanding of human personhood. Beforehand, it was a pedagogical tool that helped lead others to understandings previously attained – now such previous understanding could not necessarily be trusted. As he noted often human understanding is akin to what is involved in seeking to understand a friend. Objective must be necessarily combined with subjective, in addition to intuition and emotion.

Understanding requires two tasks: understanding what the language means, and understanding the mind of the speaker. This is based on the assumption that there is an interrelation between language and author that is not always self-evident. Schleiermacher was also the first to take into account the combination of the content, the author, and the receiving audience, especially regarding the effects of the text on that audience.

2. The Broader Context: Romanticism, Pietism, Culture and Hermeneutics

Schlegel was likely Schleiermacher’s source for his romantic tendencies, most importantly his belief in the importance of feeling and experience, and a distrust for how much can be known by sheer rational argument and reflection. Though he never gave much attention to the problem of human sinfulness, his pietism has given him the reputation of a ‘liberal evangelical.’ During his education, Schleiermacher left seminary to study at Halle, where he was thoroughly introduced to Kant by Eberhard (1787). Though he challenges the ground for understanding, he distances himself from Kant’s notion that there is an absolute that is knowable via moral imperative.

Schleiermacher is close to Ast in the belief that texts of the classical world are more than static artifacts – there is an implicit dynamic effect activated when the modern reader engages the text, allowing it to become ‘a living reality’ (215). Also present in both, and in Herder, is the notion that the Zeitgeist of a period, or even a person, is greater than their lasting expressions in text, art, etc.

3. Schleiermacher’s System of Hermeneutics: ‘Grammatical’ (Shared Language) and ‘Psychological’ (Language-Use) Axes

Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics are studied in four principal notions:

a. understanding comes from reexperiencing the thoughts of an author
b. parts are interpreted via the whole, and vice-versa (hermeneutical circle)
c. the author must be perceived as a human user of shared language
d. the text can possibly be understood better than its original hearers, and it may be possible to understand it better than the author (obtainable unconscious elements)

In addition to the hermeneutical circle, it is key to note Schleiermacher’s other distinctions. Grammatical vs. psychological. Grammatical is the study of language, and can be understood in a similar way to the HC. Language can be studied generally—that is, as the shared product of a society (langue), with all potential uses considered, and it can be studied in the particular – the way a certain author uses it (parole). The psychological component of hermeneutics, that which understands the author, can also be broken down to general and particular. There is the particular individuality of the author, in addition to the type of the author (i.e., a paradigmatic author of that time period).

4. Schleiermacher’s System of Hermeneutics: the Hermeneutical Circle and ‘Better’ Understanding than the Author

Here it becomes evident that Schleiermacher has advanced the notion of the HC beyond Ast and other predecessors. One may even wish to call the HC a hermeneutical spiral (see Gadamer), for the understanding of text can grow deeper with each pass through the generals and particulars of said text. “A text can never be understood right away. On the contrary, every reading puts us in a better position to understand . . .” (221). See most helpful diagram on 225. It is reiterated that Schleiermacher notes that context and word meaning are not enough for thorough interpretation, but that thoughts of the author are the ideal goal. He also notes (226) that reception must be taken into account – the Corinthian letters were not written to ‘all Christendom’ but to the needs of Corinth. Schleiermacher also sees the potential for unconscious self-deception in the interp of texts, again anticipating Freud’s 1899 The Interpretation of Dreams.

5. Theological Ambiguities and Hermeneutical Achievements

Some of the historical criticisms of Schleiermacher are as follows: his theology is less concerned with God than with man’s consciousness of God. Grace is a byproduct of human understanding of it. There is little attention to the problem of human sin.

Nevertheless, his achievements are great: he introduced notions of sociology and psychology into interpretation without allowing etiological explanations of religion. He integrated hermeneutics with modern theories of knowledge. He mandated that texts be understood via their content and intent (single unity of author-and-text). He was the first to clearly draw attention to the interplay of modern readers and modern interp. He still contributes to the discussion re: whether or not interpreters can go beyond the horizon of the author.

CHAPTER VII

Pauline and Other Texts in the Light of a Hermeneutics of Understanding

1. Paul, Pauline Texts, and Schleiermacher’s Hermeneutical Circle

Discussion of the tension between finding a ‘centre’ of Paul’s thought and the hesitancy to do so by those who see too disparate historical and contextual occasions for
his letters. This handicaps the exegetical process. Various occasions for the letters considered.

2. The Hermeneutical Circle and the Quest for a ‘Centre’ of Pauline Thought

Challenge of Meek’s notion that we never see the inner logic of Paul’s thought because he never leisurely composed his letters – the occasions of each held some immediacy. Kierkegaard noted that thought is not developed in leisure, but in crisis, and Schleiermacher notes that we are better able to understand Paul’s inner logic when we see the occasion that called forth his exposition. Arguing for a contextual understanding of Paul does not imply that he has no ‘theological system.’ Schweitzer’s ‘one-sided’ eschatology and Sander’s move from solution to plight considered.

3. A Hermeneutics of “Life-World” Reconstruction in Dilthey and Betti: “Re-living” and “Openness”

Dilthey’s (d. 1911) key hermeneutical category is Leben (“life”) or Erlebnis (“lived experience”). The interpreter can gain understanding of the “other” through re-living the other’s experience. Sympathy and imagination are products of social interaction wherein exist the revelation of similarities and differences, of variations and particularities. A life-relation exists between the self and the “other.” A connectedness binds people together. Hermeneutics is thus concerned with “the relation between patterns of correspondence, analogy, or generality, and the particular, the unique and the contingent.” The interpreter looks “behind” the “dead deposits” of texts to understand the life behind these texts (and thereby the texts as well).

Betti relies upon “openness”/“open-mindedness” and “receptiveness” to help achieve an “objective” understanding. Such understanding is a “continuous, ongoing process”, always open to “correction and improvement”, relying on openness for continuous discovery. Seeking mutual understanding is moreover a desperate need in today’s world. Such understanding requires imaginative reconstruction of what lies “behind” the text. The interpreter studies (1) the linguistic phenomena of the text; (2) the ideologies/commitments that may hinder true understanding; (3) how to place oneself in the “shoes of the other person”; and (4) the factors which lead to the production of the text.

4. Pauline Texts and Reconstruction: “Better” Understanding than the Author?

Pauline studies relates in three ways to a hermeneutics of understanding and life-related reconstruction. First, the historical life-context of a text includes the “realities of life and thought which surround the author . . .” Archaeological discoveries at Corinth do actually elucidate the meaning of 1 Corinthians by illuminating the social life of those in the Corinthian church and Paul’s response to these people. Second, this type of socio-historical life-context reconstruction, encouraged by Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Betti, reconstructs the inter-subjective realities that Paul addresses. We thereby understand more fully the content of his letters. A tension does exist concerning the treatment of Paul’s uniqueness and distance from the modern reader. Schweitzer, Weiss and Stendahl
stress the “otherness” of Paul while Bruce focuses upon his “nearness.” Regardless, the “social life” of Paul as an artisan in the workshop is reconstructed by Hock and Murphy-O’Connor. Third, such social reconstruction, insists Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Betti, can help us understand Paul more fully than he understood himself. Post-Freudian understandings of self-deceit help us to more clearly understand Paul’s statements about the heart than he himself understood them. Paul’s letters, to be understood, require attention to the social world in which they were produced, an emphasis lacking in certain post-modern, deconstructionist approaches.

5. Understanding the Author of an Anonymous Text: the Epistle to the Hebrews

Even the anonymous letter to the Hebrews has a social context and authorial thought world, each of which may be explored. The text may be understood with reference to its wholeness “which represents the vision of a human mind and which belongs to some larger context or life-world.” Certain aspects of understanding a person “as a person” transcend “explanations about a text as a text.” We thus move beyond mere explanation to a hermeneutics of “understanding”, one which nonetheless is a process involving various degrees of progress.

CHAPTER VIII

The Hermeneutics of Self-Involvement: From Existentialist Models to Speech-Act Theory

1. Reader-Involvement, Address, and States of Affairs: The Contrasting Assumptions of Existentialist Hermeneutics and “the Logic of Self-Involvement” in Austin and Evans

Existentialist hermeneutics includes an emphasis upon reader-situations. The biblical texts themselves (esp. the parables, Paul, Luke-Acts) are concerned to address the hearer/reader. Existentialist models seek to capture this aspect of self-involvement and audience-related address. Yet the existentialist modes from Kierkegaard to Bultmann represent a narrower example of self-involvement hermeneutics than do the works of Austin and Evans and the speech-act theory of Seale and Recanati. Austin stresses the exercitive force of God’s speech in the act of creation. Language about creation addresses the reader. Evans notes that calling God Creator uses language which is self-involving. Whereas Bultmann viewed objective description and existential address as mutually exclusive, Austin and Evans integrate descriptive truth claims into their language of self-involvement.

Kierkegaard (d. 1855) (whose influence was great upon Barth, Bultmann, Jaspers and Heidegger) stressed the need for truth to engage the individual. Belief is not cognitive assent to an idea but is lived out in personal commitment and re-orientation of life and deeds. The subjectivity of the individual relies upon radical faith and not upon ethics, theology or a logical/rational basis. Self-involvement transcends mere reason. The contrast between “instrumental” reason and some broader historical frame, which culminates in “post-Gadamerian hermeneutics”, is begun by Kierkegaard.
2. The Hermeneutics of the Earlier Heidegger and Bultmann’s Approach to Paul

Heidegger stressed the priority of “existence” as a “given” which precedes and conditions the nature of understanding. Three assumptions are important for Heidegger: (1) the interpreter is bound by bound by time and is thus historically conditioned; (2) objectification amounts to depersonalization; thus mere “description” fails to do justice to the particularities of life; (3) the *givenness* of our “world” is the “facticity” of our “existence”; we are born into a situation not of our own choosing. This constitutes the particularity of our being. For Heidegger an “objective” perspective is really a view of how an object relates to one’s particular concerns in life. Understanding is seeing “something as something.” Any interpretation contains presuppositions. Lastly, he prefers “authentic existence” (understanding the present in terms of a possibility) to inauthentic existence.

Heidegger’s existentialist views and question of “Being” provides Bultmann with “conceptual tools” for an existentialist interpretation of Pauline theology. One is freed from the past (inauthentic existence) by God’s grace to live a life of freedom toward the future (authentic existence). In focusing upon these existentialist categories and ignoring historical questions (relation of Gentiles to Israel *a la* Stendahl, Sanders), Bultmann’s view is one-sided. This one-sidedness affects negatively Bultmann’s demythologizing program and his Christology, each of which fails to attend to historical matters. Bultmann’s program would be harmful if it were regarded as a comprehensive hermeneutic.

3. Christological Texts in Paul and in the Synoptic Gospels in the Light of Speech-Act Theory in Austin, Evans, Searle and du Plessis

Whereas Bultmann focuses upon the self-involvement aspects inherent in Christological confessions, Austin and Evans stress both the factual/institutional truth and self-involvement of claims such as “Jesus is Lord.” Bultmann stresses (rightly) the existential aspects of the *kyrios* texts but neglects their “truth-claim” (God’s instituting, appointing, or exalting Christ as Lord). The identity of Jesus as *Lord* bring together these two aspects as well as provide a link between Paul and the Synoptics. The self-involving aspects of Jesus’ pronouncements imply Christological presuppositions. In the Synoptics are a number of exorcitive, verdictive and behabitive categories, each of which contains an “existential resonance for the present reader which does not exhaust its further truth-claims.”

Wolterstorff, Searle and du Plessis each stress the “role of human agents within an extra-linguistic world for determining the operative nature and effect of certain speech-acts.” In contrast to polyvalent readings of the parables (Funk, Crossan, Via, Tolbert), du Plessis contends that their “status and function as total speech-acts” includes the contexts of both the gospel texts and their speech-relations to the speaker and audience. Christological truth (Thiselton) forms the basis upon which acts are effectively performed. A transformation is wrought in the “extra-linguistic relationship between the speaker and audience”, one in which the reader is invited to participate.
4. Illocutionary Acts and Performatives in Searle and in Recanati: Directions of Fit between Words and the World

Searle’s effort to construct a broader theoretical model (utterances perform a variety of specific acts which also entail a given prepositional content) represents an advance on Austin’s work. To Austin’s categories of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, Searle adds performing utterance acts, performing proposition acts and performing illocutionary acts. Searle’s distinction illumines the logical fallacy of the dualism between description and self-involvement in Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Bultmann. Biblical texts may simultaneously address the reader as warnings, commands, invitations, pledges of love as well as embody prepositional content. In addition, Searle distinguishes between the logic of promise and the logic of assertion. Assertions are illocutions that seek to have the words (the prepositional content) match the world. But promises and commands have the opposite function, to “get the world to match the words.”

Recanati and Searle agree on the suggestive importance of the model of “direction of fit” or “direction of correspondence” between words and the world. Linguistic description portrays prior states of affairs in “word-to-world” language; “world-to-word” language, on the other hand, can bring about change to the world to match the uttered word (eg the promise).

5. The “World-to-Word Fit” of a Hermeneutic of Promise: Types of Illocutions; the Work of Christ in Paul; Promises in the OT

_Promise or pledge_ texts have the ability to transform readers, situations or reality. The speaking of words constitutes an act which “shapes a state of affairs provided that certain inter-personal or institutional states of affairs also hold.” Categories of illocutionary acts include exercitives/directives, commissives, declaratives/verdictives, and expressives/behabitives. Each category contains verbs appropriate to its domain. These verbs function as performative speech-acts in institutional, situational, and inter-personal contexts (such as worship/liturgy). These uses of language leave neither the speaker nor the hearer uninvolved and unchanged (in Searle’s terminology they operate in a word-to-world direction). Speech-act theory suggests, contra Sanders (who draws a sharp contrast between the participatory significance and atoning significance of the cross), that atonement language “constitutes assertions about states of affairs in which the language reflects an accomplished reality.” Key passages in Romans re-affirm the “world-to-word” effects of the divine promise as well as the “word-to-world” assertions about the human plight (which describe the realities of the human situation). The central role of _promise_ in the biblical texts is confirmed by its emphasis in the Pentateuch (_a la_ Clines). In the Johannine texts there exists a dual focus upon both word-to-world and world-to-word transformations.
Chapter IX
The Hermeneutics of Metacriticism
and the Foundations of Knowledge

1. The context of the Paradigm-Shift to Radical Metacritical Hermeneutics and the Nature of Gadamer’s Hermeneutics

When reading a text at a pre-critical level, the text overtakes the readers; it plays its game with them and takes them where it will. At the critical level, the critic steps back and assesses how well the text (or film, etc.) accomplished its purpose. However, a problem arises. What are the proper criteria for evaluating success of the text; how do we decide what are the most important “purposes”? This is the metacritical level of critiquing the critic. Gadamer proposes a solution that is at once modern, post-modern, and many would argue, vague. According to Gadamer, the reading community must agree upon the set criteria. Hence his post-modern side. Yet, Gadamer does not want to give up “truth,” however vague a concept this may be in Gadamer. Gadamer suggests that through conversation, through critical dialogue, the community can find responsible, ethical, and rational criteria.

Gadamer responds within the framework set by the philosophical problem of radical historical finitude. He accepts Heidegger’s response to a set of realizations past from Hegel and Kierkegaard and realized in Husserl. The subject-object split that helped enable the Enlightenment rationality and its analysis of objects, is severely challenged when one realizes that objects exist only within an entire givenness of the world which is determining our perception. Thus, any analysis of an object is already hermeneutical. “For Heidegger, what is ‘objective’, including making assertions about ‘facts’, is derivative from, and dependent on, hermeneutical understanding from within a given horizon” (319). Heidegger proposes adopting the poet’s ‘meditative’ thinking rather than always remaining in a mode of “calculative (method-based) thinking” (319). Along these lines, Gadamer rejects “hermeneutics as method” (319), and he adopts the metaphor of the work of art as play, in which the entire object of “play” is to lose oneself in the game, to be only a mere part of a larger world that operating with its own rules. In so doing, Gadamer (like Heidegger) is attempting to retrieve a kind of knowledge or experience of the work of art that is essential to the work of art, but lost when one moves to the critical level. Gadamer is thus post-modern, for “consciousness takes a secondary place, and reflection is replaced by reflexivity. Players simply react to tasks and rules which the game imposes” (320). Also, the work of art only exists in performance, in the playing. As games should not “rigidly reproduce” other games lest they no longer be true games, one cannot impose strict criteria and yield absolute interpretation (320). However, as intimated above, Gadamer rejects “the later Heidegger’s negative evaluation of tradition since Plato” (321). Rather, he is critical of the rationalism of the Enlightenment, but affirms Plato’s “exposition of dialogue as a process in which truth ‘arises’ in the to-and-fro of questions and of conversation” (321). Based on the norms and the formation wrought by the consensus of the community, one must learn judgement. But not judgement in the sense of a rigid deduction from universal rules for evaluation the particular. “It is, rather, a matter of knowing ‘what is important’ within a practical and inter-subjective frame of reference” (321).
2. Gadamer’s Claim for “the Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem” and the Development of Critiques of Language and of Knowledge

Another philosophical basis for Gadamer’s work is the problem of language. Language constitutes all of our perception, but it also enables our inter-subjective communication of understanding and thus takes on a “universal” dimension” (322). Thus, the hermeneutical problem becomes a universal phenomenon; it is not a problem just for the humanities. Consequently, hermeneutics acquires an ontological dimension. Language fails to be objective, and only has meaning in inter-subjective interaction. In seeing the necessity of a critique of language, Gadamer follows Mauthner and Wittgenstein. Mauthner saw language’s pretense to expressing objective truth as a force imprisoning us in an illusion. Earlier Wittgenstein probed the limits of language, also believing it to “disguise thought” (323; Wittgenstein’s terminology). Yet, language may disguise propositions formulated by logic, and “logic itself, however, is foundational” (323). Wittgenstein later loses his “faith in the power of logic alone, or the purely logical analysis of linguistic propositions to answer foundational human questions” (324). He comes to focus on the inter-subjective dynamic of language, by which practice and communal agreement provide the possibility for meaning in language and agreed upon terms for establishing judgments. To “understand” something means knowing how to interact with it and play off it; this requires “both cognitive, practical, and situational or hermeneutical factors, as well as ‘training’” (325; last term is Wittgenstein’s). For Gadamer, the hermeneutical problem is universal also because “practical reason itself functions in the context of, and as part of, a tradition of effective history, not in opposition to it or in abstraction from it” (325). According to Gadamer, we understand ourselves in our historical situation prior to entering into subjective scrutiny. Indeed, we require the pre-judgments provided by the world in which we find ourselves. The effective-history of the tradition provides a necessary horizon for shaping our judgments and practices and enabling us to continue making judgments once given rules have been exhausted. Criteria for judgment are necessarily historically-situated as are the acts themselves (328). Just as the “game,” our operative metaphor for the performative nature of a work of art, must not be simply reproduced but played again, the act of judgment must not be prisoner to a method with its pretense to objectivity but remain historically situated. On the other hand, we cannot abandon the rules of the game or step outside of the game in a way that it no longer governs our actions and reactions, for that would be relativism. Objectivity and relativism are the two extremes Gadamer seeks to avoid by arguing that we work from within the effective-history of a tradition that forms our cognitive and practical judgments. Consequently, Gadamer gets attacked from two sides. For some, he surrenders objectivity rather than developing “an expanded understanding of rationality” (329), while for others, such as Richard Rorty, Gadamer does not exploit the consequences of his elevated role for historical finitude and “reduce ‘truth’ to more pragmatic terms” (329).
3. Pannenberg’s Metacritical Unifying of a Hermeneutics of Universal History with the Scientific Status of Theology

While Pannenberg accepts Gadamer’s arguments regarding historical finitude and the importance of tradition, he critiques Gadamer for disparaging of objectivity too quickly, lest one take the step into the social pragmatism of Rorty. Pannenberg’s hermeneutics are explicitly theological and Christian. As Gadamer and others observed, we exist in history, but for Pannenberg, this history is going somewhere, and we already have provisional knowledge about this goal through Jesus Christ. And Christian theology is grounded and centered in the historical event of the Incarnation. Thus, unlike Gadamer, he does not want to give up on scientific theology. The events in history carry meaning value as God’s actions in history, and they should be evaluated and interpreted on rational foundations. However, one need not turn to a full positivism that reduces what can be known to what at present seems possible. We must realize that our ability to offer a compelling construal of data results from explanatory powers of understanding that are not necessarily given in the data themselves. Even in the natural sciences, hypotheses are made by anticipating results (334). Furthermore, as Christians, future and past hold possibilities that might seem impossible in the now. Through our provisional knowledge of the future, of the end of the historical continuum, we are able to open a future horizon as one of the factors of current understanding. Indeed, “meaning can be determined only in the light of the whole,” and by speaking of God and God’s acts in history, Christianity offers a vision of that whole that enables sound interpretive judgments (331). From our historical location, keeping in mind our present, and the past and future horizons, we can interpret events and texts in their historical particularity, trusting they have a meaningful relation to the whole.

Chapter X

The Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Retrieval: Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutical Theory

1. Human Fallibility, Hermeneutical Suspicion, and Freudian Psychoanalysis: Idols, Dreams, and Symbols

In his hermeneutical theory, Ricoeur attempts “to bring together the two dimensions of ‘explanation’ and ‘understanding’” (344). On the one hand, he worries that mere metacritical explanation will lead to an unfruitful reductionism. He insists that through careful interpretation we can arrive a post-critical openness to symbols that can lead to understanding. Explanation keeps symbols and their interpretations from becoming idols. Critical suspicion prompts re-readings and the act of “post-critical retrieval” encompasses “openness towards a new ‘possibility’ which may entail renewal or change” (344).

When Ricoeur undertook a phenomenological investigation of the symbolism of evil, he was led to “reflection on hermeneutics and on the philosophy of language” when he realized how “the language of sin and guilt” depend upon metaphors of bondage and slavery, metaphors themselves deriving from “contexts in primal narratives which tell stories of prohibition, temptation, trespass, and exile” (346). The layered meanings of
metaphor, i.e. the transfer of empirical language into something deeper, leads Ricoeur to the field of psychoanalysis and his extensive engagement with Freud. He rejects Freud’s reductionism, but accepts Freud’s notion that one interprets dreams as symbolic disguises of human desire, and one works not with the dream but with the dream as told, which has been rearranged. The symbols take on the capacity both to reveal and to hide. As Ricoeur moves deeper, he latches onto Freud’s notion of “overdetermination,” denoting “an intermixture or overlapping of multi-signification which exhibits the ‘richness’ or ‘plurivocal’ nature of language” (347). The task of interpretation is to navigate this inherent double-meaning in language. Thus, hermeneutics entails the two-fold effort of unmasking and of authentic listening. Hence, he cannot accept Gadamer’s categorical dismissal of method as an explanatory device. Also, Freud’s work implies the difficulty of phenomenological evaluation of human consciousness, for our conscious selves can avoid and hide from truth.

Furthermore, Ricoeur argues that the metaphors Freud uses to describe psychical “forces” reveal that in the process of analysis, one is not merely offering an explanation but is offering an interpretation.

2. Paul Ricoeur on Metaphor and Narrative: Possibility, Time, and Transformation

In later works, Ricoeur explores the potential of metaphor to “create possible ways of seeing or understanding the world and human life” (351). Some of Ricoeur’s direction stems from Heidegger’s notion that understanding entails not just seeing what is factually there before you, but in seeing the possible uses, possible contexts, possible ways of service” (351). In his study of Aristotle, Ricoeur insists that a metaphor is not just a linguistic ornament that substitutes a less usual word for the usual one. Rather, “there is a transposition from one pole to another (epiphora)” (353). In another essay, Ricoeur argues that one must focus not on the words but on the sentence, examining “metaphorical discourse” (353). Some metaphorical discourse is so powerful and compelling as to enable one to see new possibilities and concepts. Thus, metaphor may have stronger capacity for conveying truth than calculative, scientific discourse.

Ricoeur’s moves to an examination of narrative. “Narratives present possibilities of human action, as understood in terms of a schema of time” (354). Narrative is, like metaphor, a synthesis, for it brings elements of plot into a unified whole expressed in human time. In the telling of a plot, the mimetic element should not so much be understood as mere representation but as a “reconstruction,” a reconfiguration of events (355). The audience does not see events as they happen in natural time, but discover what is happening in human time, as they are learned. “But when the reader is seized by this ‘re-figured’ world, the narrative-effects, Ricoeur argues, become revelatory and transformative,” just as metaphor can be (355). Narrative opens the possible.

Ricoeur sees historical narrative as similar to fiction in that it entails an imaginative reconstrual of the data in order to come into narrative sequence. The narrative per se is not a given. However, he maintains a distinction between fiction and historical narrative, recognizing that history maintains “its referential claim in compliance with rules of evidence common to the whole body of science” (357; quoting Ricoeur). It too, however, can transform the reader.

Some have worried, however, that despite Ricoeur’s desire to hold on to explanation and method, his construal of historical narrative as refiguration reduces the point of reference to “the intra-literary and intra-linguistic world” (358). Ricoeur does affirm the need for method and explanation, and he also affirms the metacritical task of hermeneutics, but he also insists that we must move beyond methodology in order to return to a “second naivete” (359) in which the text can make a claim upon us again. On the basic interpretive level, Ricoeur wants to concentrate on the text and its world. However, at the critical level, he is willing to discuss critical evaluation of how the evidence is used in historical narrative. He is also willing to evaluate the value of this evaluation at the metacritical level. However, at this level he so thoroughly buys into the idea that all history writing is value-laden, that this becomes a thoroughly abstract discussion that also takes place within the linguistic world. Thus, the critical level easily eludes our attention. Also, at both the critical and metacritical levels, for Ricoeur, “we are no longer engaged with the text” (360).

But T. (and others) still presses the question of whether Ricoeur’s hermeneutics can evaluate the truth of poetic, metaphorical language. Since metaphor operates by playing with the normal reference game, can we make critical judgements about “‘the correspondence between thought and percept’” (360; quoting Klemm)? Nonetheless, Ricoeur’s eye remains trained on the power of the text to transform, since human subjects require this inter-subject interchange with the text to know themselves; and themselves is what they come to know.

The question remains as to why the hermeneutic of suspicion, that was so prevalent in the work with Freud, now plays such a negligible role in narrative theory (361). Ricoeur is reliant upon notions of ordinary language according to which language takes on its meaning and value only in inter-subjective action and has meaning only in context of the whole interaction. However, “the whole, for Wittgenstein, includes not only the behaviour and stance of the hearer or reader, but also of the speaker” (362). Yet, these would be elements behind the text, while Ricoeur, in dealing with written texts, is focused on what is in front of the text (363).

However, the extralinguistic conventions, commitments, and presuppositions are “background” in speech-act theory according to Searle. According to Searle, it is precisely in the writing of non-fiction where these extralinguistic commitments are crucial, for the fiction writer is allowed to toy with the relationship between language and reality, while the non-fiction writer claims to make connections based on agreed upon conventions. For Searle, examining the “background” remains crucial to a full explication of the text; we need to understand intended effect of the language, not just effect as we experience it. The background is that “on which the text, narrative, or utterance rests” but also determines the range of possible effects on the reader. Recanati goes so far as to argue that even the assertions must be evaluated in the light of the intent and context. The force of the text’s performance is more than can simply be derived from the words on the page (365). Recent speech-act theory has tended to push this basic notion even further. Since linguistic propositions have meaning only in the whole context, and part of this context is extralinguistic, in order to understand an assertion, we
must understand what drove the author to make it.

T. remains worried that Ricoeur’s model may offer us no critical means to escape the linguistic world a metaphor, etc. gives us since we cannot determine its truth or falsity. “Whether a picture or a metaphor is good or bad may well depend on how it is applied” (367). T. argues that “in practice,” Ricoeur remains so focused on the world in front of the text and the reader’s interaction with the text, that his hermeneutic of suspicion loses its critical power.

4. Some Consequences for Recoeur’s Approach to Biblical Hermeneutics

T. continues probing the question of what texts, according to Ricoeur, offer us other than “creating new ways of perceiving human selfhood” and possibility (368). “In the end, the interpreter must wager on possibility” (368), but as Poland argues, our interpretation must be secured by a critical engagement “with possible seductive explanations” (369; quoting Poland). And once one wagers, one must make commitments.

But T. argues that Ricoeur may leave us with some sense of “reference on the part of the text” (369). In Biblical texts such as the parables, the discourse can point “toward the Wholly Other” (370; quoting Ricoeur). Like Bultmann, however, what the biblical language refigures is actually human existence in its totality. And yet, like Barth, this happens in an event in human time, “and God is wholly transcendent, or wholly Other” (370).

Ultimately, T. agrees with Vanhoozer that Ricoeur “formulates a ‘believing philosophy’, rather than a theology’”(371; quoting Vanhoozer). Nonetheless, T. emphasizes several points. “Engagement with texts expands our horizons,” and not just in the Kierkegaardian sense of personal, subject exploration, but real expansion of selfhood through the other. Also, his hermeneutics of suspicion function in his interpretation of biblical texts to allow the texts first to “dispel our illusion” and then move us on to understanding (372).

Chapter XI

The Hermeneutics of Socio-Critical Theory:
Its Relation to Socio-pragmatic Hermeneutics and to Liberation Theologies

1. The Nature of Socio-Critical Hermeneutics: Habermas on Hermeneutics, Knowledge, Interest, and an Emancipatory Critique

Socio-critical hermeneutics seeks to penetrate beneath the surface-function of texts to expose their function as instruments of power, domination, or social manipulation. Critical hermeneutics seeks to achieve liberation for those over whom this power is exercised. The liberation of both texts and persons is important. Socio-critical hermeneutics provides a theoretical framework for liberation hermeneutics (black, feminist, etc). A deep divide exists between “genuinely metacritical theory and more pragmatic versions of liberation hermeneutics.”

Habermas is the most important and influential contemporary theorist of socio-critical hermeneutics. He wants to maintain a metacritical position which seeks both to
affirm the critical capacity of social theory (grounded in intersubjective, social interaction as well as retaining some notion of the universal notion of human rationality. He critiques positivist theories of knowledge (a la Gadamer, Ricoeur, Pannenberg, Apel, Rorty) and epistemology.


Central for Marx is the category of “liberation” or “emancipation” with which alienated forms of labor may be unmasked. Ideologies (which are socially determined and serve to justify external or established interests) hinder, for Marx, this process of liberation. So, a dialectic of liberation must include also a critique of ideology, exposing it as a source of social oppression. Habermas is influenced by the linguistic philosophy of the later Wittgenstein and Austin; speech-act theory (Wittgenstein, Austin, Searle) and the sociological theory of Talcott Parsons. Habermas focuses upon a model of linguistic and behavioral interaction. “To speak a language is to perform an act, and the performance of linguistic acts depends on certain general presuppositions.” These presuppositions relate to “social roles in life.” Language is a matter of action by social agents. The “life-world” belongs to the hermeneutical level of inter-personal understanding and co-operative behavior. A focus on systems enables one to unmask the illusions inherent in the linguistic “life-world.”

3. Richard Rorty’s Socio-Pragmatic Contextualism vs. Karl-Otto Apel’s Cognitive Anthropology as Transcendental Metacritique

Rorty develops only one side of the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer. Rorty emphasizes the particular and socially conditioned nature of knowledge. Foundations in knowledge consist in nothing more than contextual social practices, language-games, and social self-images. One cannot get outside of one’s own belief and language. Neither knowledge nor philosophy are based on “foundations” – everything depends upon the nature of the community “in which given or acquired social norms of expectation assume the role normally ascribed to rationality and argument in traditional epistemology. Rorty prefers a pragmatic hermeneutic to one which seeks to be “universal” or “transcendental.” Rorty ignores Gadamer’s emphasis that conversation can lead to learning. Thiselton critiques Rorty for offering an American, ethnocentric authoritarianism in “liberal” clothing. Cornel West critiques Rorty for failing to offer a socio-critical theory or norms for action. Rather, under Rorty’s system, the status quo is perennially defended. Rorty admits he has no answer to the question, ‘Why not be cruel?’

Karl-Otto Apel rejects a theory of truth that can be reduced to social pragmatism. Like Ricoeur but contragadamer) he argues that explanation and understanding are complementary. Pace Habermas, the “historically constituted life-form of a given society transcends simply the normative institutionalizing of its own institutions.” Apel thus brings together hermeneutics, social theory, and the search for a transcendental dimension. This (contra Rorty) allows for a psycho-social critique of societies and
traditions which is not merely contextually internal to them. Habermas and Apel offer a trans-contextual notion of rationality and rational norms whereas Rorty offers a socio-contextual pragmatism in which the system collapses.

Chapter XII

The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theologies and Feminist Theologies: Socio-Critical and Socio-Pragmatic Strands

Latin American liberation, black, and feminist hermeneutics share a critique of frameworks of interpretation used or presupposed in dominant traditions (e.g., Western, thought-centered, bourgeois-capitalist, colonial, racist, imperialist, androcentric, patriarchal). Each hermeneutic offers reinterpretations of biblical texts from the standpoint of a particular context of experience and action. Each seeks critical tools to unmask the uses of biblical texts which serve social interests of oppression. Each claims to embody some critical principle which reveals these dominating social interests.

Do these hermeneutics function pragmatically to filter out from the biblical text a signal which affirms a given social group or do they embody a genuine socio-critical principle which unmasks oppression? Do they reflect the community in self-affirmation or do they offer a social critique under which all communities may experience correction, transformation and enlargement of horizons?

1. The Major Concerns, Development, and Dual Character of Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics

Most liberation hermeneutics stress both its theoretical hermeneutical integrity and its grass-roots nature of its commitment to practical action. Juan Luis Segundo distinguishes between two theologies of liberation: a line of university-trained theologians well trained in the critical, socio-critical, post-Freudian, neo-Marxist tools of suspicion and critique of ideology; and second, one which sought not only to live among the oppressed but to learn from them. Within these poor communities the Scriptures are understood as speaking to them and for them. Latin American liberation theology thus has a dual character for (despite the claims of Boff, Mesters, Rowland, Corner) there was a heavy influence of theory (note Segundo) in the liberation hermeneutic. Yet in the Latin American context theory does not stand in opposition to praxis (as it does in American pragmatism and British empiricism).

Gustavo Gutierrez considers an empathetic understanding of the socio-economic realities of the poor in Latin America coupled with Christian love and faith, to be the first foundation for liberation theology. Paulo Freire’s model of conscientizacion provided a pedagogical framework within which liberation theology could be carried out practically. Socio-critical tools, provided by Marx, Fredu, Marcuse, et al. become a “second” foundation for Gutierrez. A third foundation emerges from the biblical texts which concern liberation. The Exodus event becomes central. A fourth foundation is the language and theology of promise and eschatology (drawing upon Weiss, Schweitzer, Moltmann, Metz, Bloch). In tension with the socio-critical approach is the socio-pragmatic which fails to offer any authority outside of the experiences of its own community.
2. Parallels and Contrasts with Black Hermeneutics: the Varied Approaches of Cone, Boesak, Goba, Mosala, and other Writers

Black hermeneutics embody three distinct contexts. In South Africa the focus is upon colonial history and the legacy of Apartheid. The concern in North America is on the historical memory of slavery and its aftermath. African hermeneutics in black African states concerns mainly contextualization and the relation between Scripture and African cultures. The first two stress experience and struggle as the context of hermeneutics. Each perceives positivist or rationalist interpretations as inadequate and even deceptive.

James Cone stresses the role of the interpreter as an exegete of Scripture and existence. Narrative, specifically the narrative of black slaves, becomes a fundamental partner in the dialogical process with Scripture. The black experience of oppression is an epistemological lens through which one reads of the liberating God in the Bible. Boesak, Goba and Mosala each deal with liberation in the African context. Boesak and Desmond Tutu represent traditional “mainstream” black hermeneutics. Boesak uses the Apocalypse as an expression of a suffering people. Goba and Mosala draw more consciousness on socio-critical theory though the latter stresses a radical Marxist-materialist hermeneutic.

3. Further Examples of Marxist or “Materialist” Readings: Belo and Clevenot

Belo’s *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (1974) critiques the dominant bourgeois-Christian ideology. Belo relies on Marxist categories and insights from Barthes, Kristeva and Mary Douglas for his conceptual tools. He develops a critical suspicion which enables a genuinely socio-critical reading. Clevenot also utilizes Marxist and materialist philosophy but realizes the diversity of the latter in a way that Belo does not.

What do liberation hermeneutics achieve? At the very least, a sensitizing to the pre-understanding with which one approaches texts. Suspicion needs to be exercised in a double direction, toward both hierarchical and egalitarian trends. Both oppressors and oppressed can misuse biblical texts. What is needed is a critical hermeneutical tool.

4. The Nature and Development of Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics

Despite the shared attempt to demonstrate the ways certain texts have been used to legitimate oppression of women, there is a diversity to feminist hermeneutics. Some interpreters focus upon those biblical and patristic texts which speak positively of women. Another focus (Schussler-Fiorenza, Sakenfeld) combines historical reconstruction of an explanatory nature with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Women’s experience becomes a foundational point for many interpreters who seek to dislocate the androcentric tradition of interpretation. Ruether identifies the role of women’s experience as a critical hermeneutic for feminist interpretation. Primary feminist sources include Schussler-Fiorenza’s *In Memory of Her* (1983), Mary Ann Tolbert’s *The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics* (1983), Letty Russell’s *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*
(1985); Adela Yarbro Collins’s *Feminist Perspectives in Biblical Scholarship* (1985) and Alice Laffey’s *Wives, Harlots, and Concubines: The OT in Feminist Perspective* (1988, 1990). The high evaluation of the authority of biblical texts may cohere with a radical narrative of “women’s experience as one of oppression.

5. The Use of Socio-Critical and Socio-Pragmatic Methods and Epistemologies in Feminist Hermeneutics: Reuther, Fiorenza, Tolbert, and other Writers

Thiselton begins by noting that each socio-critical hermeneutic theory needs to ask the question whether it functions as *socio-critical* theory (in the sense that they embody some trans-contextual, metacritical, or transcendental principle of critique) or as a *socio-pragmatic* theory (which on the basis of the narrative-experience of a given context, exclude all interpretive options in advance that would give any other signals than positive ones for the journey already undertaken). The contrast between socio-critical and socio-pragmatic should not be confused with the contrast between *objective* and *subjective* modes of interpretation. Thiselton then begins to analyze various strands of feminism.

Mary Daly’s radical feminism promotes exclusivity and separatism, and rejects any notion of the priority or privilege of Christian tradition. In contrast, Rosemary Radford Ruether stresses the inclusive nature of the criterion of women’s experience as part of the wholeness of humanity. Ruether critiques Daly’s separatism as it leaves no room for trans-contextual hermeneutic. Rather than favoring a dominant group, we must seek genuine mutuality.

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza considers the locus of revelation to be within the *ekklesia* of women. As such, she gives her community authority to choose and reject biblical texts, thereby filtering out texts which do no support the direction of their journey. What guides the interest of interpretation is that which affirms woman readers. But it should be noted that Fiorenza tries to distinguishes her approach from straightforward socio-pragmatic relativism. However, the empirical outworking of Fiorenza’s approach is often disappointing as she allows her own social and hermeneutical interests to determine even the selection of hypotheses which she presents for consideration and evaluation. And it is this selectivity of gender-related explanatory hypotheses for historical or textual data which erodes her claim to offer a critical rather than a pragmatic-orientated enquiry.

Thiselton concludes by noting the self-contradictory nature of socio-pragmatic liberation theology in that the oppressed takes up the tools of the oppressors. Without a genuine socio-critical hermeneutic, pragmatism merely changes the identity of the oppressors as the oppressed now uses the instruments of selectivity, privilege, and manipulation.

6. Further Complexities in Feminist Hermeneutics: Parallels between Demythologizing and Depatriachalizing

Thiselton notes that there are three components of Bultmann’s demythologizing program which parallel feminist programs (e.g. Phyllis Tribble’s) of depatriachalizing the texts: (1) The biblical texts invite demythologizing; male imagery in the language of God
similarly invite depatriachalizing. (2) Demythologized language appears in some texts; similarly, God is sometimes portrayed in feminine concepts. (3) Biblical writings reflect an outdated mythological worldview; similarly, the androcentric sociology of the Bible is outdated.

Due to the similarities with demythologizing, depatriachalizing embraces many of the strengths and weakness of Bultmann’s program: (1) Both Bultmann and Tribble emphasize “the point” of language. However, both pay inadequate attention to the multi-functional nature of language. (2) Both Bultmann and Tribble are subject to critiques from the “right-wing” and “left-wing” regarding the scope of demythologizing or depatriachalizing. “Right-wing” critics speak out against the lack of criteria while “left-wing” critics argue for the entire transformation of the entire symbolic system. (3) The supposed evidence for internal processes of demythologizing or depatriachalizing is ambivalent.

While there may be similarities between demythologizing and depatriachalizing, there are differences as several scholars such as Elizabeth Achtemeier and Susanne Heine have sounded a cautionary note against full-scale programs of depatriachalizing. Heine, for example, argues that it is dangerous to feminist interests when the distinction between male and female properties of God gives rise to usual stereotyping of roles. Similarly, it is wrong to project gender stereotypes of the modern world back to the ancient biblical writers since their choice of gender-related images may have a different significance from that presupposed in current popular debate.

What has emerged clearly is that feminist biblical hermeneutics is not a monolithic entity as there are a large variety of methods, theories, and goals. However, feminist biblical hermeneutics is fruitful in that it offers a socio-critical model of enquiry that un masks the interpretative assumptions and presuppositions that support and appear to legitimize structures of domination.

Chapter XIII
The Hermeneutics of Reading
in the Context of Literary Theory

1. Problematic and Productive Aspects of the Literary Approach and the Legacy of the New Criticism

In this section, Thiselton highlights some of the problems and productive contributions of recent interests in literary theory. Some of the problems include the propensity of certain literary theorists to talk past scholars who have been schooled in a discipline in which history and evidence are fundamental. As for its positive contribution, Thiselton lists 5. (1) It encourages the use of imagination in biblical reading and warns against the shattering of the wholeness of the text by atomistic dissection. (2) It encourages greater attention to metaphor. (3) It calls attention to the role of ambiguity and indirectness in the biblical texts. (4) It highlights the subtleties of irony. (5) It sharpens the contrast in hermeneutics between literary approaches with historical-critical methodologies.
2. A Closer Examination of Narrative Theory

In this section, Thiselton examines various narrative theories espoused by different scholars. He first notes Seymour Chatman’s distinction between story and discourse. Story relates events as they occurred in “natural” sequence while discourse represents the story-as-told-in-the-telling, a structured plot. Gérard Genette discusses 3 issues of order, duration, and frequency. Robert Alter tells us that sensitivity to the role and importance of literary and narrative conventions will help us avoid making hasty assumptions about clumsy editing. Wesley Kort stresses the coherent nature of plot within the framework of narrative time. Robert Tannenhill and others emphasize the temporal flow of narrative plot and the projection of narrative “points of view.” Meier Sternberg warns against driving a sharp wedge between the concerns of literary theory and the aims of redaction criticism. Finally, Hans Frei warns against the hermeneutically anachronistic assumption that the relations between the linguistic and extra-linguistic worlds take a formal atomistic correspondence.

3. Formalist and Structuralist Approaches to Biblical Narrative Texts

Thiselton begins by noting that “formalism and structuralism approach texts as systems while hermeneutical tradition from Schleiermacher to Gadamer approaches them as life-worlds bounded by horizons of understanding” (486). The roots of a structuralist approach can be traced to Russian formalism, and the desire to articulate a formal grammar of narrative can be traced to Vladimir Propp. In his work, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp traced formal patterns which frequently recurred in Russian folktales. Alexander Greimas attempts to present a scientific approach to narrative texts such that he is concerned with the formal structures that underlie and generate the text. His emphasis falls on the level of langue and not parole.

Roland Barthes undertook the first structuralist exploration of biblical texts. Although Barthes adopted the structuralist stance of viewing texts as closed systems, his work on the Jacob passage in Gen 32:23–33 highlights the disruptive features against formal patterns of the text, and points to socio-historical factors which modify systemic forces.

Dan Otto Via applied a structuralist approach to biblical texts and undertook a synthesis between the new criticism and hermeneutics. Via acknowledges the limitations of pure formalist versions of structuralism that represses all historical questions. Thus, he proposes that the frame which understanding operates is not simply a structural system but also a hermeneutical life-world. In contrast, Daniel Patte sets aside the hermeneutical tradition and looks for “meaning-effect” which he hopes to derive from structuralism. However, Thiselton argues that this approach does not provide a basis for a better hermeneutic than other more traditional approaches.

Ultimately, the development of structuralism into post-structuralism or deconstructionism emphasizes the fact that “what counts as a system or as semiotic code is at least partly a matter of socially-contingent reading conventions” (494). Once we recognize that systems are not universalized frameworks but frames conditioned by socio-cultural factors, the focus of attention will shift from the text to the role of the reader.
4. From Post-Structuralism to Semiotic Theories of Reading: Intertextuality and the Paradigm-Shift of “Reading”

The factors which precipitated the demise of structuralism in biblical studies are the following. (1) Structuralism emerged in a context that reacted against existentialist subjectivity. (2) There is skepticism about the value and yield of structuralism in comparison to the amount of labor. (3) The inevitable broadening and modifying in biblical studies of objectivist notions of structure calls into question whether recent work can still be called “structuralist.”

The shift away from structuralism is also noted by Jonathan Culler who observes that as soon as structural networks are perceived to be nothing other than conventions of reading, the emphasis shifts from the text to the reader. With the emphasis now placed on the reader and the possibility of “reading,” Culler notes the similarity between intertextuality and traditional hermeneutic notions of pre-understanding. Intertextuality does not only refer to a work’s relation to a prior text but a designation of the work’s participation in a discursive space or culture. Furthermore, intertextuality suggests irreducible polyvalency and indeterminacy which the reader does not seek to overcome. Since works endlessly refer to other literary works or texts, the boundaries of intertextuality can never be fully established.

5. The Paradigm of “Reading” in Biblical Studies and Intertextuality in Biblical Interpretation

T. presents a paradigmatic shift: the shift from the hermeneutical paradigm of understanding to the literary paradigm of reading. It occurred with a general interest in literary theory and a greater recognition of the role of the reader in interpretation. Example of this paradigm shift: John Barton’s *Reading the Old Testament* (1984): conversation with Jonathan Culler’s earlier work, with emphasis on reading and reading-competence (vs. interpretation and understanding). Barton argues for the use of methods that can make the reader competent in reading: readers need to have some sense of what sort of questions it makes sense to ask of a given text. Two main aims in Barton’s theory of reading: (a) assert the value of a variety of methods and models; (b) claim to find the valid understanding of a text is fruitless. Textual meaning depends on the interpretative purpose → “interpreters choose their own aims” (p. 501). T. is not convinced that (b) necessarily follows (a). When Barton says that one has to find what sort of questions it makes sense to ask of a text, he presupposes that “some appropriate match of writing-code and reading-code is a prime hermeneutical aim in reading this kind of text” (p. 501). Barton recognizes the “sometimes transmissive function of texts as media of a communicative content” (p. 501). If the goal of matching codes matters, then it seems that there should be some priority given to this matching of codes, “in cases where an epistemological dimension or disclosure-content of a biblical text is in question” (p. 501). The multiple readings and this aim of matching writer-code and reader-code are not necessarily compatible. The text can and should serve as a limit (Barton does not share Fish’s view completely on the role of the reader).
Shift of paradigm from “understanding” and “interpretation” to reading creates shift of emphasis. We have to be conscious of the problems of this shift of emphasis: texts, especially biblical texts, are not only literary constructs, they also reflect what human beings say and do, and how they’re addressed in everyday life → “the newer paradigm shifts the focus from epistemological communication and interpretative judgment to semiotic effect, with some considerable loss for biblical scholarship and for the status of the Bible itself” (p. 503).

Intertextuality does not re-stabilize the problem. It is influenced by Julia Kristeva and the later Barthes → Intertextuality in Biblical Writings for example. Introduction understand reading as an act of creativity. Intertextuality is understood as a rewriting of texts and also as reactions to texts: “In the textual theory of Barthes and Julia Kristeva, all texts ‘abort’ and ‘transform’ other texts, as if to form a mosaic. In Derridean terms, a text is a network of ‘Traces’” (p. 504). This way of understanding texts has similarities with Patristic and pre-Reformation interpretation (understanding texts as codes or matrices). Another theme of Intertextuality in Biblical Writings is the theme of polyvalency of language and indeterminacy of signs: “Meaning becomes polyvalent because all meaning is identified not as parole but as a further matrix which generates further meaning in its capacity as langue” (p. 505). Then what a text means is whatever it can mean for the readers. The problem here is that no role is given to the text itself, “the self-sufficiency of the scriptural word” (p. 506). Grant proposes another kind of intertextual approach, it has some resemblances to reader-response criticism, but the reader is not “left to construct the textual meaning without external or given constraints” (p. 507).

CHAPTER XIV
The Hermeneutics of Reading
in Reader-Response Theories of Literary Meaning

The main aim of reader-response theories is to call attention to the active role of communities of readers in constructing the meaning of a text. W. Iser sees the role of the readers in filling in a textual meaning which otherwise would only remain potential. Affinities, at first sight, with the necessity of concrete actualizations of texts in the time-horizons of readers, also with the theological concern of seeing readers not as passive spectators, but as being engaged in the reading process. However, wide variety of theoretical assumptions behind reader-response criticism → philosophical difficulties about the role of the communication of knowledge and the capacity of texts to shape the expectations of readers from outside their community. “If ‘meaning’ is subsumed within the prior horizons of the reading-community, we no longer stand where, with Gadamer, we construe engagements between readers and texts as interaction between two horizons, each of which is first to be respected before a fusion of these two horizons can take place” (p. 516).

1. Wolfgang Iser’s Theory of Reader-Interaction and its Utilization in Biblical Studies

T. presents Isers’ theory of interpretation. Iser’s philosophical background is drawn from Roman Ingarden (disciple of Husserl). Iser “pointed out that objects of perception are not perceived by the consciousness of the human subject exhaustively, but
in terms of those aspects which are presented” (p. 516). This means there is always a measure of incompleteness in all perception. The person who perceives fills in what is missing. Iser says that this principle of construing what is missing can be applied to literary narrative → reader’s activity: fill in the blanks. Iser does not question the “giveness” of stable constraints in textual meaning, but he underlines their potential and indeterminate status independent of actualization by the reading process → “actualization” is the result of “interaction” between the text and the reader. Iser distinguishes three readers: real reader; ideal reader; implied reader. Several attempts to apply this model to biblical texts.

2. Umberto Eco’s Semiotic and Text-Related Reader-Response Theories and their Implications for Biblical Texts

Umberto Eco’s reader-response criticism is founded by a rigorous examination of principles of semiotics. Major step of Eco: recognizing that “semiotic theory needs to include both a theory of codes, which comes under the heading of signification, and a semiotics of sign-production which comes under the heading of communication”(p. 524). Eco makes another fundamental advance in the notion of understanding: it arises “from the ‘absence of reliable pre-established rules’ to an extent which permits readers to make over-generalized assumptions about the code which a given text presupposes” (p. 525). Also Eco recognizes the wide range of models which constitutes texts. Differences between and within codes create sub-codes. Eco combines objectivism and subjectivism together, much like Iser. Theirs is a pretty moderate reader-response criticism.

3. Differences among more Radical Reader-Response Theories: The Psychoanalytic Approach of Holland and the Socio-Political Approach of Bleich

Early approaches of Norman Holland draw on a psycho-analytical perspective in the tradition of Freud: in regard to a text, “multiple meaning-effects emerge, in other words, which can be attributed to conflicts, ambiguities, and overlapping causes within the self” (p. 530). Emphasis on the role of the individual reader. Contributions to biblical hermeneutics: positive: self-awareness and strengthening of an individual as one who has a stake in texts and that to which they bear witness constitutes an important reader-effect in the case of biblical texts; negative: need for a hermeneutics of suspicion in biblical texts (danger of idolatry). Holland’s model as a socio-pragmatic status.

Bleich has a different angle: socio-literary and socio-political context. He focuses on subjective reading but with a theory of intersubjectivity. He envisions a community of readers, but not in the same way than Fish. He does not want an academic community of readers. Necessity for a male and female community of readers → contribution to feminist hermeneutics. But socio-pragmatism runs the danger of ending in anarchy, where the most militant pressure group wins the interpretation.
4. Further Observations on the Reader-Orientated Semiotics of Culler and on the Social-Pragmatism of Fish

Culler is not at ease with the term reader-response theory. But he does stresses the constitutive role of the “competences” of a reading community to determine meaning. Culler’s base: semiotic theory and consistent development towards the role of the reader. Seeks to answer the question: how do readers make meaning. Resemblance with Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics. But: the subject-matter of his concern is quite different from Schleiermacher. “Culler’s focus of interest lies less on understanding a supposed textual ‘content’ in its own right, than perceiving the ‘conventions’, ‘operations’ and ‘procedures’ by which a given system may function operatively for a given community of readers” (p. 536). Culler agrees with Barthes’ view that there is no final meanings to a text. “Interpretation … is not a matter of ‘recovering’ meaning, but of participating as readers in the play of possible meanings to which a text gives access”. Problem with Culler’s work: give priority to linguistic competence over actual language use in life. T. sees a further difficulty: “If all the weight in reader-orientated hermeneutics is placed on prior expectations, codes, conventions, horizons, out of which meaning is determined and constructed it is difficult to see how the text can transform or correct the horizons of reading communities ‘from outside’ (p. 537).

This aspect figures predominantly in Fish’s work. Major contribution of Fish: unflinching acceptance of what is entailed, or not entailed, in socio-pragmatic hermeneutics. Fish tells about his hermeneutical development in Is There a Text in this Class and says that eventually he saw through “the illusion that any ‘meaning’ resided in the text at all” (p. 538). Interpretation is constructed by interpretive communities. One needs not to ask: “what does this mean?” but “what does this do?”. Later, Fish develops his work and insists that everything hinges on social and institutional circumstances. According to T., Fish’s fatal error is that there is no place to stand between the two extremes, either formalism, either radical pragmatic anti-formalism.

5. What Fish’s Counterarguments Overlook about Language: Fish and Wittgenstein

In Wittgenstein, there emerges a view of meaning that is neither formalist nor purely contextual-pragmatic. Both Fish and Wittgenstein see the illusions of formalism. But their respective methods when distancing themselves from it are completely different. T. formulates the main difference between Wittgenstein’s understanding of texts and Fish: “When he looked at language, Wittgenstein observed that some language-games could be thought of in entirely context-relative terms, but for the most part ‘we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing’ … It is not the case, as Fish suggests it is, that we must choose between the sharply-bounded crystalline purity of formalist concepts and the unstable concepts of contextual pragmatism. Concepts may function with a measure of operational stability, but with blurred edges.” (p. 541).

T. sees another key difficulty with Fish’s position: Fish recognizes variables in contingencies of social history, but he holds to a pragmatic doctrine whereby all texts depend for all meaning on what socio-contextual boundaries construct by internal community norms and practices. On the contrary, Wittgenstein observes diversity among
different texts and different meanings. T. discusses 4 standard of criticism related to the work of Fish:
- no possibility of asking metacritical questions about whether the community’s conventions are testable or right, because we cannot get ‘outside’ the film without perceiving it as a film (p. 545).
- socio-pragmatic philosophy can never be more than narrative philosophy
- through Wittgenstein, we can see that Fish attempts to set up formalism in a way that invites to re-bound into social pragmatism. It is often doctrinaire to say that meaning can be reduced exhaustively to the norms and conventions of a community
- in social pragmatism no room for a hermeneutics of suspicion, that values the effort to respect the other. Danger of premature fusion of the horizons.

6. The Major Difficulties and Limited Value of Fish’s Later Theory for Biblical Studies and for Theology

When Fish has been used in Biblical Studies, scholars have focused on two aspects: (a) problematic status of the traditional notion of “the meaning of a text”; (b) the supposedly decisive role of community interests and expectations on the part of readers in “construction” textual meaning. Discusses three essays: Mark Brett; Stephen Fowl; Stanley Porter.

There are five disastrous entailments of socio-pragmatic models for Christian theology:
- if textual meaning is the product of a community of readers texts cannot reform readers from the outside → the reformation becomes a dispute over alternative community life-styles and not an attempt to retrieve authentic meanings from texts.
- prophetic address is either illusory or pre-conscious inner conflict. It is not an address: the community itself has created the words.
- such notions as grace or revelation must be illusory because there are no givens
- the message of the cross remains a linguistic construct of a tradition
- it would be impossible to determine what would count as a systematic mistake in the development of doctrine. Social-pragmatism allows only the view that what gave rise to our past must be broadly right.

The problem of socio-pragmatism is however more general: “socio-pragmatic hermeneutics transposes the meaning of texts into projections which are potentially idolatrous as instruments of self-affirmation. Such a model transposes a Christian theology of grace and revelation into a phenomenology of religious self-discovery. Paul Ricoeur calls us ‘to destroy the idols, and listen to symbols’. This, he argues, is the goal of hermeneutics” (p. 550).
Chapter XV

*The Hermeneutics of Pastoral Theology:*

(1) Ten Ways of Reading Texts in Relation to Varied Reading-Situations

1. Life-Worlds, Intentional Directedness, and Enquiring Reading in Reconstructionist Models

   The notion that Schleiermacher and Dilthey want to ‘reconstruct’ texts is often criticized, but T shows that there is a necessity for doing so in the interp of some of these texts. Understanding of currency or immeadiacy is impossible without. There are 4 reasons why:

   1. in some cases this reconstruction to ‘stream of life’ or life-world is abs. necessary to understand text (not the genetic fallacy)
   2. it is inaccurate to associate historical reconstruction with a restriction of method to scientific positivism or rationalism
   3. many biblical text address a directed goal, whereby it is necessary that there be some understanding (adverbial) of the author’s intent
   4. it is a mistake to presume that Schliermacher places importance of author over text

   T shows that texts such as 1 Cor have to be reconstructed a la Theissen in order to actually understand what is going on, in order that the present horizon not be a completely detached from the historical. Robert Morgan and Barthes’ claims concerning the death of the author are invalid in texts such as this.

2. Disruptions of Passive Reading in Narrative-Worlds

   Understanding in the genuinely existentialist model is precisely not determined in terms of the expectations of a reading community (563). Individual decision is the resolution of the ambiguous text. This reflects Bultmann and Kirkegaard’s notion that the gospel is to be lived, decided upon, rather than be thought about (passive, e.g. Hegel). Following the social situation of 19th c. N. Europe, the conventional (i.e. passive) may not always be right – i.e., the text has to confront the reader, can’t have become so normative as to lose illocutory effect. ‘Some things refuse to be systemized” (565).

3. Drawing Readers into Biblical Narrative-Worlds: Four Theories of Narrative in Relation to Reading-Situations

   Narrative projects a world that readers can enter, making it different from most other genres of text. There are 4 functions discussed that relate narrative worlds to pastoral theology:

   1. the classic function of the narrative, seen most clearly in 2 Sam 12, the narrative catches readers off guard. By bringing the reader along into the argument/rationality of the narrative, the reader may be prepared to make a decision in a manner he may have moments previously objected to. (Reverses expectations).
2. There is a possibility of grasping personal identities within the text, moving away from a tupos towards personhood. This has pastoral consequences for understanding self-identity.

3. Narrative-worlds also stimulate imagination and exploration of possible worlds (Ricoeur).

4. There may also be self-involving speech-acts where illocutions become operative.

Further effects of narrative discussed, especially the fact that narrative hits at sub-intellectual levels. The parable is to confront, and in ways that may shock the reader. E.g., the parable of the just wages shocks the reader, and this in turn leads to an understanding of grace that is deeper than a propositional one. There is a stiulation of the imagination that prepares the hearer for future modes of thinking/action (569). Parables of reversal transform the pre-understanding which hearers bring to the parable. The reversal has now become conventional, and this is a reason for deconstruction (Crossan, Rindge).

T gives attention to conservative readers who have begun to validate ‘multi-functionality’ of scripture that does not necessarily call for historical referrent when literary artifice is employed, esp. when that artifice has a true theological referrent (Jonah, Job; T. Longman, 573).

4. Biblical Symbols: Productive and Spiritual Reading, with Questions partly from Freud and Jung for Pastoral Theology

A discussion of Jung’s archetypal images. Tillich takes up these images and draws closer connection to theological worlds. “Symbol thus provides a pre-conceptual bridge between the human psyche and what is symbolized” (577). Pastorally, symbol can be the basis for the individual’s lectio divina. However, if such spiritual reading is undertaken, it is helpful that there be controls, preferably historical – for example, a river (water) may have connotations to the modern reader unfamiliar with the Near East that takes the reader away from any content that the text may have to offer. This does not preclude multivalent readings. Multivalent symbols of the 4th gospel discussed, esp. in ref to Qumran, on 581.

5. Models Five through Eight on Variable Reader-Effects: Semiotic Productivity, Reader-Response, Socio-Programmatic Contextualization, and Deconstruction

The 5th model is that of semiotic productivity. When the code is seen as foreign, readers are ‘outside’ of the system, and this invites socio-critical and political assessment of the systems, advocated by Gottwald, Barthes, and Cleenot. T seems more interested in reading from within the system, where there are shared signs between the reader and the author. The symbols that resonate with the unconscious within the system makes the theories of Jung and Tillich valid. While T consistently suggests that the author directs the text towards a situational context to which the reader may reconstruct and enquire of, he asks, what is gained by excluding the intents and author for the purposes of hermeneutical strategy. Possibilities discussed 584-585. Discussion of differences between modern Western semiotic systems and ancient, e.g. spiritual is currently
conceived of as opposed to physical, but in Corinth it could have been opposed to simply the ‘ordinary,’ etc.

Against the rigorous reader response mode, T points out that you need interplay between at least some intent of the author and the reader, as expressed in the composer v. soloist/orchestra analogy (i.e., you don’t want a wooden repetition of Haydn, but you don’t want it to be hijacked either). He does however like the r-r mode in that it allows readers to circumvent the power of both sectarian institutions and the critical guild. This also allows that interpretations of texts can not be predicted beforehand because of the affiliation of the interpreter to an institution/church/etc. Then again the weakness of the socio-pragmatic reading (r-r) is that if exegesis is only the internal generation of a constructive community, no one reading can have claim over another, unless they have the same ethnocentric interests. T recommends a coherent formulation in creed that sets some base of necessary theological dogma, grounding the reader, but also allowing for the reader to have freedom in interpretation from that ground. There needs to be a combination of formalism and contextual relativism, such that you are left with Wittgenstein’s ‘concepts with blurred edges.’

Chapter XVI

The Hermeneutics of Pastoral Theology:
(2) Further Reading Situations, Pluralism, and ‘Believing’ Reading

1. Some Implications of Speech-Act Models for Enquiring and Believing Reading (9th Model); and the Socio-Critical Quest to Transcend Instrumental Uses of Texts (10th Model)

Speech-act theory is deeply concerned with the illocutionary effects of the text, and with the overlapping of intention in reading the text (i.e., whether personal reading of the Psalms locates the reader as echoing the cries of the psalmist, etc). In speech, there is often a concern for directedness, meaning that anything said to a hearer/reader addresses a specific situation, especially promises, authorizations, and acts of forgiveness and liberation. When the reader takes on the role of the original recipient or writer, however, we enter into ‘believing’ reading. It is not that the reader knows a new proposition, it is that they participate in a count-generated act. If the words read only refer to the psalmists faith, etc, it is a word-to-world direction of fit, if the reader identifies herself with that faith, it is world-to-word, with consequences for the reader. Other promises believed/engaged in (e.g., come to me all you who are thirsty) necessarily presuppose Christological belief.

The 10th model is that which the socio-critical approach becomes the metacritical hermeneutic. These models serve to disengage texts from social constructs that only serve individual or social interests (non-universal?). T points out a similar critique as he did with r-r methods of reading – if interests determine how we read the text, and all interests are equally valid, then how can biblical reading shape interests, criticize them, etc (602)? A better answer may be Habermas’ two axes of life-world and system.
2. ‘The Present Situation’ in Hermeneutical Approaches to Pastoral Theology and Social Science: Criteria of Relevance in Alfred Schutz and the Critique of the Cross

Pastoral theologians who claim that the past, or a text, can not be treated with bare ‘description’ need to be checked when they presume they can describe their current contexts with such bare description, ignoring past and future contexts of theology. Also, the relation between the biblical material and the present context are not symmetrical. Can the bible’s witness to Christ be de-centered in the same way as the modern context while still maintaining relevance and truth? (606). Schutz’ formation is as follows: The cross transforms present criteria of relevance: present criteria of relevance do not transform the cross. (610). Theological thinking, especially pastoral, must always be grounded in the past.

3. The Transformation of Criteria of Relevance and Power in the New Horizons of the Cross and Resurrection: Towards a New Understanding of Hermeneutical Pluralism

For T, hermeneutical pluralism is inevitable. Nevertheless, there are components of Christianity that must remain static, universal, and outside of cultural construct: the prohibition of idolatry, the message of the cross, and eschatological promise. We must also recognize that the biblical texts function with the greatest integrity when they function as illocutionary acts of address, pardon, liberation, promise, praise, celebration, etc. Rather than the text or the current context, the reader must be de-centered for real transformation to come about.