THE THOMIST

JULY, 1978

Structuralism in Biblical Interpretation and Theology

Vernon K. Robbins 349

The Sixth Way of St. Thomas Aquinas

Joseph Bobik 373

The Medical Paradigm in Aristotelian Ethics

Michael J. Skidler 400

The Ontological Basis of Human Rights

Raymond Derridy 434

"Humanae Vitae"—A Decade Later: The Theologian Behind the Encyclical

Lawrence B. Porter, O. P. 464

BOOK REVIEWS:

Bengt R. Hoffman, Luther and the Mystics

William A. Newman, O. P. 310

Franz Brentano, On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle

Sang-Ki Kim 513

Edmond Barbotin, The Humanity of God

Patricia Snell, O. P. 519

Ian Craib, Existentialism and Sociology: A Study of Jean-Paul Sartre

Thomas M. King, S. J. 524

Richard J. Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory

Michael J. Keshin 537

Stephen Toulmin, Knowing and Acting

S. K. Lindemann, O. P. 552

BOOKS RECEIVED

538

THE THOMIST®

A SPECULATIVE QUARTERLY REVIEW
OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Published quarterly: January, April, July, October

By: The Thomist Press, Washington, D. C., 20017
Dominican Fathers of the Province of St. Joseph

VOL. 42 JULY, 1978 No. 3

Publication Office: Candler Building, Baltimore, Md., 21202
Yearly Subscription: U. S., $10.00; Canada & Foreign, $11.00;
Single Copies, $3.00.

Editor in Chief: William J. Hill, O. P.
Associate Editors: William A. Wallace, O. P.
John B. Davis, O. P.
Book Review Editor: John B. Davis, O. P.
Business Editor: Robert F. Conway, O. P.
Editorial Assistant: Norman Fenton, O. P.

Address all Correspondence care of THE THOMIST

Manuscripts:

William J. Hill, O. P.
487 Michigan Avenue, N. E.
Washington, D. C., 20017

John B. Davis, O. P.
Murray-Dodge Hall
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey, 08540

Subscriptions:

Robert F. Conway, O. P.
487 Michigan Avenue, N. E.
Washington, D. C., 20017

© Copyright 1978, by Dominican Fathers, Province of St. Joseph.
Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C., and at additional mailing offices.
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

US ISSN 0040-6385
The JULY '78 THOMIST

begins with a survey, at once expository and illuminating, of the recent literature on structuralism as an interpretative method in Biblical studies in which Vernon K. Robbins (STRUCTURALISM IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THEOLOGY) goes on to make some suggestions as to how the move might be made from interpretation to theology proper.

Joseph Bobik (THE SIXTH WAY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS) offers another commentary on Aquinas’s “ways” to God, working from a textual basis in St. Thomas himself in an attempt to get at the intelligibility of being in a way different from that of contemporary Transcendental Thomists.

Further reflection on the timely problem of models and paradigms raises the question of the adequacy of Aristotle’s medical or “health” model in ethics. Michael J. Seidler (THE MEDICAL PARADIGM IN ARISTOTELIAN ETHICS) is respectfully critical of Aristotle in asking if this is a valid or helpful paradigm when it comes up against questions about justification of the moral stance as a whole.

Contemporary concern with human rights can find in Raymond Denney’s (THE ONTOLOGICAL BASIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS) an argument marked with clarity for a position largely overlooked in current debates, namely, that natural rights are not founded ultimately upon societal recognition but possess an ontological basis.

July 1973 marks the tenth anniversary of Pope Paul’s “Humanae Vitae” issued in July 1968; Lawrence Porter’s essay (THE THEOLOGIAN OF “HUMANA VITAE”) takes note of the occasion to suggest that the controversial Encyclical be interpreted in light of the thought of the theologian generally acknowledged to be his chief architect, advancing the thesis that, in such a context, the document presents itself less as a moral judgment on individual marital behavior than as a bulwark against a growing world-wide contraceptive mentality that denies the life-enhancing power of love in general.

Remaining space is given over to reviews of six varied books of current interest.

STRUCTURALISM IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THEOLOGY

NOTHING IS MORE characteristic of contemporary biblical interpretation than the emergence of new methodologies designed to open new arenas for research. As interpreters have adopted new approaches, they have become increasingly self-conscious about the methods and presuppositions at work in the analyses they undertake. A symptom of this self-consciousness in American biblical interpretation has been the publication, by Fortress Press in Philadelphia, of a series entitled Guides to Biblical Scholarship. At first the perimeters of the series appeared to be clear cut. The dominant methods were ready at hand: textual criticism, literary (source) criticism, form criticism, and redaction (composition) criticism. But when Beardslee and Habel wrote the books on literary criticism, when Tucker wrote the book on Old Testament form criticism, and when Perrin wrote the book on New Testament redaction criticism, they found themselves defining the literary nature of the biblical materials in broader terms than the traditional practitioners of biblical literary-historical criticism.

The shift in these books indicates that the cultural context of interpretation is on the move. Interpreters are remolding literary-historical methods on the basis of new perceptions in the culture. The author of a recent issue in the NT section of


349
the series asserts that interpreters must recognize the new cultural setting for interpretation and refashion methodology to accommodate the new perceptions. The new method is "structural exegesis," and the author of the book claims that "the very introduction of structural methods in exegesis implies a shift in the exegete's preunderstanding of the biblical text." 2

By now it is evident that a revolution, in the sense of T. S. Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, is occurring in the field of biblical study.3 During this kind of revolution various groups and interpreters emerge with distinctive forms of the new methodology. 4 It is necessary for such variety to emerge, since various combinations of analysis and synthesis constitute any mature area of study. This situation, however, makes every explanation of the transition run the risk of being an oversimplification.

This article explores implications of structural exegesis for biblical interpretation and theology during the last quarter of the twentieth century. The author presupposes that future methods will employ certain kinds of structural techniques of analysis and synthesis, though it is a matter of debate whether structural techniques will dominate the field or be incorporated with other techniques. Since structural study is invading virtually every area of study,5 it is impossible to cover even a majority of areas which relate to biblical interpretation and


3 This work is part of a series entitled "International Encyclopedia of Unified Science," Vol. 2, No. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970). The nature of scientific revolutions is discussed, pp. 12-73. Though references to this book are "in the air" in discussions of methodology, J. D. Crossan referred explicitly to this book, and outlined the nature of the "revolution" in biblical studies as he sees it, at a meeting of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research, February 19, 1977.

4 Ibid., p. 70. He further indicates, p. 1, that there must be a long fermentation period where two major disciplines compete.

5 An excellent collection of essays which shows the broad spectrum of structural studies is found in Introduction to Structuralism, ed. Michael Lane (Harper Torchbooks; New York: Basic Books, 1970).

theological formulation. The methodological transition will be discussed on the basis of books and articles recently published in America—some which are authored by Americans and some which are translations of French or German publications.

FROM HISTORICAL PARADIGM TO LINGUISTIC PARADIGM

Structural analysis, according to most interpreters, seeks understanding within a linguistic paradigm rather than a historical paradigm. 8 Over the past two hundred years a historical paradigm has been establishing itself as the perceptual framework in which biblical study proceeds. The key to a historical paradigm is the perception that all things result, over a period of time, from a cause or causes.

The first method to emerge within the historical paradigm was textual criticism. The method arose when interpreters discovered that the wording of books in the Bible varied from manuscript to manuscript, and often the variations were a touching point for differing theologies. The conclusion arose that variations had been produced through a complex process of alteration and error. The reproduction of manuscripts without benefit of the modern printing press caused variations in wording. Textual critics developed a scientifically precise method for unravelling the genetic process whereby corruptions of the earliest text were present in 15th and 16th century manuscripts. 7

Literary-historical study of the Bible gradually moved from textual criticism to literary criticism. Literary criticism arose in the study of the narrative books in the OT and the NT. This analysis was designed to discover the historical process through which the biblical documents came into existence. Duplications in OT stories led to the isolation of strands of narrative tradition.

8 See Patte, Structural Exegesis, pp. 1-80. To understand how the term "paradigm" is being used in this section, see Kuhn, Scientific Revolutions, pp. 10-51.

which had been incorporated into the narrative books, and chronological dates were established for these strands in order to facilitate the reconstruction of the history of Israel. Extensive word for word agreement between Matthew, Mark, and Luke convinced NT interpreters that some kind of direct literary dependence existed between these Gospels. Extensive analysis produced the majority view that Matthew and Luke had used copies of Mark and a sayings source as they composed their Gospels. Chronological dates were assigned to these sources, and this dating became an important ingredient for writing the history of earliest Christianity. Literary analysis was performed in direct consort with historical perceptions. While the text critic had accepted the challenge to write the history of the textual variants, the literary critic analyzed the biblical books to discover the sources which had been used for their composition. By assigning dates to the sources, new insight was gained into the history of Israel and early Christianity.

The historical paradigm began to raise even further possibilities for uncovering the detailed history of Israel and early Christianity. Reasonable success with textual criticism and literary criticism encouraged the interpreter to write the history of individual sayings and stories from their earliest setting to their incorporation into a source which was used by a later author. The earliest setting for these materials was perceived to be oral, and form criticism arose as the method whereby information about the oral settings was gathered. The form critic searched for the situation in the life of the people in which the saying or story received its particular form. For the form critic, the conclusions about the existence of written sources had to be accommodated to the results of the history of a saying or story as it was revealed through form analysis. The form critic applied his analytical tools within the framework of textual and literary criticism, and the challenge was to use each method as a complement to the other for the purpose of clarifying aspects of the history of the religious community.

The most recent literary-historical method has been redaction or composition criticism. This method arose from an interest in displaying the forces at work in the composition of the final documents. Analysis of manuscripts, literary sources, and oral forms had left the documents without holistic interpretation. The redaction critic begins by accumulating information with regard to the alteration and rearrangement which an author performed on a written source (editing or redacting) and he moves on to observe the characteristic vocabulary and phraseology of the author (style of composition). In addition, the interpreter gathers statistics about characteristic vocabulary and phraseology, and he analyzes the structure and arrangement of stories and sayings. These data are the basis for identifying the literary, theological, social, and historical forces at work as the author composed the document. With this methodology, literary analysis within a historical paradigm has come full circle. The initial concern was the exact wording of each verse, and this analysis led deeper and deeper into the history that produced parts of the texts until interpreters set the goal of understanding the complex factors which were at work in the composition of entire books.

During the past one hundred years, these methods have gradually attained the status of being central for understanding biblical literature with integrity. These disciplines were nurtured by Protestantism, and they have become a standard feature of Roman Catholic biblical interpretation. This is the...

---

11 See N. Perrin, Redaction Criticism, pp. 86-79.
manner in which a paradigm establishes itself within a mature discipline of study and research. Within this paradigm, literary-historical analysis has been considered the natural base for a hermeneutic of the biblical texts. If the steps from exegesis to theology are difficult, the theologian has accepted the task with courage and creativity.

Especially during the last 25 years, however, biblical interpreters have been searching for broader methods to explore literary, theological and religious-philosophical aspects of the biblical material. Amos Wilder has persistently encouraged a more general literary approach to NT literature, and his proposal has borne rich fruit during the last decade. Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling have searched for a more theological method of interpretation based on the power of "word," and their efforts are manifest in a number of works consciously unfolding a "theological hermeneutic." Also, biblical interpreters have been aware that Edmund Leach wrote essays on "The Legitimacy of Solomon" and "Genesis as Myth" using a "structural anthropological" method. But only within the last five years

last fifteen or twenty years have seen almost a revolution in Catholic biblical studies—a revolution encouraged by authority, for its Magis Carta was the encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu (1948) of Pope Pius XII. The principles of literary and historical criticism, so long regarded with suspicion, are now, at last, accepted and applied by Catholic exegetes." Cf. Kimmel, New Testament: The History, pp. 130-408; Krentz, Historical-Critical Method, pp. 1-5.

13 Kuhn, Scientific Revolutions, pp. 10-34.
16 E. Leach, "Legitimacy of Solomon: Some Structural Aspects of Old Testament

has "structuralism" become a serious methodological term within the arena of American biblical interpretation. By now, structural exegesis is gaining such a foothold that biblical interpreters enter into detailed comparison of structural exegesis with literary-historical analyses of the same texts. Instead of understanding biblical texts as compositions arranged over time, the structural exegete perceives biblical literature as the linguistic expression of structures of meaning. These structures of meaning work, in one way or another, among all beings who communicate through language. In other words, as a person speaks a sentence and people understand him, so also religious people in Israel and Christianity told stories and recited hymnic or proverbial speech, and people in that cultural area and in many others at later times understood and participated in the meaning which had come to expression in those texts. The model for understanding Israel and Christianity, therefore, is language rather than history, and the systematic study of language arises out of the question, "How is it possible for people to communicate by speaking sounds in a sequence?"

When language rather than chronology becomes the model for understanding, the exegete seeks to explain the presence and interrelation of semiotic systems in biblical texts. A semiotic system is an organized system of signs (semecia). The fundamental semiotic system is language. Words are signs which signify meaning referents. A semiotic system is a functional system. Its function is communication. In order for the constituents of a semiotic system to function as communicators, they are set forth in structured relations. These structured relations are semiotic structures, and they reflect underlying meaning structures.

18 Patte, Structural Exegesis, pp. 97-98.
The common ground for the literary-historical exegete and the structural exegete is the text, and both seek to interpret the text with precision. But the structural exegete approaches the text with an interest in its particular expression of structures of meaning which make it possible to understand any text. Structural analysis begins with investigation of a particular semiological system. To analyze a story completely, an interpreter must investigate at least three semiotic systems: (a) the narrative system; (b) the cultural or mythical system; and (c) the semantic system.

A sample of analysis on the level of the narrative system may demonstrate the procedure. One of the most well worked texts in American circles to establish the fruitfulness of structural exegesis is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-35). Analysis of the parable begins by detecting the basic functions of narration which exist in Lk 10:30-35. The opening verse (10:30) relates that a man departs from Jerusalem in anticipation of arriving in Jericho. Thus, the entire story emerges within the structure of departure and arrival. We expect the final sequence of the story to have emerged out of successful arrival at Jericho. Since the final verse (10:35) relates that the man is still at an inn and has not yet arrived at Jericho, the entire story occurs within the arrival / departure structure which was introduced in the first verse. The structuralist starts, then, with the initial observation that departure / arrival is a basic function within narrativity.

Interruption of the arrival of the man in Jericho creates the setting in which other people participate in the action. Robbers, a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan come into the story from somewhere (we do not know from where), and the first three arrive and depart. But the structural interpreter perceives that there is a different dynamic within the arrival and departure of these people. Arrival of the robbers brought about a confrontation between the robbers and the traveling man, and through this confrontation they deprived the man of his ability to continue traveling. Here the structuralist perceives five more functions: confrontation, conjunction / disjunction, deprivation / attribution, mandating / acceptance or refusal, and domination / submission. The robbers confronted the traveling man and deprived him of the physical well-being which gave him the power to travel. Through this action the narration raises a mandate for someone to help the wounded man. As the priest, Levite, and Samaritan arrive, the question is whether or not they will conjoin with the wounded man and attempt to attribute to him that of which he has been deprived (health) or disjoin from the wounded man to go on their way. In other words, confrontation has interrupted the departure / arrival structure. Through confrontation, the traveling man was deprived of the ability to continue the initial structure of departure / arrival. Both the priest and Levite disjoin the action, thus refusing the mandate raised by the action. The Samaritan conjoins with the action, accepts the mandate raised by the narration, and attempts to attribute to the wounded man that of which he has been deprived. As the narrative ends, it appears that the story will not allow the action of the robbers to dominate. The story, teller presents a protagonist who dominates (potentially) over the robbers.

This analysis suggests that six meaning structures underlie the narrative account: (1) departure / arrival; (2) confrontation; (3) deprivation / attribution; (4) mandating / acceptance or refusal; (5) conjunction / disjunction; and (6) domination / submission. This analysis implies that we understand this story because we understand these meaning structures. The goal of the analysis has simply been to discover the meaning structures which we use. When we have discovered the meaning structures which make it possible for us to understand the story, then we can move beyond the narrative system to other semiological systems.

Before moving on, however, we must take one more look at the structure of narrativity. Through the action in the story,
someone is attempting to communicate a message to a listener. Therefore, the act of telling the story, or writing it, introduces another meaning structure: communication/reception. As soon as we hear or read the first words of the story, we know that someone wants to communicate a message by telling a story. Or, if we do not "know" this, we "presuppose" it. The structural exegete brings this presupposition to systematic expression, and thus a seventh meaning structure underlies this narrative account: communication/reception.

If a person perceives this analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan to be entirely foreign to his or her sensibilities, one of the reasons may be that he or she has usually come to the Bible with literary-historical questions. In fact, literary-historical understanding has become the important base for nurturing a life of faith or formulating theology. In other words, not only biblical interpreters but also believers and theologians have thought, spoken, and written primarily within a historical paradigm for understanding. In contrast, structural analysis is conducted out of a desire to understand how communication takes place at all. The presupposition is that if we know how communication takes place, perhaps we can begin to understand the fundamental relation of religious understanding to other kinds of understanding. The analyst is concerned to know what semiological systems make it possible for people to understand the story. Thus, he approaches the text within a linguistic paradigm. If, through analysis, he discovers the way in which systems of communication are functioning in biblical material, comparison of this material with other material anywhere and everywhere may help us to understand with precision the likenesses and differences which exist, in terms of structures of meaning, between biblical literature and other literature, both religious and secular.

**Biblical Analysis in a New Key**

Once the structural exegete begins to analyze a story to display the systems of communication which function in it, he or she may choose to proceed in a number of different ways. In the analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Patte prefers to use a model of narrative structure proposed by A.-J. Greimas. This model applies the principle of binary opposition to the spheres of action of the main characters in the story. In turn, Greimas's work is an extension, with modifications, of V. Propp's analysis of Russian folktales. Propp, desiring to produce a system of classification for folktales, concluded that the functions of the characters rather than thematic features or characters per se, are the constant dimension within narratives. Greimas, on the basis of Propp's analysis of Russian folktales and E. Souriau's analysis of 200,000 dramatic situations in classical plays, has applied a rigorous deductive methodology for the purpose of establishing structural analysis as a theoretical science similar to that of the physicist. Greimas proposes that it is possible to reduce all of the functions within narratives to seven "canonical functions." All of these functions are at least partially manifested in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and they have already been introduced in the previous section.

The deductive procedure includes one further dimension. The functions of narrative have their matrix within actions of characters. Again, the specific actions and the specific characters are not the point of interest. Underlying all actions and characters are a limited number of roles which any character may

---


fill. For example, the character may be the subject of the action, or he may receive the object of the action. Greimas, using Lucien Tesnière’s analysis of a sentence as a drama which includes a process, actors, and circumstances, has constructed an actantial model which reduces all “actantial roles,” “spheres of action,” or “actants” (varying terminology for the same dimension) to six structural constants. The six actants, plus the direction in which actants influence one another, form the actantial model. The model, with its manifestation in the parable of the Good Samaritan, looks like this:

\[ \text{SENDER} \rightarrow \text{OBJECT} \rightarrow \text{RECEIVER} \]
\[ (\text{Health}) \quad (\text{Wounded Man}) \]
\[ \uparrow \]
\[ \text{HELPER} \rightarrow \text{SUBJECT} \leftarrow \text{OPPONENT} \]
\[ (\text{donkey, oil, wine, money, innkeeper}) \quad (\text{Samaritan}) \quad (\text{Robbers and effect of their action}) \]

Using this model, the exegete hopes to display the structure of the overall action which occurs in the narrative. The arrows in the diagram show the direction in which three kinds of underlying action move. Each kind of action is called an axis. The arrows on the top line display the axis of communication in the narrative: a Sender is sending an Object to a Receiver. In Patte’s application of this model to the parable of the Good Samaritan, someone (through Jesus’ telling of the story) is attempting to send health (the object) to a wounded man (the receiver). Patte indicates that the Sender is often hidden or abstract. The Sender of a communication through a story is often God, chance, a society as a whole, or conscience. In this story it would appear to be God or the ideals of the Jewish community as they come to expression through Jesus. The arrow from the Subject to the Object displays the axis of volition: a Samaritan (subject) wants to bestow health (object). The Subject of the narrative is not the Sender of the communication; rather he projects the Object which the Sender is attempting to send to a Receiver. The arrows on the bottom line display the axis of power: the Subject wants to do something, but he can only do it if he has the power which enables it. The Opponents of his action are the robbers and the effects of their action. Only if the Samaritan has the power to overcome that which the robbers have done, can his volition become action. The Samaritan has a number of Helpers: know-how, oil, wine, donkey, money, innkeeper. They contribute to his power to overcome the forces which have caused the problem.

Immediately the question arises, “What is the value of this analysis for understanding the parable of the Good Samaritan?” Patte admits that this analysis is not yet exegesis, but he considers it to be “the necessary prelude” to a mythical and semantic analysis. The foregoing exploration has analyzed simply the functional and actantial structure of the narrative. Therefore, “meaning” has not yet become the object of the analysis. Patte considers this analytical procedure to provide the means by which subtypes of narrative genre can be identified. Through an extensive application of the actantial model to discover the pattern with which functions and actants are manifested within texts, he envisions the possibility of distinguishing among “evangelical parables, example stories, Jewish parables, and Hellenistic parables” in the field of NT study. The dominance of a particular subtype of narrative within Christianity or Judaism would contribute to our understanding of the basic message communicated by these historic groups.

**FROM NARRATIVE STRUCTURE TO MYTHICAL AND SEMANTIC STRUCTURE**

For the structuralist, exegetical results begin to appear when the analysis moves to the level of mythical structure and semantic structure (the second and third semiological systems). Ex-

---


animals (ravens and coyotes) are featured as trickster figures. In these stories, beasts of prey are equivalent to hunters, and herbivorous animals are equivalent to farmers. Beasts of prey kill animals for food. Herbivorous animals gather plants for food. Carrion-eating animals gather (but do not kill) animals for food. Therefore, carrion-eaters share the same food with beasts of prey but function like herbivorous animals in the manner in which they procure their food.

Patte wishes to move from his analysis of narrative structure in the parable of the Good Samaritan to an analysis of the mythical structure, using Lévi-Strauss's transformational model. Patte abstracts the model in this form for the transition:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Polarity</th>
<th>First Triad</th>
<th>Second Triad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warfare</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Patte, the parable of the Good Samaritan manifests only the poles of the second triad (−A and +A), and by a reverse process of analysis he posits the poles of the first triad (−A and +A). The story does not allow one to know the poles of the initial opposition (−A and +A). Since his antecedent analysis reveals that the Samaritan is the Subject of the story, Patte proposes that the Samaritan represents +A. Using Lévi-Strauss' formula for the transition, he decides that the mythical structure is:

\[ +A \]

---

### Initial Polarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Triad</th>
<th>Second Triad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$-A^2$</td>
<td>(robbers)</td>
<td>$-A^2$ (wounded man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B^2$</td>
<td>(healed man)</td>
<td>$+A^2$ (Samaritan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$+A^2$</td>
<td>(ideal religious person)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mediating element ($B^2$), according to Patte's analysis, is not expressed in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Its absence suggests that the parable is a polemic genre which confronts an established myth with a new myth. The reconciliation and mediation offered by the Jewish myth are not valid; Jesus and early Christianity introduce a specific alternative—eschatological myth. Only this alternative myth offers true reconciliation and mediation.

If a person were to accept this diagram as illuminating how the parable of the Good Samaritan mediates polarities in Palestinian society, then he or she has a means of talking about a mythical or cultural structure which has manifested itself in NT literature. Many other stories should be manifestations of this same cultural structure. It is important to notice, however, that Patte has attempted to move from narrative structure to mythical structure without any analysis at the level of semantic (elementary or deep) structure. For this reason he does not attempt to fill in the terms for the initial pole in the transformational model. The initial polarity can be revealed only by analysis at the level of the semantic semiological system.

Dan Via has undertaken an energetic project to uncover the structure of the semantic semiological system at work in NT literature. He, like Patte, accepts Lévi-Strauss's hypothesis that a basic polarity is mediated within a cultural setting by myths which reflect transformations. Via proposes that Christian texts derive from a binary structure at the semantic (elementary or deep) level which takes a holistic, generic form at the mythical (cultural) level. The binary principle is death/resurrection (new life) and the generic form is tragicomic. Via considers death/resurrection to be a fundamental polarity underlying Hosea, the Pauline letters, the Gospel of Mark, and Aristophanes's comic plays. This binary feature, then, is manifest in Israelite culture, Hellenic culture, and Greco-Roman culture. Displaying all the forms of this polarity on a grid, Via unfolds the transformations of death/resurrection as this structure is expressed in the literature available to us. In the Israelite literature this opposition is expressed as: unclean/clean; far/near; disobedience/obedience; lose land/keep land; not listen/hear; disobey/obey; be deceived/know; forget/remember; perish from the land/possess land; die/live; Israel's rebellion/prophet's struggle with Israel and God; abandonment/word; God destroys/God restores. In the Hellenic culture the polarity is expressed primarily as: contest (agon)/victory procession (+ marriage). In the NT literature it is expressed as: death/resurrection; cross/word; foolishness/wisdom; weakness/power; letter/spirit; verbal conflict with hostile authorities/victory in debate and assertion of authority. In the Gospel of Mark, this structure manifests itself in the generic form of tragicomic. Around the turn of the century, the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* attempted to establish a causal-genetic relation between

---


\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 61.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., pp. 46-51.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 40-45, 54-66, 71-103.
the dying-rising motif in Mediterranean literature and death-resurrection in the NT literature. Literary-historical interpreters insisted that direct literary influence had to be proven to uphold this hypothesis, and analysis of the vocabulary from Israelite traditions and conceptions from contemporary Jewish beliefs denied the hypothesis any dominant status among biblical interpreters. Via approaches the same motif from the standpoint of the elementary binary structure of the human mind. His thesis is that death/resurrection, a fundamental mode of thought among human beings, manifested itself in the dominant cultural group within the Mediterranean world.  

Therefore, the Pauline letters and the Gospel of Mark manifest an essential aspect of the semantic (or elementary) structure of human thought which found various forms of expression in the Mediterranean world.

Since the structuralist asserts that each level of analysis should help to illuminate the other levels of analysis, Via's analysis should contribute to Patte's analysis. Via's analysis suggests that the initial polarity in Patte's transformational model is death/new life. This polarity emerges from the semantic (elementary or deep) structure which dominated Mediterranean culture. The parable of the Good Samaritan should reflect this semantic structure at the mythical and narrative levels. Therefore, Patte's transformational model should display death/resurrection in the generic/mythic mode of tragicomedy. Patte's analysis of the canonical functions and his construction of the actantial model will represent the manifestation of the semantic and mythical structures at the surface level of narrative parable.

Via's analysis challenges Patte's analysis of the mythical structure of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Primarily, it calls into question Patte's conclusion that the wounded man represents the negative pole of the second triad (-A²). Application of Via's analysis to Patte's transformational model would result in a model which looks like this:

In other words, perhaps the wounded man is the means by which the opposition between the Jerusalem temple clientele (priest and Levite) and Samaritans (who have a temple on Mt. Gerizim) is mediated. Robbers, prostitutes, and tax collectors would share with the rejected prophet in being ostracized by society. The rejected prophet would have in common with the ideal religious person his claim to religious authority in society. Thus, the rejected prophet is a mediator between the ideal religious people and religious outcasts. The Samaritan is the functional equivalent of the rejected prophet, and the Priest and Levite are the functional equivalents of the ideal religious person. The wounded man can be a mediator. He holds in common with Samaritans an experience of rejection and assault, and he holds in common with the priest and Levite an association with Jerusalem, the center of Judean history and worship.

If this construction of the transformational model were accepted by both Via and Patte, then we would possess a detailed analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan at all levels: narrative, mythical, and semantic. Few, if any, complete analyses exist, however, since this kind of analysis of biblical literature

---

89 Ibid., p. 40.
is still in its infancy. It will undoubtedly take a number of years before structural analysis of biblical literature attains the kind of maturity reflected by literary-historical analysis. Types of structural analysis different from those presented in this article will be developed and applied. Already, a non-binary structural approach has been developed to analyze the relationships between various types of gods, leaders, servants, victims, etc. Modified forms of structural analysis which use insights from Freud and Aristotle have also been introduced.41

FROM STRUCTURAL EXEGESIS TO THEOLOGY

At last the question arises: “What is the direct import of structural biblical interpretation for theology?”42 Undoubtedly the most energetic answer to this question is being formulated by Erhardt Guttgemanns.43 He asserts that theology must be formulated on the basis of a “Generative Poetics.” This means that theology can and should be formulated out of the principles and conclusions which result from a “semantic grammar.” In other words, as we now possess grammars describing the way in which biblical languages function, so also a grammar can be developed which explains the manner in which biblical meaning functions. When a thorough structural exegesis of biblical tradition has been achieved, then a grammar of biblical meaning can be established. After this is accomplished, theology can be generated by transforming biblical meaning into modern cultural forms. “Theology thereby becomes the science of the

41 E.g., René Girard, La violence et le sacré (Paris: B. Grasset, 1979), asserts that the fundamental mythical structure of culture is “collective victimage.”
42 If biblical interpretation has any relation to theology, then much of the preceding has at least implicit ramifications for the theological enterprise. I must, at the outset of this section, indicate my gratitude to my colleague, Edward A. Yonan, who gave generously of his time to discuss the implications of structuralism for theology and philosophy of religion.
43 Four of his essays have been published in English translation with the title, “Erhardt Guttgemanns ‘Generative Poetics’,” Semiosis, 6 (1976).

operations and transformations between texts ‘given’ to us in the tradition and texts to be ‘produced’ today…”44

There is another aspect of Guttgemanns work which is just as striking as the emphasis on “Generative Poetics,” and he shares this with structuralists like Jean Callouid and Daniel Patte. The mode of analysis adopted by these three men reflects a theoretical orientation which has many features in common with the “transcendental theology” of Bernard Lonergan. All four share the desire to formulate a theory which approximates the contemporary standards of scientific theorizing. This leads to an equation of their structural method with that of algebra and physics. It also emphasizes that scientific pursuit is simply the systematic application of principles derived from common sense and that the goal is to develop a unified science for all disciplines of study.45

Within this theoretical framework, these men share a series of presuppositions. First, they perceive explanation and understanding to exist in hierarchical levels. Knowledge is gathered and reflected upon in qualitatively different ways depending on the level of analysis. Second, equivalent structures exist in myriads of places throughout different spheres of knowledge. This leads to “isotopic” or “isomorphic” analysis.46 Third, models, lists, diagrams, and graphs are essential heuristic tools to be used in analysis, because they are initial abstractions of reality which stimulate detailed research and call for synthetic explanation.47 Fourth, all of these men are interested in functional analysis. Aspects of human activity which have previ

44 Ibid., p. 3. D. Patte seems to envision something similar to this in Structural Exegesis, p. 75.
46 Lonergan, ibid., pp. 9-10; Guttgemanns, ibid., pp. 4-5, 8; Callouid, ibid., pp. 7-8; Patte, Structural Exegesis, pp. 22-23, 25-27, 33-34, 57, 59-59.
47 Lonergan, ibid., p. 21; Guttgemanns, ibid., pp. 5-6.
48 Lonergan, ibid., p. 22; Guttgemanns, ibid., p. 9; Callouid, ibid., pp. 6-7; Patte, Structural Exegesis, pp. 25-29, 51, 59, 84; “Structural Network,” pp. 22-23.
ously been misunderstood can now be illuminated by description of their function.

A notable difference between Lonergan's programmatic work and that of Gùttgemanns, Calloud, and Patte is manifest in their respective interests in texts. Lonergan apologizes (with tongue in cheek) to the readers of Method in Theology for citing so few Christian texts. He considers the concern with texts to be a "functional specialization" with which he need not deal extensively in a discussion of method. For Gùttgemanns, on the other hand, the texts are primary, because they are the basis on which an analytical grammar can be established for writing contemporary theology. It is not clear that Gùttgemanns would be satisfied with a description of his work in terms of a functional specialization, since for him the possibility of a "Generative Poetics" both begins and ends with the human being as "communicator." While Lonergan sees the end of his analysis as "communication," his beginning point is not so directly grounded in the human being as a linguistic being.

According to Paul Ricoeur, however, the fundamental issue is whether a theologian accepts structuralism as an ideology or as a method which illuminates a segment of reality. Lonergan's transcendental method runs the risk of categorizing dynamic, synthetic fields of research. In other words, it is extremely difficult for a transcendental mode of analysis to maintain contact with the mimetic character of human activity. If a method of investigation cannot maintain this contact, it does not satisfy the demand for reference to human existence which a total science must fulfill. The structural method as applied by Calloud, Patte, and Gùttgemanns also runs this risk.

Ricoeur proposes to use structural methods to analyze the production of speech, both oral and written. This analysis would clarify religious discourse and reveal the limit-expressions of religious language. This understanding must be linked with understanding of the limit-experiences of human life which emerges from systematic reflection upon symbolic knowledge. The task, then, is to provide "a method of mutual clarification of the limit-expressions of religious language and the limit-experiences of human life." It is possible to develop such a method if we "find concepts which preserve the tension of the symbol within the clarity of the concept." By this means, theology may be formulated as "a conceptual language which preserves the tense character of symbolic language."

Ricoeur suggests that structural analysis should play a decisive role within theology but that theologians should avoid structuralism as an ideology. If theologians accept structuralism as a method, one of the major influences would be upon their use of texts. The recent crisis in theology is, to a great extent, related to the uneasiness theologians experience in using biblical and other texts in their theological systems. As a result, the use of biblical texts in theology is more of an art than a science. One effect of structural methods can be to provide a means by which the theologian may systematically use insights from religious texts in the formulation of theological discourse. If we think such a theology would be stilted and uncreative, we have yet to encounter the plurality of meanings in language and the manifold structures of meaning in texts.

**Conclusion**

Structural analysis is rapidly gaining a place alongside other methods in modern biblical interpretation. A major issue appears to be the relationship of structuralist method to structuralist ideology. Daniel Patte asserts that "a preunderstanding of the text is imposed upon the exegete by his culture," recent modern culture possesses a new sensitivity toward a "plurality of meanings," and structural study is the primary means by which a satisfactory hermeneutic can be developed in our time. Erhardt Gùttgemanns proposes that a Generative Poetics, es-

---

tablished through structural analyses, is “a methodologically and scientifically reflective textual theory that can stand up to contemporary standards of scientific theorizing, succeeding ‘existential interpretation’ which is the only earlier text theory that has been consistently thought through.” Paul Ricoeur claims that structural analysis is successful only if it analyzes the text as discourse or discourse as the text. This kind of structural analysis may enrich an existential hermeneutic. If, however, structural analysis is linked with an ideology which treats any ‘message’ as the mere ‘quotation’ of its underlying ‘code,’ it is “a dead end.”

The issue underlying these assertions may be stated in another form. Biblical interpretation and theology exist at the interface between religious faith and cultural understanding. Some structuralists possess a neo-medieval interest in a unified science which displays the interrelation of all ways of thinking and acting. Other structuralists may presuppose that religious faith possesses a unique dynamic which precludes the possibility of analyzing its structures in relation to structures of meaning throughout the universe of knowledge and action. Few biblical interpreters are able to ignore the broad hermeneutical questions which hover over their analyses. These questions, implicit or explicit, are opening new fields of research for the exegete.

Structural analysis and structuralist ideology have entered the world of the biblical interpreter and the theologian. Only the future will reveal whether this is the harbinger of a decisively new way of understanding reality or whether it is an additional component within the perspective through which twentieth century people already view their world.

Vernon K. Robbins

University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign

3 Ibid., p. 94.
4 Ibid., p. 95.
5 I am grateful to the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at the campus of St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota, for providing the congenial setting to begin the research for this article.

The Sixth Way of St. Thomas Aquinas

When one thinks of arguments for God’s existence which St. Thomas Aquinas records with approval, one thinks of a posteriori arguments. Aquinas disapproves of, and argues against, the a priori argument of St. Anselm; forcefully and conclusively, in my view. Moreover, the a posteriori arguments one thinks of are arguments whose point of departure is some fact or other observed in the world of sense experience, at least to some extent: the fact of motion, the fact of an order of efficient causes, things for which it is possible to be and not to be, the graded perfections of things, the fact that things without knowledge (natural bodies) act for an end. And not only that, one thinks quite immediately, and most often only, of the Summa Theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 3, the locus of the Five Ways; sometimes, though considerably less often, one also thinks of the Summa contra Gentiles, Bk. I, ch. 13.

Maritain, in describing his own Sixth Way, which he regards as an addition to the Five Ways which Aquinas records in the Summa Theologiae, is careful to point out wherein it differs from the Five. One of the points of difference which he emphasizes is the fact that his Sixth Way is not based on a fact observed in any way in the world of sense experience. It is based, rather, on a peculiar intuition, an intuition intimately connected with an intellectual experience of intellectual experience, with an “experience of the proper life of the intellect.” It is during such an experience, Maritain notes, that the intuition on which his Sixth Way is based occurs, the intuition that I, this thinking I, have always existed. And so, whereas the arguments which Aquinas records begin in this way: there exist things in motion

2 Ibid., pp. 78-76.