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Is There An Author In This Text?:

A Re-evaluation of Authorial Intent Pursued as Ontological Disclosing the Being of the Entity
of the Composition in Understanding an Author's Communication

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Abstract

The assertion that God inspired human authors to write, hence speaking through them, and still speaks to readers by means of the biblical text they had written, raises three primary hermeneutical issues, if it is to have any validity within hermeneutics. These are firstly authorial intentionality, secondly the nature of a text and thirdly that of understanding and meaning in interpretation of the text. However, the following issues create a problematic for the author or reader holding to such an assertion. The assertion of intentionality, as an aspect of an author's psyche, effecting an inter-subjectively with interpreters has been epistemologically exposed as insupportable. The categorization of being as either personal or impersonal has denuded the text of being as a composition to leave it an impersonal stretch of language, whose meaning is an assertion in re-animation by readers. Meaning itself has been recognized as a reflective task whose reference point is the individual reflecting, hence disclosing a relativization of meaning that excludes an individual being able to assert an absolute meaning. The way forward for the individual desiring to retain the value of Scripture, without opting out of hermeneutical debate to take refuge in a special hermeneutic, which leaves them marginalized in general debate, lies in a re-evaluation and review of the arguments and philosophical perception underlying these issues. This is the subject matter of this work.

The act of parole in using language is a willful, hence intentional act. Intention remains an aspect of an author's psyche and intentionality describes the event producing the text. However, what is produced is intentioned and must retain that intentioned-ness, hence conferring being on what is produced, whether a work of art or composition. The categorization of being as personal and impersonal is inadequate for intentioned being, which has aspects of both. This raises ontological issues that have been missed or ignored and must be investigated. The very act of communication involves forms of knowledge that defy the categorization as rational knowledge, e.g. in the domains of subjectivity and belief. Yet all forms of knowledge in a text are communicated in the composition. Hence a text must undergo not only epistemological evaluation but also ontological evaluation. These issues and their impact on understanding and meaning are explored leading to a new approach to hermeneutics.

Whilst the writer holds beliefs within the Christian community, the approach considers the issues from the point of view of any literary text, as an aspect of human-being.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Setting the Scene

General Introduction: The Conundrum and Paradox of Scripture

The general viewpoint of Protestant Christianity concerning the scriptural text presents a reader with a conundrum and resultant paradox offering both a hermeneutical problem and an opportunity for hermeneutical development. It is generally believed that in some way, via the scriptural text, God both reveals Himself and speaks in the contemporary setting.¹ The authorship of the actual physical text of Scripture is that of a human hand and not a divine hand, and this poses a conundrum: "How has God spoken in the biblical text?"² Subsequently, if the message of Scripture, in that text, is at the same time both a human message and a divine message this also presents a paradox.

Usually the idea of a conundrum is lighthearted and for amusement. However, the basic idea of the conundrum is that of a confusing and difficult problem or question. Certainly the concept of the scripture as a vehicle for both a human and a divine voice, at the same time, qualifies as a true conundrum. This same scripture is a message by an historical author to people who lived in history, yet at the same time its message is conceived of as being divine and addressed to a universal audience of those who believe. As a proposition, this also seems to combine contradictory features that carry the implication of a paradox, regarding the message of Scripture.

The contemporary trend, in what is styled general hermeneutics, is a tendency to not consider the concept of an authorial intention as impacting meaning on the reader's side of the communication. This seemingly occurs for two main reasons, firstly intention, as a substantive, relates to the psyche of the author who is no longer present, and secondly,

¹ Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, "Orthodox Biblical Interpretation," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. General Editor Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 554. Within the Orthodox Protestant Christian community there must be fidelity to the witness of Scripture as the Word of God. See also, Henry M. Knapp, "Protestant Biblical Interpretation," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. General Editor Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 633. The view of interpretation in the first 200 years of Protestant orthodoxy was that meaning was found in the words of Scripture because they are considered divinely inspired.

² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today," in *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite and David F. Wright (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 149. Vanhoozer does not use the word 'conundrum' but discusses the concept of God's speech in the text. A significant part of his object in the article is for the 'left' and 'right' of Evangelicalism to realize that what they both seek is an understanding of how God has spoken in the scriptural text. Hence in any view of Protestant evangelicalism the conundrum exists as inherent in the text.

epistemological methodology in the modern period failed to establish the validity of the idea of an absolute meaning in dealing with texts. Since meaning is directly related to intention, the fluidity and lack of absolute meaning in the interpretive side of the hermeneutical equation tended to imply that, although an author had an intended meaning, this meaning is lost to the interpreter. Hence, meaning became viewed as a function of texts in their attachment to readers. Therefore, a third issue, though not immediately apparent, is that of the nature of the entity of the author's text. The text is what the author writes and is the vehicle of the author's message. It is also the only avenue presented to the reader to receive the author's message. Its very nature is at the heart of this issue of a reader's meaning in dealing with an author's text.

Consequently, in the current environment if God is proposed to be able to speak through the author, then in current theory, this voice becomes lost to the reader unless a special hermeneutic is devised. The result of this line of thinking is that the person pursuing an understanding of the divine author is seen to be operating outside general hermeneutics. The consequence of this presupposition is the marginalization of authors and readers working on the basis of belief and hence their exclusion from debate on issues in the 'real world.' It can and must be conceded that an interpreter cannot know with absolute certainty the authorial meaning, either human or divine, and further that meaning in relation to texts is not uniform across the spectrum of readers or their communities. Hence, epistemology has led further away from the idea of authorial discourse, despite valiant attempts to find correspondence between what is observed in terms of meaning and the seemingly logical concept that an author intentionally discloses an understanding in their composition.

However, does this itself imply that an interpreter cannot know a relative value of that authorial voice in their own setting within time? Further, can the interpreter on the one hand realize that they cannot know the absolute value, i.e. the God's eye view of reality, yet have a degree of confidence that they can know a relative value of the absolute in their setting, i.e. the God's eye view of reality from their perspective? If epistemology has led away from the voice of the author is this the direction that must be taken or is there another way of approaching these issues that can value both the relative value, via epistemology, yet know

that the process has involved listening to an authorial voice? Finally it must be asked, is the following concept put forward a valid one, i.e. that general hermeneutics is a separate category that avoids the presuppositions involved in hermeneutics that are perceived as having a specialized agenda, such as biblical or theological hermeneutics? The purpose of this thesis is to look at these areas and examine the hermeneutical process to seek an answer to this seeming impasse, so that both the author and interpreter can approach a text with confidence in an ability to communicate in the writing and the reading. It is also, as a result, an examination of the legitimacy of the marginalization of an author or reader operating under a presupposition of belief. These issues are important to the Christian who seeks to encounter and deal with the voice and message of God, believed associated with the biblical text. However, these issues are also important to any interpreter if there is in fact an authorial voice that should be listened to. It also is important if the concept of general hermeneutics is an abstraction, and consequently, hermeneutics is always conducted from within a set of presuppositions that of necessity involve a dimension of belief. In this case no interpreter engages in the ideal of general hermeneutics, but all make use of the basic principles and methodologies in the pursuit of hermeneutics within their presuppositional understanding.

1. Separating Sacred and Text: A Fallacious Argument

A solution to the conundrum could be to consider the concept that God has spoken in the biblical text as a theological issue not a hermeneutical issue, i.e. that the nature of the text as sacred is a different category to the text as literature. Such a solution would have the attraction of making possible a separation of the message of God and the human message. A special hermeneutic would enable a reader to deal with the message of God and general hermeneutics the message of the human author. However, this has the disadvantage of fracturing understanding and interpretation of the life-world of a person. An alternative solution is to look at what a text is and does, how it relates to any intention of an author, and subsequently how, in dealing with the written communication, an interpreter arrives at meaning.

The words of the text are always accepted as having been authored by fully human people who lived in history, yet at the same time the text is considered to be the Word of

God.³ The basis of resolving the paradox will be found in answering the conundrum, i.e. how God has spoken in relation to the text. If this is not to be regarded as developed in a special hermeneutic, designed for sacred texts in general and the biblical text in particular, then the answer must be developed from the basis of how any author can be seen to speak in their literary communication.

The orthodox view, as the starting basis of the Protestant and hence evangelical position, is that this Word of God has occurred because God inspired⁴ the authors to write their text.⁵ Innovations by academic scholarship in hermeneutics during the Renaissance led to pursuit of a literal sense of scripture that was seen as precise.⁶ The critical methodology that developed in the Enlightenment focused on the historical context and led to the meaning of scripture being sought in the reality of persons and events in history.⁷ This inscriptive revelation was proposed not to have come to humanity immediately but mediately through historical events.⁸ Ladd says of scripture that it is "...God's word spoken to men, and then expressed in the words of men."⁹ As a result, though held in the domain of belief as divine in origin, it is received as a text written by people and about people who lived in historical contexts.

Fee states that because of this view of the biblical text "...as human words in history the eternal word has historical particularity."¹⁰ The Word of God was addressed to, and conditioned by, a specific historical context.¹¹ The language used in this communication is

³ Stylianopoulos, 555. The author specifically states that in the Orthodox Christian view of interpretation the nature of Scripture involves this paradox.

⁴ A. K. M. Adam, *Making Sense of New Testament Theology: "Modern" Problems and Prospects*, ed. Charles Mabee, *Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics* 11 (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995), 65. Acceptance or non-acceptance of the doctrine of inspiration is not germane to a discussion of the impact of belief on the author and audience, since that impact is real and describable. This issue is not what the interpreter believes, but the author. At this stage the argument begins with the concept of the doctrine but will develop out from this position to argue an impact that cannot be ignored on the basis of doctrinal positions held.

⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology: One Volume Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 199. Erickson states: "By inspiration of the Scripture we mean that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God."

⁶ Knapp, 633.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man*, trans., Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 178.

⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 84.

¹⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1991), 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

not a specialized religious language but can involve a specialized use of ordinary language.¹² The example given by Thiselton is that 'hearing God' is not a special word for hearing but a special meaning of the word 'hearing.' This would imply that a specialized hermeneutic need not be seen as demanded by the nature of the text. It is not necessary to develop a specialized hermeneutic but rather recognize that a specialized use of hermeneutics can be employed.

Thiselton takes up the point of other authors that faith should not be seen to constitute another avenue of knowledge outside the processes of human understanding.¹³ He notes that the Holy Spirit, as the divine agent of the text, works through these processes of human understanding, if not entirely, certainly in the majority of situations.¹⁴ If not then the strange situation would exist where, for understanding of the text to occur, the scripture calls for a presupposition of the faith it seeks to create.¹⁵

Any proposed answer involving separation of sacredness and text as a solution to the conundrum assumes, at the very least, a 'super' human understanding of that which is sacred. It would also assume that texts not directly designated as being 'sacred' texts possess no 'belief' dimension in their nature nor involve a 'belief' category of knowledge. However, Kuhn observes that within scientific communities people "whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice."¹⁶ Kuhn further notes that this commitment "...and the apparent consensus it produces *are prerequisites for normal science...*"¹⁷ They are committed to a "body of belief" that is not determined alone by observation and experience.¹⁸ The conduct of researching "normal science" is based upon acceptance by the researcher of "*past scientific achievements.*"¹⁹ These furnish a foundation on which the research can proceed.²⁰

¹² Anthony C. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 531.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁶ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Hence the researcher begins with a belief and the research results are examined in the light of these beliefs. As a result this 'belief' impacts the process and is subsequently also impacting how the results are interpreted. How that "body of belief" in the scientific community is developed may not be either apparently, or overtly, metaphysical in a sense that would be understood in the domain of onto-theology, but it does involve belief, which implies a metaphysical dimension that is operational within those who conduct the scientific research. It is simply just not acknowledged. Consequently, it would seem that any texts generated by a scientific community involve a belief dimension, which, if 'belief' and text are always to be regarded as separate categories, should be subject to special hermeneutics in respect to the domain of belief. Similarly any historian holds beliefs and the recorded history and these beliefs will impact the selection and presentation of material set out as history, which by the same reasoning would require separation from the text. Yet no one would propose such distinctions be made with either scientific or historical texts.

Furthermore, an inherent assumption in any separation of sacredness and text, for hermeneutical purposes, is that, in dealing with a text, an interpreter is capable of conducting hermeneutical enquiry *a-belief*, i.e. without belief or belief-less. It is proposed that belief is a part of the presuppositions of every person, consequently of any interpreter. It is well recognized that no interpreter approaches the task of hermeneutics presupposition-less.²¹ It would seem illogical to suppose that the presuppositions of an interpreter included no presuppositions about belief. The assertion that belief should be, or even can be, removed from the text for hermeneutical purposes is therefore proposed as a fallacy. The conundrum of scripture is not solved by such a proposed solution.

An interpreter cannot have imposed on them Christian belief as a prerequisite for hermeneutics, but they also cannot ignore or avoid the belief dimension of the presuppositions of the author and intended audience of the text. Especially if, as in the case of the biblical text, authors understood and believed themselves to be directly under a divine influence in what they had written, which by the above reasoning is directly impacting the

²¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1980), 114. See also, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 19. Vanhoozer notes that postmodern critics and philosophers have exploded the myth of the neutral observer.

text.²² This divine influence would constitute an integral part of the text, due to the belief domain of the author, which cannot be separated from the text in respect to meaning. It is therefore important to examine how such an influence would operate upon an author and how it is to be hermeneutically evaluated.

These original human authors of the biblical text spoke to their own time and were not focused on future audiences, or readers, even where they saw themselves as writing scripture.²³ However, it could not be argued successfully that they had no idea or thought of future audiences. Nevertheless, even if the primary focus of an author were that of a future audience it would also seem logical that the presuppositions of the author about the future audience would be in terms of an audience known to the author. Consequently, considering a text from within the *Sitz im Leben* of that text is an essential element of the hermeneutical process.²⁴ The writers belonged to their own time and their texts are addressed to specific people and their intent is understood in that context. Consequently, if any impact of authorial intent is to be associated with the text then any understanding of a divine communication must develop from this position, i.e. that interpretation involves the situation in which the author spoke and it also involves a domain of belief knowledge understood by the author.

2. The Paradox: An Issue of Authorial Intent

The paradox occurs because the humanly authored scripture is proposed to be at the same time both a human communication, due to authorship in the inscriptive process, and a divine communication, due to a guiding inspiration of the human author in the inscriptive process. Any assertion that a divine author, through inspiration of the human author, had an intention either other than that of the human author or beyond that of the human author, would suggest a special hermeneutic is required, e.g. concepts such as *sensus plenior* or fuller meaning. This could be seen to be a way of resolving issues such as Paul's use of Hosea in Romans 9:25-26, which is a prophetic text he uses to legitimize the calling of the Gentiles into

²² Erickson, 199. This is integral in the concept of inspiration, in orthodox Christianity, so rendering Scripture as sacred text. Scriptural texts that can be seen to support this view are Heb. 1:1-2 and 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

²³ I. Howard Marshall, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology: With Essays by Kevin J. Vanhooser and Stanley E. Porter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 15.

²⁴ Krister Stendhal, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962). The importance and critical nature of the historical setting as the beginning of hermeneutics is the theme of his article. He notes that all branches of theology should depend on this historical underpinning, 421.

covenant relationship. It would be difficult to place this intent within the scope of Hosea's intent, whose address concerns the Northern Kingdom, or Israel, in the days of the divided kingdom.²⁵

Alternatively, an assertion that the meanings are coincident, and therefore, what the human author intended is the divine intention, whilst providing a means for resolving the paradox, would result in the equation that, in regard to scripture, 'what it meant' for the past audience equals 'what it means' for the contemporary audience. This approach would require the world to be mono-cultural or that the established Kingdom of God in this world is to be mono-cultural and hence requiring a special hermeneutic to overcome problems such as those associated with the historical particularity of the scripture. It also fails to address the horizon of the interpreter and their historical particularity. Therefore, it is suggested that it is more profitable to seek an alternative understanding to either of these options.

The very concept of intentionality concerning the text, be it the message of either the divine or human author, raises the issue of authorial-discourse interpretation and at the other end of the scale reader-response interpretation. If the authorial intent is either undetectable or absent then a special hermeneutic will be required in the reader-response situation in order to understand the message of God, which cannot be detected as part of an authorial discourse and must now be directly communicated to the reader. The paradox would exist in the reading, regardless of any paradox involved in the writing.

Consequently, avoidance of resorting to an appeal for a special hermeneutic will require an understanding of how, firstly, any author communicates in their literary communication. However, the problematic is that this has the apparent implication of involving a knowing of the mind of the author. Secondly if, in answering the conundrum of scripture, a voice other than the literary author's is detectable as impacting the author of a text then how does this voice speak through the author's text? In the case of the conundrum of scripture the special use of hermeneutics would involve identifying the voice other than the author's with the person of the Holy Spirit. In the case of the paradox of scripture the special

²⁵ The address concerns Israel, e.g. see Hos. 1:4 & 3:1, yet 1:11 shows that this is not the united Israel but the divided kingdom that became known as Israel and Judah.

use of hermeneutics would be recognition of the 'mind of Spirit' or the 'mind of Christ' conveyed in the text.

All of this raises the question of intentionality, since the paradox is caused by the inherent assumption that a literary text involves an authorial intent, which in the case of scripture in the first instance, in terms of approaching the scriptural text, is a human author. If the divine author is speaking through the human author and not just to the human author, then the divine and human authorial intent are intertwined. If meaning is a function of the reader without respect to any authorial intent there is no paradox in regards to the text. Any paradox is resident within the reader and is a function of the reader's interpretation of the text.

(a) The Issue of the "Intentional Fallacy"

If authorial intent is seen to be a factor in the creation of their texts then authors' texts cannot be understood in the present, if not first understood in their own time and context.²⁶ Esler discusses the "Intentional Fallacy" argument raised by Wimsatt and Beardsley that has been used to undermine the hermeneutical importance of authorial intent.²⁷ He correctly observes that Wimsatt and Beardsley themselves pointed out that their concept applied to poetry specifically, and works of art generally. They also noted that, in what they called practical texts, authorial intent was vital.²⁸ Nevertheless, this admission was largely overlooked in the desire to use the concept of the "Intentional Fallacy" to diminish the emphasis on authorial intent in dealing with texts.

The observation of Wimsatt and Beardsley was that authorial intent was neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the *success of a work of literary art*.²⁹ However, there are some observations that can be made that are important. Firstly, a work of art generally interacts with the subjective dimension of a person, which is both personal and individual, as a response to a work. It is a subjective personal evaluation of the work of the author, for which response the author has offered their work. As such the eliciting of a

²⁶ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 55.

²⁷ Philip F. Esler, *New Testament Theology: Communion and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 92. See fn 29 below for the text to which Esler refers.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁹ W. K. Wimsatt Jr., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 3. (Italics added for emphasis) Wimsatt notes at the beginning of the book that the first two preliminary essays were written in collaboration with Monroe C. Beardsley. This essay on "Intentional Fallacy" is the first of those essays.

subjective response could be argued to fall within the domain of authorial intent. It would seem that an inherent assumption in their argument is that authorial intent, as it relates to the work of art, does not include eliciting the response of the subjective domain of the interpreter. However, they note that the meaning of a poem attaches to a person in regard to their personality or state of soul.³⁰ This is clearly the readers' subjective domain. It would also seem to be logical to assume that this is part of the authorial intent.

Further, it should be noted that, like Ricoeur,³¹ they focus on the detached nature of the text from the author who created it.³² Although they do not state it, their assumption and reasoning is similar to that of Ricoeur,³³ they therefore consider the text autonomous with respect to the author. This concept is discussed later in this work relating to the assertion of Ricoeur, but it is sufficient to point out that there is a high degree of difference between the concepts of being detached and autonomous. Detachment is temporal while autonomy is not only temporal but also authoritative, and on this score they do not establish autonomy. This will be proposed as not established in the work of Ricoeur either; with the result that the authorial intent is not easily dismissed. Detachment alone cannot be used as a reason for dismissing authorial intent, but autonomy could be used in this way.

In regards to a poem they also point out that if the poet succeeds in their intention then the poem itself shows this and there is no need to ask a question concerning the author's intention. If the poet did not succeed then the poem itself is not adequate evidence and a prospective interpreter has to go outside the poem for an intention that was not effective in the poem.³⁴ This would seem to be the crux of the argument that those who seek to use this against authorial intent employ. There is an inherent fallacy in the argument itself. The only possibility of an interpreter knowing that an author didn't succeed in their intent would be to have that pointed out by the author. In the absence of the author they can conjecture that an author did or did not succeed and even compare this with other

³⁰ Ibid., 4.

³¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 43. Ricoeur discusses his concept of text detaching from the author and attaching to the reader.

³² Wimsatt Jr., 5. They do not mention Ricoeur, so the assumption must be they arrived at the same conclusion.

³³ Ricoeur, 29. Ricoeur specifically discusses the issue, that for him writing, and hence detachment from the author, leads to semantic autonomy of the text.

³⁴ Wimsatt Jr., 2.

interpreters, but it must still be conjecture. However, and perhaps most importantly, it is even a greater conjecture to say that an author had no intention in poetry, or in fact any work of art. No writer, including poets, or artist, would generally think of their work as meaningless. If the person evaluating the 'work of art' wishes to go beyond the subjective they must consider the intention of the author concerning their message.

There is no need to argue, as Esler does, that to circumvent this argument an appeal is made to consider the scripture as non-literary texts.³⁵ Esler argues, from the work of others, that to distinguish between literary and non-literary texts is viable and clear.³⁶ The examples used are not convincing of themselves, e.g. between a novel (literary) and a bus ticket (non-literary). The intent of the designer of the bus ticket is that it can be used to obtain bus travel and success in doing that fulfills authorial intent. Although a novelist in a fictional work may ask a reader to suspend their own belief regarding the relationship to their own reality, they do have a desire to entertain and draw the reader into the belief domain of the story, and if that occurs the intent is fulfilled. The intent of the author, in a fictional work, would not seem to require that the readers undertake integration of the belief domain of the text into their own reality. Conversely, the author of a non-fiction novel, e.g. a biography, is most concerned about the readers understanding their intent, and their intent is that the readers interact with the text within the sphere of the reader's belief domain.

Esler's use of Gadamer's work, in understanding 'play' and art, to suggest that the removal from reality in novels, as literary works, distinguish them from non-literary works and that this is not related to authorial intent, involves inherent presuppositions about authorial intent.³⁷ It presupposes that the authorial intent is not just such intent, i.e. an intention that the reader suspends their own belief world and instead enters that of the world of the text. If the authorial intent is that the reader 'escapes' the mundane and the reader does precisely that then the authorial intent is fulfilled in that very aspect. It also presupposes that authorial

³⁵ Esler, 88-118. This the concept developed in this chapter of his book and his proposal is that the texts of Scripture qualify as "practical texts", as per Wimsatt and Beardsley, and as a result authorial intent can and should be considered, even in the light of the work of Wimsatt and Beardsley.

³⁶ Ibid., 91.

³⁷ Ibid., 96.

intent and authorial meaning in the text are identical.³⁸ In Esler's work the distinction between literary works and non-literary works and the subsequent movement of scripture to the non-literary category is not convincing.

There would seem to be a real concern that the narratives of scripture will become distinguished from the rest of scripture if this view is taken. Even if scripture were taken as non-fiction and therefore non-literary, which becomes hotly disputed in some views of the text, the tendency would still seem to limit the author's ability to speak through the text. There would be a concern that, in this case, an authorial intent restricted to descriptive categories will be rendered mute to other than a purely descriptive sense.

Esler raises the concept that non-literary texts point to issues outside the text and seeks to move readers into these issues.³⁹ However, it is not outside the realm of possibility to assume that the author of a novel may intend to direct readers to issues outside the text. A novelist may use a work of fiction to espouse virtue or metaphysical issues, e.g. allegory and myth. This would fall within the domain of authorial intent that the author would not like to see lost.

In discussing the role of the author and authorial intention in literary and non-literary texts he mentions Vanhoozer's claim that in dealing with the biblical text literary knowledge is possible.⁴⁰ He then takes note that Vanhoozer mentions a quote from C. S. Lewis that is seen as warning "against reading the bible as "literature.""⁴¹ He seems to be implying that Vanhoozer's mention of Lewis contradicts Vanhoozer's own concept that literary knowledge is possible. Vanhoozer notes that the very concept of literary knowledge is ambiguous as it can refer to knowledge about or gained from a text.⁴² The quote from C. S. Lewis refers to the issue that to read the Bible as literature may ignore the subject matter as an inherent context.⁴³ This should not be ignored in methodology. Given Vanhoozer's concept of literary

³⁸ It is proposed in this work that a distinction should be made between authorial intent and authorial meaning. This distinction is considered later in the work. Authorial meaning does indeed relate to the text and has as its referent the authorial intent. For example, in the case of a novel, the authorial intent is to capture the reader and entertain; consequently the text is designed to fulfill that intent.

³⁹ Esler, 97.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 90.

⁴¹ Ibid., 91.

⁴² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 24.

⁴³ Ibid., 157.

knowledge, this is within his concept and is not a contradiction and is seen as supporting literary knowledge in dealing with scripture; the admonition is not to rely on methodology alone in dealing with the text, i.e. the scriptures theological nature cannot be ignored.

It seems arbitrary to make the distinction of Scripture as non-literary text without more careful investigation. It also seems unnecessary to undertake such a distinction on the basis of an argument aimed at restoring authorial intent, since there is no real reason to see it as lost in literary text, or literary knowledge; the issue is how the text is handled in regard to authorial intent. However, the “Intentional Fallacy” argument, although attempting to trivialize the issue of authorial intent, does highlight two important issues concerning authorial intent. The argument shows that it is know-ability and not existence, which is the real area of contention, and this issue of the disclosure of authorial intent is important and must be investigated. Secondly, it also highlights that the only place this can be dealt with is the text, hence the nature of the text is critical and must also be investigated.

(b) The Human Authorial Intent as Primary Task

Marshall, representing an evangelical position, agrees that any approach to a contemporary understanding of a text must have as its origin the attempt to understand it in its original setting, and therefore deal with the meaning of the original human author.⁴⁴ However, the focus of contemporary interpreters in any era is a relevant understanding of the message of the biblical text for their own contemporary setting.⁴⁵ Therefore, the contemporary interpreter in order to address the issue of what the Scripture *does* mean must first address the issue of what it *did* mean.

If the biblical text is not subject to a special hermeneutic then the pursuit of what it did mean is the same as for any historic text. This is the basis of Stendhal’s contention that shapes the issues of “what did it mean” and “what does it mean” when dealing with Scripture.⁴⁶ It was noted above that there is a presupposition of divine influence upon the author. There is also an author’s presupposition of divine influence upon the intended audience that must be considered. This means that a special use of hermeneutics is required

⁴⁴ Marshall, 25.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁶ Stendhal. This is the subject matter of the article. Stendhal separates these as different tasks to be undertaken, essentially in isolation from one another. They are dealt with as two distinct questions.

in dealing with the impact of this influence on the author and their text by any interpreter. An understanding of the divine communication by means of a biblical text requires first considering the hermeneutical approach to a human author's communication by means of their text. The answer to the conundrum and resolution of the paradox will operate from the same base in the hermeneutical task, i.e. although requiring a specialized use of hermeneutics, it is not a specialized hermeneutic.

3. The Research Problem and Its Setting

The research is covered from the perspective of Protestant evangelical thought and as a part of the Pentecostal community. However, no interpreter is neutral in either belief or in the task of interpretation, so as to act as a normative position from which others should work;⁴⁷ all begin from a starting point of where they are, on engaging the text.⁴⁸ Having presuppositions doesn't exclude different ways of seeing the world.⁴⁹ Consequently, having presuppositions doesn't disqualify an interpreter, or require explanation and apologetic, as the path to understanding starts from where the interpreter is.⁵⁰

In consideration of both the conundrum and paradox, created by viewing the Scripture as the Word of God, the nature of the text is vital. Thiselton proposes that the nature of texts is the most radical question in hermeneutics, because interpretation doesn't rest just in the needs of the reader but more particularly on the very nature of the text considered.⁵¹ Consequently, how the text is viewed and operative in its function is highly significant.

The conundrum of Scripture is due to the primary assertion that an author can in some way intentionally communicate through a text. This immediately brings to the fore the issue of authorial intentionality. The related issue of the impact of belief and its subsequent communication draws attention to the nature of the text. Hence, the paradox, associated with the scriptural text, which is created by the view that the Scripture is at the same time both a human communication and a divine communication.

⁴⁷ Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics : Development and Significance*, Paperback ed. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994; reprint, 3rd 2002), 5.

⁴⁸ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 706.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Thiselton goes on to observe that the presuppositions held can encourage different ways of seeing the world.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 627.

⁵¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 49.

Therefore, the first question is; how does the human author communicate in relationship to the text? Consequently, any projection of divine communication relates in the first instance to answering this question of human communication. This question raises the issue of the nature of authorial intent's relationship to the text. If the authorial intent is located within the text, this implies that the solution of the paradox would require an explanation of how two authorial intents can be resident in the same text, without recourse to a special hermeneutic. Conversely, if the authorial intent is not located within the text then how is it related to the text? How can two authorial intents speak through the same text without one voice being subsumed by the other? Consequently, is theological hermeneutics a specialized hermeneutic developed to deal with adding a voice to a text? Alternately, is theological hermeneutics a specialized use of hermeneutics to deal with an operational voice other than that of the author? Thus consideration of the conundrum and paradox of Scripture can only be addressed by an examination of both the authorial intent and the nature of the text.

These primary issues of authorial intentionality and the nature of the text are those that will be pursued in this work. The purpose of the work is to show that they are vital in all texts, not just sacred text, and, consequently do not imply a special hermeneutic. In the course of the work the mode of the impact of belief on the author and hence the text is examined and this will offer directions to explore the special use that can be made of this in theological hermeneutics.

The apostle Paul, in using a text from Genesis, Gen. 15:6, as the basis for the imputation of righteousness by faith, quoted in Rom. 4:3, did not discover a text he did not know.⁵² What appears to have occurred is that his perception changed of the text he already knew. This is what is proposed in this work, i.e. a new perception of written text that leads to new understanding of authorial intent.

In order to establish a basis for the working assumption of the research, concerning how a text functions, the method used is to first put forward an analysis of five issues from within current debate. This process will take a more in-depth view of both authorial intent and

⁵² Though Paul was born in Tarsus he declares that he was raised from his youth in Jerusalem and studied under the rabbi Gamaliel, Acts 22:3. He declares that he was thoroughly trained and so it would defy credulity to suggest he had never read the text of Genesis before.

the nature of a text. The purpose is to establish a *prima facie* case for proposing the working assumption of this work.

Following the discussion of these issues and their related proposals the central thesis, concerning the issue of authorial intent and how written text should be viewed, will be developed. Consequently, the thesis statement of this work will be stated at the conclusion of Chapter 4, following the development and analysis of the five issues investigated. The succeeding chapters of the work examine the validity, impact and implications of this thesis statement. This research thesis is primarily descriptive in its approach but some suggestions will be put forward on possible directions in methodology.

Chapter 2

Literature Rationale

Introduction

The thesis concerns a proposal relating to authorial intent and is not based on a particular author and their body of work. The author as the creator of the text gives being to the composition. The recognition of the ontological nature of the authorial intent, established in this work, subsequently raises the issue of the being of the entity of the composition, which is considered in this work to be an entity to which the authorial intent gives being, and which, as an entity, is related to that of the text. Thiselton has called this issue of the nature of the text as the “most radical question of all in hermeneutics,” in the light of current debate and theories.¹ Another issue, related to the text and authorial intent, is the question raised essentially by the word intention itself, i.e. the concept of meaning of the composition. These issues must be examined in the twin approach of consideration of philosophical, hence theoretical and descriptive issues, and the practical issues of detection and understanding.

The approach taken in this work is to specifically deal with these issues and questions. As a result the works of the authors are encountered in the body of the text in dialogue concerning the issues and questions. Consequently, the term ‘Literature Rationale’ is chosen as a title for this chapter, since neither discussion of the authors, as individuals or a group, or their body of work is the purpose of this dissertation. As the basis of the rationale this is also the basis on which the selection of primary authors was made. There are subsidiary authors, whose work is drawn into the consideration of the topics by the primary authors, and their work will also be considered. There are numerous additional authors consulted, however, the authors discussed in the rationale represent the significant authors consulted.

The decision to investigate these issues as the basis of the work, rather than using the mentioned authors as the foundation, has led to a further inference being adopted. After some investigation and reflection the personal decision has been taken to conduct the investigation with, as directly as possible, the perspective of each author's composition,

¹ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 49.

hence text, on the issues under investigation. As a result of this personal decision secondary literature on the works of the authors concerned has not been pursued. The desire is to engage the authors directly on the subject matter, and hence, to understand and deal with their views on the issues under investigation. Where the authors are translated into English the Translator's Preface will often discuss issues of language, which together with resources such as native speakers and internet resources² make it possible to consider the author without the lens of the presuppositions of another author, on the author under discussion, or their body of work. The issue is the disclosed understanding of the author on the subject matter under discussion as revealed in their composition. It is an important contention in this work that it is the 'intentioned' composition that discloses the issues. Where the authors considered have engaged with the work of the other authors consulted on the subject matter, this form of secondary analysis has been considered. However, the issue remains the consideration of the author's viewpoint on the subject matter, or *Sache*.

1. Three Primary Authors

The central proposal to be established in this thesis is that the issue of authorial intent functions in the ontological interpretation of the entity of texts, i.e. *in disclosure of the being of the text*, and as a result is a task prior to epistemological interpretation, as a descriptive task, i.e. *in dealing with the content of texts*. These two tasks function together in disclosing the matter of the composition. The approach taken follows a consideration of authorial intent, together with related issues mentioned, and the 'being' of the composition and text, in the work of the three primary authors who have addressed these issues.

This work is written from within the Christian community and each of the primary writers place themselves within this community, regardless of individual persuasion within the broad community. Since the issue is first of all theoretical, and therefore a philosophical issue, the work of Anthony Thiselton is considered. Thiselton has dealt extensively with the work of various philosophers and their relationship to the task of hermeneutics. Thiselton has recognized that beginning with Schleiermacher, then Dilthey, and the subsequent direction of the development of hermeneutics, philosophical concepts became important, since a person

² Resources such as Google Translator to investigate common usage of language and Online Language Lexicons.

could be methodologically equipped but still not understand a text.³ Thiselton, though holding the view of authorial-discourse interpretation, does not address this issue of authorial intent at length in his works, but he does consider each of the other authors and their philosophical concepts involved.

Kevin Vanhoozer is an evangelical theologian who has been a passionate advocate for the retention of authorial intent in the task of hermeneutics. Vanhoozer contends that in dealing with meaning in relation to texts the author is not only the primary cause of its existence, but also the authoritative voice in determining what it counts as.⁴ An objective of his work, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, is to establish a methodology whereby the goal of interpretation is viable and meaning is in fact demonstrably and uniquely that of the author.⁵

Vanhoozer does not ignore the philosophical issues that impact this concept of authorial intent, acknowledging that in the background of this hermeneutical task "...lurks philosophical and theological issues that are all too often overlooked."⁶ He views his work in *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* as a normative treatment of this issue, therefore concerning methodology, but admits that there is a need to consider the descriptive (hence philosophical) issue, which concerns "...what actually happens in understanding."⁷ In what he admits is a rough generalization he proposes that the normative task is epistemological and the descriptive task is ontological.⁸ Hence, Vanhoozer, although recognizing the philosophical impact in relationship to interpreted meaning, is a proponent of the epistemological consideration of the concept of authorial intent as determinate in meaning of the text, independent of any particular interpreter. He notes in *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* that "meaning is independent of our attempts to interpret it."⁹

The third primary author is the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who together with Gadamer, stands as a significant philosopher in the development of hermeneutics in the postmodern

³ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 5. Thiselton also notes that the issue is that methodologies do not complete the hermeneutical process, 22.

⁴ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 228. In essence this concept of meaning related to authors is the theme of the book.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter: Hermeneutics and the 'Miracle' of Understanding," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17, no. 1 (Jan 2005): 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 11. As part of the preface to the book it shows his commitment to this issue in the hermeneutical task despite current postmodern theory, which he discusses at length in his work.

era. Thiselton regards Ricoeur important as a philosopher in the discussion of hermeneutics as, although holding Christian presuppositions¹⁰ as a believer, he nevertheless comes to the task without a “theological axe to grind.”¹¹ Thiselton notes that in Schleiermacher and Dilthey hermeneutics moved to include “interpretation and understanding of human persons, or that which is ‘Other’ in human life.”¹² As a result hermeneutics has flowed on to “a hermeneutics of lived experience,” and in the recent works of Ricoeur, within the postmodern paradigm, “we reach a hermeneutic of selfhood and of human action.”¹³ However, the problem is that this postmodern focus on personhood has focused on the interpreter and specifically excluded the author.

Consequently, authorial intention, as impacting hermeneutically in the issue of interpretation, is specifically rejected. In this Ricoeur is one of the strongest voices. In the written text “the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide.”¹⁴ Ricoeur regards that in the appearance of the written text the mental intention of the author and the verbal meaning of the text become separated.¹⁵ As an important figure in hermeneutics, in the development of postmodernism, his work on this issue must be considered.

(a) Anthony C. Thiselton

Thiselton has been a detailed and thorough exponent of the discussion of philosophers and their works in relationship to the processes of hermeneutics. He suggests that the work of philosophers provides tools that can prove useful but should not overrun the process.¹⁶ As a result his work interacts with all the other authors noted and is therefore encountered throughout the thesis. Thiselton advocates a willingness to consider the works of philosophers, noting with others that concepts that come from outside the biblical domain are neither, of necessity, wrong or inappropriate.¹⁷

¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans., Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 24. Ricoeur observes that the book *Oneself as Another* is written with an understanding of his own Christian faith and convictions, but not written from them. See also, Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde, trans., Kathleen McLaughlin (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 270. Ricoeur notes that he doesn't regard himself as dogmatic when it comes to theology.

¹¹ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 109.

¹² Anthony C. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise*, ed. Alasdair Heron & Iain Torrance, *Current Issues in Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 47&48.

¹⁴ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Thiselton's basic concept develops from the recognition that interpretation involves two sets of horizons that interact, those of the text and the interpreter.¹⁸ The concept of the fusion of these two horizons, drawing on the work of Gadamer, is important in the development of his work.¹⁹ In the work of both Thiselton and Vanhoozer, as evangelical authors dealing with this subject, the focus is the written text. Certainly this is what is presented to the reader/interpreter and so must be the point of origin of the task. However, this will lead to a problem within hermeneutics in dealing with intention. The concept of intention either relates directly to the agent, or what they have intentionally done. Relating intention directly to the agent carries the implication of engagement of the consciousness, or psyche, of the author. All the primary and subsidiary authors consider this concept, prevalent in Romantic hermeneutics, to be unsustainable in hermeneutical theory. However, the text can reasonably be seen to be what the author has intentionally done, i.e. it represents an authorial act, which both Thiselton and Vanhoozer focus upon.

It is in this vein that Thiselton sees the issue of authorial intention to be understood adverbially, as a qualifier of the action of the author.²⁰ However, the work of Ricoeur has taken note that when the concept of action is considered the ontology is not personal, as relating to the agent, but impersonal as relating to the 'what' of the action.²¹ This is the logical consequence of the very idea of an action, i.e. it concerns what is done. Hence, consideration of authorial intent primarily from its adverbial sense in hermeneutics, presents only a weak attestation to the author as agent.²² The focus is the 'what' not the 'who.'

The encounter with otherness in this situation becomes the encounter of an object, i.e. a 'what,' rather than a person. In Heidegger's ontological concepts every entity is either a "who," as existence, or a "what," which he termed present-at-hand.²³ The text would therefore be considered as a present-at-hand entity. However, in Heidegger all such entities are worldless,²⁴ and are unmeaning,²⁵ i.e. they neither mean, as intention, nor possess meaning.

¹⁸ Ibid., 15, 439.

¹⁹ Ibid., xix.

²⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 560.

²¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 60-1. This is the theme of the chapter.

²² Ibid., 68.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962; reprint, 1967), 71.

²⁴ Ibid., 81.

The text therefore is both worldless and unmeaning, as an entity in this conceptualization. Consequently, meaning is either a function of the author or interpreter, as the only entities capable of meaning. The issue of authorial meaning therefore becomes problematic, since meaning cannot be viewed as that of the person of the author. The direction taken in postmodern thought, under the influence of philosophers such as Gadamer and Ricoeur, is that of taking meaning as an issue of the interpreter, with the exclusion of authorial intent, therefore making any reference to authorial meaning invalid.

Thiselton does not specifically seem to endorse Heidegger's concept, having considered his work to some depth in a complete section of *The Two Horizons*, however, nor does he directly address or present an alternative proposal.²⁶ Thiselton does raise the issue of the entity of the text in observing: "The most radical question of all in hermeneutics concerns the nature of texts, because the decision to adopt given interpretive goals depends not simply on the needs of the modern reading community but also more fundamentally, on the nature of the particular text which is to be understood."²⁷ His discussion, however, considers the philosophical development, and doesn't consider the being of the text as an entity. The problem is that if the Heideggerian concept is adopted, either directly or by default, then the text has neither meaning nor a world, and to speak of either is misleading. This is an important issue investigated in this work.

Thiselton has noted that the concept of the formation of a comprehensive theory of meaning is unrealistic.²⁸ He is not expressing skepticism about the concept of meaning, simply noting that meaning cannot be developed as an idealized concept, instead there is a need to look at particular cases.²⁹ Thiselton expressed similar thoughts on the issue of understanding, noting understanding remains "a single, complex, interactive, process in which the interpreter's own developing understanding undergoes constant revision, modification and correction."³⁰ Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that the idea of a single universal meaning is not in fact possible; it also is not the endpoint that hermeneutics should be aimed

²⁵ Ibid., 193.

²⁶ This statement concerns that work of Thiselton that has been engaged in relation to this dissertation and does not cover all his work.

²⁷ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 49.

²⁸ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 530.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 559.

at. Therefore, it is important to consider the issue of understanding and meaning, if there is to be any relationship to the concept of authorial intention.

Whilst recognizing the concept of directedness related to intention in the speech-act theory, he does query the restricting of this understanding of intention to the paradigm of speech-act.³¹ Thiselton suggests four considerations in the modeling used in hermeneutical traditions.³² Firstly he supports the value of historical reconstruction as a valid context in many cases in relationship to meaning. He does recognize the importance of historical aspects in the hermeneutical task and his work deals with a range of authors on issues related to historical concerns. Secondly, he suggests recognizing that the concept of historical criticism does not imply only modernistic methodology. Thirdly, many biblical texts address a directed goal, which are identifiable as authorial intention, provided an adverbial understanding of intention is taken. Fourthly, he considers it a mistake to assume that Schleiermacher gave priority to authors over texts, whom Thiselton believes to be ahead of his time in recognizing that interpretation revolves around the two axes, those of the author and the linguistic.³³ Although authorial intention clearly relates to directedness in texts it is not totally resolvable in the impersonal ontology of the event.

Thus, the issue of the entity of the text as the composition must be taken further, and if authorial intent is to be recognized as integral to the task of hermeneutics, it is in need of re-investigation and re-evaluation. It is proposed in this work that the primary reasons for ambivalence and misunderstanding concerning authorial intent relate to its capture by epistemology, when its primary locus should be ontology.

Thiselton recognizes the importance of philosophical aspects due to the impact of the concept of horizons. He indicates that he prefers the concept of 'horizon' to that of 'presupposition,' in discussion of pre-understanding.³⁴ The concept of horizon implies an understanding in life, whereas that of presupposition expresses an idea of rootedness in beliefs and doctrines.³⁵ Thiselton states: "The horizon or pre-intentional background is thus a

³¹ Ibid., 560.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 45.

³⁵ Ibid.

network of revisable expectations and assumptions which a reader brings to the text, *together with* the shared patterns of behavior and belief with reference to which processes of interpretation and understanding become oriented.”³⁶ In this work although the word presuppositions is often used, it is used in the sense of Thiselton’s idea of horizons. The use of the word presupposition, though having philosophical baggage, does imply the application of cognitive processes as involved as well, which it is also important to recognize.

(b) Kevin J. Vanhoozer

As noted above, Vanhoozer represents the strongest contemporary voice, within Evangelicalism, if not in general, advocating the philosophical and practical importance of the author and their intention in hermeneutically dealing with a text. Whilst his discussion occurs within the Christian community his consideration is the concept of texts and textuality in general, i.e. what he proposes is not a special hermeneutics. It was noted in discussion of the work of Thiselton that what is highlighted in this whole argument is the nature and concept of the text. Vanhoozer agrees that any theory on interpretation concerns this vital issue of the nature of the text.³⁷ Vanhoozer defines a text as “*a communicative act of a communicative agent fixed by writing.*”³⁸ In another later work he noted of a text that it “is a set of marks (words) that fixes the meaning of the author.”³⁹ The result of this, concerning meaning, is that “meaning is located in the author’s intention to convey a particular message through signs.”⁴⁰

Vanhoozer sees within his thought a distinction from that of Hirsch’s consciousness. Firstly that this view of authorial intention and meaning is accessible publicly, whereas the author’s consciousness is not accessible in the absence of the author, and secondly that past acts are not only fixed by writing but also in history.⁴¹ In an attempt to avoid the question of consciousness he seeks to move the issue to the “communicative act.” However, as noted above in discussing the work of Thiselton, the attempt to move to the text through the concept of an act, though seemingly logical as the point of contact for the interpreter, brings the issue

³⁶ Ibid., 46.

³⁷ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 103. It is interesting that to discuss the nature of the text he specifically opts to not talk about meaning but the idea of the text.

³⁸ Ibid., 225. (Italics original)

³⁹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 314.

⁴⁰ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 43.

⁴¹ Ibid., 225.

of hermeneutics into the realm of the ontology of the impersonal event, highlighted by Ricoeur.

It also raises the issue of fixity of meaning, which is problematical as will be highlighted in this work, with the recognition that a changing audience results in an 'apparent' changing meaning. The real issue that will be exposed is that meaning is a cognitive reflective activity (it involves a knowing) that is unique to each person, with the result that the only 'person' who can know meaning in an absolute sense is the 'person' who is able to be somebody and yet everybody at the same time. Within the domain of belief systems this can only be God (where God is perceived as personal, or no such person who knows in this sense exists and all is indeed relative), and Vanhoozer admits that no one person enjoys the divine viewpoint in an absolute sense.⁴² It would seem prudent to seek an alternative concept of sameness for expression of the nature of intention. This is a feature of this work, i.e. a shift in emphasis from meaning to understanding as the criterion for discussion of sameness between communicator and receptor.

Whilst it can be agreed that there is a 'meant' of an author that is the antecedent of the text, i.e. the reason for the being of the text in the first place, to speak of fixity can only apply to the 'meant,' as a past situation. An author can have moved on and even revised their thinking, and can even have a differing meant in a later text; none of this alters the 'meant' that gave birth to the original text. Hermeneutics cannot interest itself in speculation or revision, since to do so is to not deal with the author's composition; it is indeed an attempt to deal with their consciousness. Stendhal placed the first task of hermeneutics, in relationship to meaning, to be that of the 'meant' of the author.⁴³ This would seem to be the actual quarry of Vanhoozer, who states, concerning the goal of interpretation, that it is "to reconstruct the single correct meaning of the text."⁴⁴

Yet, as was noted by Thiselton discussed above, the idea of a single correct meaning is quixotic. Heidegger has helped to bring light onto this issue that brings into focus why such an aim is quixotic. Heidegger points out that interpretation arises in the desire to bring within

⁴² Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 309. He notes that this results in the Word of God needing to be interpreted. Yet in this admission is the implication that meaning will therefore be unique to the interpreter.

⁴³ Stendhal, 419.

⁴⁴ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 76.

the domain of one's own horizon (in the sense that Thiselton uses this word as noted above) that which has been understood, e.g. in a communication. Heidegger states this in the following way; he asserts that in interpretation "understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it."⁴⁵ Gadamer saw that the higher truth of hermeneutics is that of translation, in that it makes what is foreign (the issue of understanding therefore is prior in the very concept of perception of something as foreign) one's own.⁴⁶ Interpretation doesn't destroy or simply reproduce it, but explicates the matter within a person's own horizons, thereby "giving it new validity."⁴⁷ Meaning relates to what Gadamer calls this "new validity," i.e. to express this in the thought of Heidegger it is the disclosure to one's self so that what was foreign now is one's own and intelligible to oneself.⁴⁸

Consequently, meaning is a personalization and therefore unique to each person, hence any attempt at universalization is indeed quixotic. Vanhoozer seems to essentially acknowledge this in his recognition that meaning is related to persons, not inanimate objects.⁴⁹ The text is not a person, and unless a new conceptualization of the nature of the text and the composition is developed, as is a purpose in this work, Vanhoozer is faced with the fact of seeking meaning in what is unmeaning. Furthermore, meaning which belongs to a personal ontology is then sought in the ontology of the impersonal event, as noted by Ricoeur. His attempt to traverse this impasse, and avoid being caught in this quixotic state, is shown in his attempts to connect meaning and the text. In Vanhoozer's thinking a text is "the site for a work of meaning."⁵⁰ This results in a situation where his desire is to access the meaning that existed in the author, and the text is the means to this end, which is a similar contention to Stendhal. Yet, he recognizes that: "To believe that there is a meaning in texts is, as we shall see, an act of faith."⁵¹ The faith is communicated in language, which is "a kind

⁴⁵ Heidegger, 188.

⁴⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans., & edited by David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California, 1976), 94. The parenthetical comment is an observation, which seems to be the thrust of his comment on hermeneutical consciousness, in his observation that its power is the ability to *see* what *is* questionable, 13. (Italics added)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, 193.

⁴⁹ Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 26. This is similar to Heidegger's conception of being as related to either a 'who' or a 'what.'

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 30.

of sacrament, a means of communicating meaning through verbal signs.”⁵² If he is not proposing a special hermeneutic in using the word sacrament, then his idea must relate to the concept of connection of the outward and visible, the text, and the inward and spiritual or existential, as the author’s meaning. It is in essence a model of referencing that purports to make available the anterior meaning of the author so as to be directly accessible to the interpreter.

Vanhoozer’s concern is that in postmodernism, especially in deconstruction, absolute values are unobtainable and there is a loss of transcendence in the loss of the author and their meaning. In a desire to illustrate this sort of thinking Vanhoozer uses as an analogy that of moving from Newtonian mechanics to an Einsteinian view.⁵³ The direction of flow he is suggesting is that of Newton representing the book as the unity and stable meaning, and that of Einstein the autonomous text, which is a “field of shifting forces.”⁵⁴ His decrying of a ‘special relativity’ theory of hermeneutics strengthens this view of seeing this shift as a negative development.⁵⁵ However, how this analogy has been used actually misunderstands the nature of the work of Einstein. The work of Einstein actually showed that the basic premise of Newtonian mechanics was wrong.⁵⁶ Newton based his work on the assumption of a point of absolute rest and his theories were based on this, whereas Einstein was able to show that this observation and theory was actually a relative situation.⁵⁷ As such Newton’s concepts worked within a frame of reference but not outside it, hence it was a limited view. The key to Einstein’s theory was his critical insight that the speed of light in a vacuum was constant, independent of the frame of reference of the observer.⁵⁸

Therefore, to find the relative situation at any point requires access to an absolute constant reference point, which by nature transcends as independent of an observer, which in Einstein’s work was the speed of light. Placing the Bible in the Newtonian reference is locking

⁵² Ibid., 31.

⁵³ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁶ Michael Polyani, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Revised ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 10. Polanyi states that he personally spoke to Einstein who confirmed that his theory was not the result of investigating empirical data but developed from theory alone, although since its inception it has proven a reliable reference point in science.

it into a view that has a flaw. The absolute is placed in the wrong system. Newton placed the absolute in space but Einstein realized that anything in space was relative and the absolute was independent of space. Texts can in fact be a 'field of shifting forces' that can provide relevant relative value, provided there is an absolute point of reference. In the work of Vanhoozer the absolute point of reference for meaning in the biblical text is the meaning of the human author; to reiterate his dictum on the goal of interpretation, it is "...to reconstruct the single correct meaning of the text."⁵⁹

However, this places the absolute in the wrong frame of reference. The shifting field is in fact the concept of meaning, i.e. meaning is always relative, being unique to each person. The issue becomes: to what is it relative? It is quite logical to believe that an author had a meaning when they wrote their text, and having existed it exists, as an absolute as the antecedent of the text. However, in reality the author's meaning is also relative to his or her own situatedness and horizons. It is a temporal entity and exists only within that horizon. As noted above it is quite conceivable that an author will review and revise their text, hence indicating a change of meaning. This can continue, as Vanhoozer has noted, as a shifting field of forces. The problem occurs because of the perceived domain of the absolute as related to meaning.

Vanhoozer declared the text a site of meaning, however, the site of something is where it is, not the sign that points to it, or references it. The site of a house is where the house actually exists as an entity. Therefore, to proclaim a text as a site for a work of meaning places meaning at the site, i.e. it places meaning actually in the text, not just referenced by it. This situation cannot occur unless the consciousness of the author, in the person of the author, exists at the site. This is not the case. Clearly this implication is not what Vanhoozer himself intends, since he acknowledges the author's meaning as anterior to the text. The very idea of authorial-discourse interpretation assumes a representative nature of the text in relationship to intention. Furthermore, this modeling has not overcome the problematic of the individual and unique nature of meaning. Whilst, if absolute meaning exists, it is then possible that two individuals can have the same meaning, it must however be

⁵⁹Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 76.

considered as improbable. Also, since to each the meaning appears unique, who or what can mediate showing sameness? The question therefore is; what can exist as an entity at the site whose whole *raison d'être* is to reference or disclose that which is other than itself, and that is itself related to the cognitive issue of meaning, in such a way as therefore having itself the appearance of meaning?

The analogy that suggests itself for such an entity is the picture, especially the photograph. The picture, as a work of art, like all works of art is not directing the observer to its referent, e.g. scenery (as in a landscape) or person (as in the case of a portrait or statue). Rather the object is, knowing the referent, to then observe that which references, i.e. the work of art itself is the object to be viewed. However, the photograph, though it can be raised to the level of work of art, generally has the purpose of directing attention to what is disclosed in the photograph. The object is to see what the photographer saw. In the case of an event, if the photographs are close together in timing, the observer can, in the domain of their imagination, even 'see' the event. This is not a recreation of the event as an event, nor a re-living of the actual event; it is itself a new event, or performance of the original event. This indicates that within human being is an aspect of consciousness that is ontic in nature, in that it discloses the entities viewed as having being so that they are 'seen' as entities within a world.

In Heidegger's development, understanding is existential being that functions in disclosing.⁶⁰ The realm of the absolute may be more properly pursued in understanding rather than meaning, or to put it another way, in the idea of ontology rather than epistemology. An important aspect in this work is the disclosure of the ontological nature of authorial intent and its relationship to understanding, as the disclosure of what the author saw. Heidegger saw also that in understanding there is a tendency to relate what is understood as meaning.⁶¹ However, this in reality was the disclosure of entities in their being, meaning was the result of the process of personalization.⁶² Consequently, understanding presents as meaning, relates to meaning, but it can stand as distinct from it. Understanding

⁶⁰ Heidegger, 184-5. It will be suggested in the work following that this concept in phenomenology, if taken in the view of spirit as substance in being, becomes in essence an attribute of spirit.

⁶¹ Ibid., 192.

⁶² Ibid., 193.

is to see what the author saw, as a result the text can involve an entity that references in itself to disclose what the author saw.

It seems that in his later work Vanhoozer may have moved more in this direction in his own thinking. Vanhoozer's view is that Gadamer's central insight important to hermeneutics is that understanding is not due to methodology, but is an act of "the matter of the text," which happens to the interpreter.⁶³ This is primarily the development within hermeneutics of what Heidegger observed. Vanhoozer further notes that the miracle of understanding is undergirded by ontology.⁶⁴ However, it is in the same article that he notes that the normative task will relate to meaning.⁶⁵ The importance of his work is the powerful and articulate argument for the author and his intention. The problem for his work is that he searches for the absolute where it doesn't exist, searching within human temporality in meaning, and in particular his ontology is in the end locked into the ontology of the impersonal event. The issue of the nature of the text is paramount in the discussion. These concepts are pursued in this work.

(c) Paul Ricoeur

The work of Ricoeur has been extensively referred to in both the other primary authors' works. As a result there is no need to give an extensive account of his work here, it will be encountered in the unfolding work. As mentioned above Ricoeur has become one of the prime philosophers to argue against authorial intent in the hermeneutical task. It is this feature that is highlighted here. Ricoeur discloses the tradition and presuppositions that he places himself within, in the task of hermeneutics. In this consideration he notes it "remains within the sphere of Husserlian *phenomenology*."⁶⁶ The revival in hermeneutics that occurred under Schleiermacher considered "*what it is to understand*" as the central issue of hermeneutics.⁶⁷ It is in the exploration of understanding itself that led to hermeneutics being able "to graft itself onto phenomenology."⁶⁸ This pursuit of understanding is a theme in this work, and the ontological setting that comes through Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur is an

⁶³ Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 28.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans., Kathleen and Thompson Blamey, John B. (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 12. (Italics original)

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

important factor. In Ricoeur's view interpretation of texts is "the making explicit of this ontological understanding."⁶⁹ The implications of phenomenology, its view on being, especially in Heidegger, together with its limitations will be considered.

It is in moving into self-understanding (the making of one's own that which is foreign in the interpretive task) there is also a movement into epistemology.⁷⁰ This is more pronounced in Ricoeur than either Heidegger or Gadamer. This occurs as all self-understanding is "*mediated* by signs, symbols and texts" and "in the last resort understanding coincides with the interpretation given to these mediating terms."⁷¹ Not only the authors considered here but also numerous others have extensively dealt with Ricoeur's work in the areas of signs and symbols. Some aspects of these are considered in this work. However, it is following the issue under investigation in this text that is taken.

It is in the written text that there is a "threefold semantic autonomy" that the text as representing discourse acquires, which are those regarding authorial intention, the reception by the original recipients and the historical setting of its production.⁷² These are central and critical elements of Ricoeur's theory, and are discussed as they are encountered in the body of the text. For Ricoeur the task of hermeneutics is twofold: "to reconstruct the internal dynamic of the text, and to restore to the work its ability to project itself outside itself in the representation of a world that I could inhabit."⁷³ Both of these aspects of hermeneutics are consistent with Christianity; certainly there is also a vital interest in understanding as critical in Christian life.

The problem is not with the task but what he forsakes in pursuing the threefold semantic autonomy as a presupposition of the task, which is the central issue. The forsaking of these is on the basis of phenomenology as developed in Heidegger and Gadamer, which is questioned in this work. As noted above in considering both Thiselton and Vanhoozer, the phenomenological concept of being leaves the nature of the text as entity unexplored. Hence,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 17.

⁷³ Ibid., 18.

in all the primary authors considered the nature of the text is pivotal, and remains to be explored. This is an important task in this work.

2. Three Subsidiary Authors Considered

The subsidiary authors considered do not necessarily hold Christian presuppositions themselves. In their work their proposals and concepts would indicate that, if they are in possession of Christian presuppositions, it has not directly impacted their understanding of texts. Conversely, their understanding on the issues pursued in this work would seem opposed to such presuppositions in regard to the issues of the being and functioning of texts. Therefore, their voice in the process presents a balance on the questions and issues considered.

(a) Hans Georg Gadamer

Thiselton regards Hans Georg Gadamer as an important philosophical figure in the transition from the modern to the postmodern era; crediting him with facilitating the movement to a new paradigm in hermeneutics.⁷⁴ In Gadamer's opinion, in Romantic hermeneutics there was an over pre-occupation with historical criticism and authorial intention, which to him was the wrong direction.⁷⁵ Once the text becomes released the author becomes a reader with no more authority than any other reader in interpretation.⁷⁶ As an author standing in the phenomenological persuasion that has impacted postmodernism, along with Ricoeur, his work has itself had a significant impact on the movement away from the author's intention.

(b) Jacques Derrida

Whilst in Gadamer and Ricoeur there is a denial of impact of authorial intent not its existence, in Derrida and Deconstruction there is a denial of the author, hence authorial intent is a meaningless term. This is not a denial that there is a writer, but a denial of the concept of authorship, which has an obvious relationship to those of authorizing and creation of the text as a related to any meaning. Meaning, as a word, is closely related to intention and the words can in many instances be used interchangeably. Therefore, to talk about authorial intent is to speak of the author's meaning, and for Derrida anterior meaning can't exist in any

⁷⁴ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 314.

⁷⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1975), 153.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

way associated with a text.⁷⁷ The idea of anterior meaning that is related to the text is an issue of referencing, and for Derrida “*there is nothing outside the text.*”⁷⁸ In the thought of Derrida writing is “inaugural” and doesn’t know where it is going; meaning is its future, not its past.⁷⁹ In the deconstruction of the husk of metaphysics that envelops the text it is the author who is deconstructed, with authorial intent rendered a phantasm.

However, the importance of Derrida’s work is for what his argument in fact highlights and brings into focus. Thiselton noted that the path Derrida takes in developing his view of textuality is a philosophical one.⁸⁰ Derrida’s philosophical argument constitutes a virtual tirade against western metaphysics.⁸¹ Hence, Derrida’s argument against the concept of the author and authorial intent is an ontological argument. In so doing he exposes the ontological nature of authorial intent as it should be, and shows the link between author and the idea of the divine. Vanhoozer makes the incredible and ironic statement that: “*Deconstruction wholly inadvertently and with some irony, proves that God is the condition of the possibility of meaning and interpretation.*”⁸²

(c) Martin Heidegger

The work of Derrida brings to the fore the ontological nature of authorial intent. As a result any investigation of this aspect must interact with the work of Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time*. Heidegger stands in the direct line to Gadamer and thence to Ricoeur and Derrida, all of who espouse phenomenology as their presuppositional framework for developing their theories. Any investigation of the being of the composition and text must examine Heidegger’s views on these issues. Furthermore, Heidegger’s ontology considers not just the act of understanding but also the relationship of understanding to being.

⁷⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans., Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), 10.

⁷⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans., Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Corrected 1997 ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 158. (Italics original)

⁷⁹ Derrida, *Writing*, 11.

⁸⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 104.

⁸¹ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 3.

⁸² Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 198.

Chapter 3

The Conundrum and Paradox: A Way Forward

Part 1: Five Issues Impacting the Hermeneutical Process

Introduction

The conundrum raises the issue of the concept of authorial intent in relationship to a text as an author's communication, since it assumes this basis for the conundrum. The paradox raises the issue of the nature of the text in this communication, and the subsequent issue of the interpreter's meaning and its relationship, if any, to the author's meaning. This overall debate has traditionally related to the two ends of the issue, i.e. the author's meaning and the interpreter's meaning.

The very words intention and meaning are so closely associated that they can be used almost interchangeably. The concept of an author's intention, in Romantic hermeneutics, therefore became closely associated with the concept of author's meaning and subsequently to the issue of 'knowing' the author's meaning; thus becoming an issue of the authorial intent's relationship to the psyche of the author. It is contended in this work that what was not considered is the transformation of authorial intention, as related to the psyche of the author, into authorial intent, as related to the being of the composition.

The term authorial intent is associated with the psyche of the author at its inception, but is operational within the composition as related to the text. The use of the term in this work is concerned with its operational effects in the composition, not its association with the psyche of the author, from which it is detached. As a result it will be a central proposition of this work that the debate has focused incorrectly on the validity of sameness of meaning. It will be argued that the true focus should be that of sameness of understanding of author and interpreter. This concerns the issue of disclosure not acquisition of knowledge.

The following are five issues that have bearing on these concepts of the author's intention, the nature of the text and the issue of interpretive meaning.

1. A Changing Audience

Marshall has suggested that authoritative meaning can undergo change and is consequently a relative value to some degree. He states that the "...closing of the canon is

not incompatible with the non-closing of the interpretation of that canon."¹ Grenz notes that the intent of a biblical text begins in the original human author's intention but "...is not exhausted by it."² The efforts of any interpreter cannot "...exhaust the Spirit's speaking to us through the text."³ An authoritative meaning in one setting may have a different authoritative meaning in a different setting.⁴ This raises the question of what is changing and to what it is relative. The author, their historical context and the historical particularity of their intended audience do not undergo change in the case of historic texts.⁵

It has become generally recognized and accepted that an interpreter is also conditioned by their historical context; subsequently they bring their resultant presuppositions to the task of hermeneutics, which impacts their hermeneutical task.⁶ Though an interpreter may seek to accommodate their prejudices with respect to the text they must recognize that a "...completely detached unbiased stance is impossible."⁷ The contemporary interpreters, in any era, contribute something of themselves in pursuit of a hermeneutical task.⁸ Marshall observes that this problem should not be overemphasized and that, although absolute objectivity is not possible, a significant relative objectivity is possible.⁹

The presuppositions of both the author and the intended audience are not undergoing change with respect to historic texts. In Ricoeur's thought the act of composition of a written text fixes the temporal instance of discourse and the event of an author communicating by creation of a text, appears then disappears.¹⁰ However, the values of the presuppositions of

¹ Marshall, 54. Italics are original.

² Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 73.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Marshall, 56. The context of Marshall's comments is the uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

⁵ Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3 (September 2001): 458.

⁶ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 11. See also, Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, 26. Fee notes that every interpreter "brings to a text a considerable amount of cultural baggage and personal bias" and so possesses a relative objectivity in the task of interpretation. It was also previously noted that Vanhoozer sees that postmodern critics and philosophers have exploded the myth of neutrality.

⁷ Graham N. Stanton, "Presuppositions in New Testament Criticism," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1985), 62.

⁸ I. Howard Marshall, "Historical Criticism" in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 16.

⁹ Marshall, *Beyond the Bible*, 25. Consequently, a pragmatic, or relative, value is within the province of the interpreter.

¹⁰ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 26.

the author and intended audience are fixed in the creation of the text at that time of its creation.

The presuppositions of any unintended audience, which includes a contemporary interpreter with historic texts, will involve differences, especially since they are historically distanced from the text. The unintended audience is changing and this is what results in meaning undergoing an appearance of change. In such a scenario, the concept of authorial meaning can change due to the impact of the contemporary context and yet still be authoritative in its setting, as Marshall observed, e.g. morality may be the aim of the author but what acts are moral or immoral may vary with, and even within, a culture.

Consequently, it is proposed in this work that in the hermeneutical task an interpreter, who is not part of the intended audience, will impact meaning resulting in some degree of change of what they observe by the very process of observing it. Hermeneutics is generally understood to be the science and art of interpretation. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle, as one of science in general, would seem to be paralleled in hermeneutics as science.¹¹ If this principle of the impact of the observer resulting in some change, no matter how minimal, is accepted then the equation *what it meant equals what it means*, is not valid for the interpretation of meaning beyond the intended audience.

Furthermore, if recovery of the human authorial meaning as a pure absolute value is impossible, as Marshall has contended,¹² then it follows that the value *what it meant* concerning individual texts within the composition, as an absolute value, is also unrecoverable. The only authoritative voice that could eliminate uncertainty on the relationship of an interpreter's observed value of *what it meant* to the absolute value would be that of the author.¹³

¹¹ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 159 & 188. Thiselton notes that in the world of post-Newtonian physics, due to work like Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty, many scientists adopt a different approach to knowledge. The impact of this on hermeneutics in the area of objectivity and perception of reality should be considered. See also, Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 128. Vanhoozer takes note of the Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" in physical sciences and is concerned about the extension of this principle of physics into hermeneutical science.

¹² Marshall, "Historical Criticism," 16.

¹³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, trans., P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 126. The observation about a text being subject to possible changes by the reader, in the author's absence, that only the author can correct, is Gadamer's. His thought is that Plato must have understood this because of the inherent structure of his work. He discovers in Plato's work an unwritten dialectic that will continuously refer the reader from the 'one,' or whole, to the many parts. But these refer back to the one, so there is opportunity to correct the reader. However, it follows that if the author is the only one who can correct, the author is similarly the only one who can endorse a meaning.

The interpreter, from within the community of faith, may desire to raise the assertion that, since the text is the Word of God and the Spirit remains attached to the text, the divine author can be authoritative. This is a reasonable assertion within the context of faith. However, the interpreter would have to postulate one of two possible scenarios. The first course could be to appeal to a special hermeneutic. The speaking of the Spirit will still involve dealing with words since this is the medium of the Spirit in being able to communicate with the interpreter.¹⁴ Consequently, this postulates that the Spirit somehow speaks through the text other than through its existence as a literary text, i.e. suggesting the need for a special hermeneutic. This is what leads to a solution of the conundrum that has been adopted of the separation of sacred from text, in the case of sacred texts.

The second appeal could be made to phenomenology. In the phenomenological method the essential reality of a thing is intuited, i.e. it is "...apprehended by an immediate presentation of itself to the understanding."¹⁵ Anderson sees that the major problem is that phenomenologists are not able to describe a method in a way that discloses how intuition works.¹⁶ Hence, it would not be an exactly repeatable exercise for other interpreters. This sort of approach does accommodate the speaking of the Spirit to an individual however.

The Pentecostal concept of revelation appears similar to the phenomenological method.¹⁷ Raymond Brown's concept of *sensus plenior* (fuller meaning) also appears to be similar, in that it concerns revelation of a deeper meaning in the text not intended by the original author but seen by the contemporary interpreter. LaSor discusses Raymond Brown's concept of *sensus plenior*, which has been used to describe this concept of extending the meaning of the original human author. The *sensus plenior* is the additional meaning intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author.¹⁸ The human author does not intentionally pass on the *sensus plenior* even if aware of it.¹⁹ Gordon Fee does admit the

¹⁴ Monroe C. Beardsley, *Thinking Straight*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1975), 5. Beardsley asserts that all thinking is done in words and relies on articulation in a sentence for clarity and existence.

¹⁵ Gordon Anderson, "Pentecostal Scholarship and Learning in a Postmodern World," *Pneuma* 27, no. 1 Spring (2005): 118.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ William Sanford LaSor, "Interpretation of Prophecy," in *Hermeneutics*, ed. Bernard Ramm (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 106.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

possibility as 'revelation' of *sensus plenior*, but limits the occurrence to the inspired writers of the scriptural text.²⁰ His reasoning is: "Who speaks for God as an authoritative voice?"²¹

This simply brings the argument back to the issue as to the discerning of the authoritative voice of the author confirming an interpretation as absolute. This same caution and reasoning would apply to the interpreter who appealed to phenomenology to speak for the divine author. The nature of the biblical text does allow for phenomenological interaction, as Anderson noted, that impacts the individual, but clearly this cannot be generally applied beyond the individual.

Appeal to a special hermeneutic sets up theological hermeneutics as a separate branch, or discipline, of hermeneutics. However, if the Bible is indeed the words of men in history, as contended by Ladd, and God's intention is to communicate with humanity, it would seem He would work within human capabilities.²² Hence, rather than appeal to a special hermeneutic, or appeal to phenomenology theologically applied, it is preferable to identify how any author 'speaks' through their text in the hermeneutical process.

If the contemporary value of the 'what it means' of a text is tied to the historical value 'what it meant' an insoluble degree of uncertainty is introduced into the value 'what it means.' Thiselton observes that Gadamer devotes one third of *Truth and Method* to the issue of the 'pastness' of the past.²³ He also agrees with Gadamer that this pastness of the past cannot be dismissed or "exaggerated"; it is a significant issue.²⁴ Gadamer contends that the writer of history 'distant from the events' never gives a description of the world that was, but, rather it is the writer's interpretation, from within their own context, of the world that was.²⁵

A contemporary interpreter can voice an authoritative view on 'what it meant' as a prelude to 'what it means.' Marshall's observation that a significant relative objectivity is possible is valid. However, despite this assertion, a contemporary interpreter cannot be *the* authoritative voice on "*what it meant*" due to recognition of their own prejudices that form part of their presuppositions. The authoritative voice is no longer present. Hence there is

²⁰ Fee, 19.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 93.

²³ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 53.

²⁴ Ibid., 63.

²⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," in *Hermeneutical Inquiry: The Interpretation of Texts*, ed. David E. Klemm (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 181.

uncertainty concerning “*what it means*” if “*what it meant*” is understood to equal “*what it means*”. The degree of uncertainty in the determination of “*what it meant*” is irrelevant, since there is no clear authoritative voice on the degree of uncertainty, or where it lies, in the absence of the author. A slight degree of uncertainty may not be significant over a short period of time, but can become a much larger degree of uncertainty over a long period of time, if not allowed for.

If Marshall is correct then the degree of uncertainty need not be regarded as hindering a viable value of “*what it meant*,” on each occasion of interpretation. Nevertheless, the central point remains that no contemporary interpreter can make the assertion “*what it meant equals what it means*.” An absolute value of “*what it meant*”, though admitted to exist, is inaccessible to the contemporary interpreter as an absolute value in the absence of the author. Consequently any systematic search for certitude begins with uncertainty.

There is no unambiguous direct access to the authoritative voice, neither the divine nor the human, to either eliminate the degree of uncertainty or specify its nature. Since the answer to the conundrum of Scripture points the way to the solution of the paradox of Scripture, a re-evaluation of what is taking place in the process of hermeneutics, and the special use of this in theological hermeneutics, is necessary. The assertion “*what it meant equals what it means*” should be avoided as a dictum. The dynamics of why meaning appears to change in the case of an unintended audience, and how that change impacts contemporary understanding, need to be considered.

2. The Nature of the Authorial Intent: An Antecedent

(a) The Association with Composition

Vanhoozer’s approach to this issue is to assert that: “Meaning is independent of our attempts to interpret it.”²⁶ He appears to separate meaning as normative, being the author’s meaning, from understanding as descriptive, which is something that happens to interpreters.²⁷ Essentially it would seem that he simply wishes to separate authorial meaning from reader/interpreter meaning, due to their understanding. The above discussion recognizes this distinction, however the issue remains as to the recoverability of authorial

²⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 11. This forms part of his Preface.

²⁷ Vanhoozer, “Discourse on Matter,” 6.

meaning as an absolute value as a knowable criterion. Further what must be examined is whether authorial meaning equates with authorial intent.

It is proposed in this work that the term authorial meaning would indeed relate to an incidence of text but that the term authorial intent relates to the composition, or work, as a whole. This distinction between a composition and an incidence of text is important. The composition is a distinct entity, which is an issue that will be developed in this work, the idea of which is a development different from orality. Thiselton has noted the work of Walter Ong and others in describing a difference between orality and textuality.²⁸ A textual hermeneutic raises different hermeneutical dynamics to that of an oral hermeneutic and this should be considered in the treatment of texts.²⁹ Ricoeur has asserted that written text is a special case of discourse and in fact is the fulfillment of discourse.³⁰ In the written text the bearer of the message is now a non-human voice. Ricoeur asserts "material marks" now convey the message.³¹ Discourse can refer to both text and conversation or dialogue. However, if there is a hermeneutical distinction between textuality and orality then caution is needed in using the word dialogue, in specifying what it refers to.

Writing, and hence textuality, is a secondary modeling system dependent on a primary system of spoken language.³² Orality exists without textuality but the reverse is not true since textuality comes into existence out of orality.³³ However, Ong also states "...abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and reading."³⁴ The creation of the text leads to the concept of study, as primarily oral cultures don't 'study,' although they have extensive methods of learning and learn and possess great depths of wisdom.³⁵ Therefore, the written occasion of discourse directly into text, i.e. the composition, should be handled differently to the situation of oral discourse.

²⁸ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 56.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 25.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 2 ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 8.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 9.

Textuality begins as transcription of oral discourse and then moves to the idea of composition.³⁶ Ong states it is a false assumption that oral verbalization is essentially the same as written verbalization.³⁷ Consequently it seems valid to assert that it would be wrong to hermeneutically treat a composition as though it was simply a dialogue between the author and the intended audience. The hermeneutics of textuality invite a different dynamic to those of an oral hermeneutic.³⁸ The composition contains more than the transcription of propositional information. Ong states that to “make yourself clear without gesture, without facial expression, without intonation, without a real hearer, you have to foresee circumspectly all possible meanings a statement may have for any possible reader in any possible situation, and you have to make your language work so as to come clear all by itself, with no existential context.”³⁹

Further, the composition requires that the writer fictionalize the intended audience and fictionalize a mood for the context of the text.⁴⁰ In the same way the reader must fictionalize the author.⁴¹ The very word composition suggests the incorporation of the presuppositional world of the composer (author) in the creation of the text. The reader/interpreter must first imagine, and then directly deal with, this world of the text as a creation from the world of the author.

Thiselton notes that Ricoeur’s contention for the autonomy of the text is based on his observation that the reader is absent in the writing and the author is absent in the reading.⁴² Textuality, with the concept of author and reader, replaces the situation of dialogue where the communicator connects with the ear of the listener.⁴³ Ricoeur also recognizes this distinction in his philosophy, observing that the relationship “writing-reading” is not a case of the relationship “speaking-hearing.”⁴⁴ In the case of text the author seeks to communicate with the reader who is not present. The reader then seeks to understand the communication of an

³⁶ Ibid., 10.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 56.

³⁹ Ong, 104.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 102. Ong is not denying a real intended audience, but that for the purposes of writing the composition the writer creates a fictional audience in dialogue at the time of writing. This audience exists in the domain of the imagination of the writer.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 56.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 29.

author who is not present. In the situation of oral communication there are elements present that are not present in the transcription process, as Ong noted in the difference between orality and textuality. Hence, textuality requires composition for revelation of these elements that are not present in transcription in communicating with the reader. This composition is related to the text that is used by an interpreter in understanding the author's communication.

Consider the following example using initially the transcription of a statement: "You are to be congratulated on your realization of the truth presented before you." The locution can be seen to perform the illocutionary act of bestowing congratulations. However, if it were noted that the situation was political debate and the statement was made in a derisive tone the intent would be sarcasm. Conversely, if it were noted that the situation was a courtroom and the statement was made in the dismissal of a jury after a trial, and, further that tone was warm and respectful, then the intent would indeed be congratulations. The same locution performs differing illocutions and only composition seeking to paint the whole picture in words can enable the reader, absent to the dialogue, to see what the author of the text is saying and doing in their locution. This desire to communicate an understanding is the birthing of authorial intent and it is the composition that fulfils the authorial intent.

In this example there are three 'scenarios' of potential authorship. The speaker can become the author to explain to another party what took place. Secondly the object of the comment could become an author for the same purposes. Thirdly a witness or participant could become an author to describe to a third party how they saw the events. All three scenarios could conceivably supply differing compositions since in each case the writer of the composition is giving the view from their presuppositional world. This is simply what Gadamer is taking note of in his observations. The composition is written within the presuppositions of the author. The 'pastness' of the events when the author is historically distant from the events compounds this situation. In each case the purpose of the composition is to enable the reader to see the view of the author's presuppositional world concerning the events described. Once the text becomes an historic text the issue is historical meaning.

(b) Authorial Intent and Authorial Meaning: A Nuance of Difference

Vanhoozer asserts that the ultimate purpose of interpretation is to “...reconstruct the single correct meaning of the text”⁴⁵ where this single correct meaning is the author’s meaning.⁴⁶ He states, and thereby defines, interpretation as being “...the quest for meaning, that is, the author’s intended message.”⁴⁷ This statement implies that in his view authorial meaning equates with authorial intention. Vanhoozer considers the book to be the context of the text and as such a closed unit, enclosed by the will of the author.⁴⁸ However, it often seems that each incident of text is an encapsulation of authorial intent. When discussing the individual text his reference is also authorial intent. If this is the case, then his inherent assumption is that every instance of the text in the composition is a direct ‘enfleshing’ of the authorial intent.

A proposition in this work is that there is a nuance of difference between authorial intent and authorial meaning that is significant. Authorial intention is what the reader should understand from the communication. Authorial meaning is the inscription of that resolve that is the entity of the text, and as such includes the explanation and development of that intention. Authorial meaning, in regards to a text as a fragment of a composition, will not only relate to the authorial intent but also to the part the text plays in its immediate setting. Consequently, authorial meaning does relate directly to the text but authorial intention lies behind the authorial meaning and acts as its antecedent. In this situation, authorial meaning does remain attached to the text but authorial intent does not have to be viewed as attached to the text. It is the referent of the text. Yet it is also true that, in its formation, there must be associated with the text the means of interacting with the operational effects of this authorial intent.

Thiselton notes that in his view authorial intent “...is better understood adverbially: to write with an intention is to write in a way that is directed towards a goal.”⁴⁹ This concept highlights intention as the modifier or qualifier of that goal, or the doing of the author. It

⁴⁵ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 76.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 104. He states concerning the book: “It is a totality, a structured whole with thematic coherence – ideological ‘glue.’ Books are ‘closed,’ or rather enclosed, by the author’s will. Symbolized by a book’s binding.”

⁴⁹ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 560. (Italics original)

relates to 'what' the author has intentionally done. The focus on what has been done moves away from the idea of the active agent, whose intention was involved, and hence further away from the issue of meaning. An interpreter can speculate about the author's meaning, but the meaning will be the interpreter's not the author's. The direction of reference has moved away from the agent and their intention. An alternate view is an important development that will be explored in this work in later chapters.

The concept of the search for authorial intent, in this adverbial view, would be irrelevant since the existence of the text would be the authorial intent. This view would lend credence to an aspect of the 'intentional fallacy,' proposed by Wimsatt and Beardsley, since if the text is the authorial intent successfully communicated by the author there is no need to look for it.⁵⁰ As Wimsatt and Beardsley observe if the author did not successfully communicate their intention there is nowhere else to go looking other than the text.⁵¹ In Thiselton's concept an interpreter would need to speak about the authorial goal, which simply shifts the search, but doesn't change the dynamics or solve the problem.

If instead of being seen adverbially it is seen as a noun then the intent of the author is seen as the subject matter, the 'about' or *sache*, which is what seems to be Vanhoozer's understanding.⁵² What is better understood adverbially is the authorial meaning as modifier or qualifier of the authorial intent. This meaning, associated with the text, is attached to the text and subsequently linguistics will be critical in perceiving it, but the authorial meaning is a means of dealing with the authorial intent. Thiselton's own observation that a person can do the methodology and still not understand the text, thus showing the need to incorporate other areas such as philosophical description, itself points to the folly of being restricted to the linguistics.⁵³

Vanhoozer defines the text of the composition as a "*communicative act of a communicative agent fixed by writing.*"⁵⁴ The word 'fixed' suggests that this essentially

⁵⁰ Wimsatt Jr., 2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 7.

⁵³ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 5.

⁵⁴ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 225. (Italics original)

corresponds to Stendhal's 'meant' of the author.⁵⁵ Vanhoozer does not seem to observe the clear distinction between the "what it meant," as a primary task, and "what it means," as a secondary task, that Stendhal does. He does note that once an author has enacted their communication it is seen as "*meaning accomplished*."⁵⁶ Consequently, his reference is primarily to the meaning of the fixed written text. If the nuance of difference is not maintained between authorial intent and authorial meaning then authorial intent is tied to linguistics, being either attached to, or contained within, the text.

Stendhal notes that it is widely held that there is no language into which the Bible cannot be translated.⁵⁷ Caird notes that the act of translating itself cannot be successful if the translator simply seeks transference of one language into another. The translator must also transfer thought forms and presuppositions.⁵⁸ Every act of translation must involve some interpretation, which Stendhal does recognize since he notes that every great translation is a creative effort for this very reason.⁵⁹ Stendhal also acknowledges this important aspect, i.e. of transference of thought patterns, as one of interpretation by theologians in seeking the "what it means" of the text.⁶⁰ Therefore, also in pursuing the "meant" of a text the limitations of linguistics should be recognized.

However, what is more strongly implied, is that the moment an interpreter begins to move away from "what it meant" they are moving into an area of the referent of the text. The authorial meaning, as the value of "what it meant," is a fixed value of the authorial intent at a particular point in time; i.e. in its historical setting. Consequently, maintaining the nuance of difference is an important distinction, as when this is maintained the authorial intent is what can be translated into other languages and historical situations. The authorial meaning is the authorial intent for a particular audience in a particular situation. It is therefore a relative value of the authorial intent; it is relative to that audience and point in time. The authorial intent,

⁵⁵ Stendhal, 422. The historical "what it meant" is found using methodology to discover "what these words meant when uttered or written."

⁵⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 262. (Italics original) Vanhoozer is a strong advocate of the grammatico-historical method; the issue discussed concerns a recognized distinction between the tasks, or it implies that he tends more to advocate "what it meant" equals "what it means." He does make a distinction between theological aims (perhaps hermeneutics) and the norm of the author's meaning. However, this still does not show a distinction between the two aspects. See also Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 276-7.

⁵⁷ Stendhal, 427.

⁵⁸ G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1980), 2.

⁵⁹ Stendhal, 427.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

being the antecedent of the authorial meaning, is that which is capable of transcending the situatedness.

An illustration of this need to consider a difference in authorial intent and authorial meaning can be seen in the Gospel of John. In Jn. 20:30-31 the author seemingly sets out the broad intention of their composition. In this text the author reveals their reason the text came into being as a composition. The author composed a selective narrative of the acts that Jesus did; declaring concerning those chosen to write about, "...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." This is the author's controlling thought behind the text and acts essentially as the antecedent of the text. It has influenced which narratives have been selected and clearly has shaped the handling of those narratives in the composition. The authorial meaning in the individual text is directing the reader towards this authorial intent. The authorial intent can be fulfilled without the absolute value of 'what it meant' and even with an imprecise value of authorial meaning in some texts that are part of the composition.

Vanhoozer does discuss this aspect in John but argues that the writer's desire to elicit belief is a perlocutionary effect. As such it should not be considered as part of the communicative action of the author.⁶¹ A lot of Vanhoozer's development of the concept of relating authorial intention to the illocutionary act is developed on the basis of Austin and Searle's approach to speech-act theory.⁶² Yet he notes that Austin himself was not convinced that the perlocutionary effects are so easily separated from the illocutionary act.⁶³ Can it be stated that if a person reads the gospel and does not subsequently develop belief in Jesus that they will have either fulfilled or understood the authorial intention? Furthermore, if by 'understanding' was meant simply understanding that the author believes this assertion, this is not the stated intention in the text. The verb 'to believe' is Second Person Aorist Subjunctive and as such the subject addressed in the statement is the reader. The author's intention is that the reader believes.

⁶¹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 179.

⁶² Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 208/9.

⁶³ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 185.

Western thought has sought to distinguish between knowledge and belief; knowledge is apprehended and tested by individuals for themselves and belief is that which the individual has “taken over” from the community.⁶⁴ Critical thought begins when an individual distrusts this community knowledge until proven for the individual himself.⁶⁵ Consequently, in this mindset, knowledge acts as adversary to belief and belief is therefore not considered knowledge.⁶⁶ Thiselton notes that in this setting the concept of community knowledge becomes essentially an oxymoron.⁶⁷

However, the individual begins the search for knowledge with a pre-existing “shared public world” that provides not only transmitted knowledge but shapes the quest for individual knowledge.⁶⁸ Without this shared knowledge, which also includes language, there is no foundation for individual investigation. Language itself provides resources without which the process cannot even begin.⁶⁹ What can be known about the world is mediated through language and is not known apart from language.⁷⁰ Consequently, belief is a form of knowledge that, although not arrived at after a process of rational reasoning, is nevertheless a knowledge acquired in communication, as in Rom. 10:17. If not acquired the communication has failed in its intent. Hence, to understand the communication of John in his Gospel is to believe it.

Vanhoozer argues that authorial meaning, and hence intention, relates to understanding the author’s communication and not the effect that has on the reader/interpreter.⁷¹ It would seem from Jn. 20:30-31 that the author’s own communication is an intention of belief and subsequent life, and this is the controlling thought behind the composition; for the author, understanding equals belief. Each incident narrated in the gospel is a description of the incident that is given in such a way that it will contribute to the intent of

⁶⁴ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 701.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 702.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 703.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The World Well Staged? Theology, Culture, on Hermeneutics,” in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993).

⁷¹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 180.

the author. Authorial meaning, in the individual texts within the composition, will not only relate to the authorial intention but will also be relative to the incident narrated.

The perlocutionary effect is the effect on the reader of belief, not the act of believing. The reader who understands believes and consequently this belief will have an impact on their life. It is what the reader does about their belief that is the resultant effect belief has had upon them. They can choose not to retain the belief, or even disregard it in their lives. In the Epistle of James the author makes an observation about a person who believes but disregards that belief in their everyday life, see Jam. 1:22-25. The person shows the effect of the perlocutionary act in what they do about their belief. If they don't adjust their life and live according to the impact of that belief the faith, or act of belief, dies within them, see Jam. 2:17-18. Ricoeur notes that if an interpreter disregards the tradition in which the text stands, i.e. the belief that is its context (as is argued in this work) then that tradition dies in that interpretation.⁷² In John's Gospel belief is understanding and not a perlocutionary act. The perlocutionary act is what is done about belief; obedience to belief is operational, or living, faith.

Ricoeur sees that the perlocutionary act, which is performed by the reader, is less than intentional (on the part of the reader) and is the least communicable aspect of the speech act.⁷³ This is primarily because in this act the non-linguistic has priority over the linguistic.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, it can clearly fall within the authorial intent. In the case of belief, Jesus regards the adoption of belief as intentional on the part of the hearer, Mrk. 1:15.

A further difference between authorial intent and meaning can be illustrated in the development of a composition in the English language. In the English language a sentence should have one single idea and a paragraph develop one central thought. Each sentence within the paragraph with its one central idea is developing that one central thought, and each is purposed to contribute to that one central thought. The central thought is the intent and the development of the sentences is the explanation of that thought. An author can employ different approaches to the central thought to help position the reader to 'see' that central

⁷² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 27. In the case of the biblical text, if not all sacred text, the belief tradition is the history in which it stands.

⁷³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

point. These approaches can work in unison but they can also work individually.

Consequently, there can be a degree of redundancy within the paragraph, so that the central thought is recoverable even if all the individual ideas in each of the sentences are not completely interpreted. The intent of the author is an understanding of the central thought not the precise meaning of each and every sentence.

Even in the case of a novel there is an observable difference between authorial intent and authorial meaning. The aim of the author of a novel is to entertain and they develop a story they believe will capture the attention of the reader and draw them into the story. This intent controls an authorial meaning in the text, but the authorial intent is to entertain and the authorial meaning is the act of entertaining. Similarly in advertising a product, the intent is that a person purchases the product. The intent is to purchase and the authorial meaning in the copy (i.e. the text) of the advertising is an act of persuasion to that end. In all probability, if the product is purchased the author considers their intent fulfilled whether or not the purchaser correctly assigned meaning to every sentence of the text.

It is proposed that the authorial intent concerns the 'big picture' of the composition and guides the development of the texts that form the composition and thereby it acts as the antecedent of the individual text. It is the influencing agent of the authorial meaning in the individual texts but is not identical to authorial meaning. The authorial meaning refers to the authorial intent and is the means by which the latter is made known. The authorial intent, rather than being discussed from the point of view of either attachment or detachment in relation to the text, should instead be viewed as the context of the text that allows the text to address the *sache*. Therefore, it is important to consider the individual text and its function within authorial meaning in revealing the authorial intent, which is the understood message.

3. The Nature of the Text: Preliminary Considerations

The classical humanist model of a text is that of a unit of language used to express the thoughts and ideas of an author. The text is seen to point to a world outside the text.⁷⁵ It is essentially the written verbal description of something that exists in the mind of the author, which the author desires to communicate. The Romanticist hermeneutic began to take

⁷⁵ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 55.

account of the impact of the world of the reader.⁷⁶ However, texts were still seen as “linguistically mediating interpersonal communication,” consequently authors could be conceived of as directly addressing the reader.⁷⁷ This led to the development of the idea, which fitted well with the concept of the biblical text, that the author and their context formed part of the text itself.⁷⁸ The focus is the world behind the text.

The world behind the text can seem remote and lead to a possible disconnection.⁷⁹ An over-pre-occupation with the historical paradigm can be seen to create a gulf between critical scholarship and the practice of faith.⁸⁰ Re-assessment and re-evaluation became necessary in the light of developments in literary theory.⁸¹ This moved the emphasis to the world of the text.

Vanhoozer, in a tribute to Paul Ricoeur, declares that Ricoeur’s central insight is that the interpreters situate themselves in front of the text. In this case, symbol gives rise to thought and the text opens up a new world in front of the reader.⁸² The appeal of this for biblical studies has been the consideration of standing in front of the text and experiencing its operative effects.⁸³ The caution that is needed concerns the issue that a focus on the world in front of the text could lead to a disjoint of “community knowledge,” which is part of the world behind the text.⁸⁴

A Pentecostal writer on this subject is Randolph Tate. His ideas concern the three worlds involved in interpretation.⁸⁵ These are the worlds of the author, text and reader. They cause three primary concepts when developing theories of the locus of meaning. These are 'author centered', 'text centered' and 'reader centered'.⁸⁶ His own proposal is that these three approaches are not mutually exclusive, nor is one approach more important or determinative.⁸⁷ It is the integrated approach of the 'interplay' involving all three worlds that

⁷⁶ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 56.

⁸² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Joy of Yes, Ricoeur: Philosopher of Hope," *Christian Century* 122, no. 17 (Aug 2005).

⁸³ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 57.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1991), xv-xxi.

⁸⁶ Ibid., xvi.

⁸⁷ Ibid., xx.

results in meaning.⁸⁸ Recognition in hermeneutics of these three worlds associated with the text mean that none should be ignored in the pursuit of understanding.

The work of Ong on literacy and orality, noted above, has highlighted that the composition is a direct creation in written form as distinct from transcription. Even where the author of a composition is transcribing material they supply a context in composition that prejudices the impact of any transcription on the reader. This prejudice is their view of reality or the reality they wish to create for the reader. It is the creation of the composition that has led to the focus on the text.⁸⁹ Also, as noted above, it is a false assumption to equate oral verbalization with written verbalization. The text becomes emancipated from the oral situation in the composition.⁹⁰

The hermeneutical problem originally developed within the pursuit of exegesis in seeking to understand texts.⁹¹ Discovery of a hermeneutical problem was due to interpretation of a text occurring within a community and its traditions, hence its presuppositions.⁹² Ricoeur states that the "...connection between interpretation and comprehension, the former taken in the sense of textual exegesis and the latter in the broad sense of the clear understanding of signs, is manifested in one of the traditional senses of the word "hermeneutics".⁹³ Hermeneutics establishes a relationship between exegesis as a technical pursuit and the issues of meaning and language.⁹⁴ In the development of the study of languages and with the work of Schleiermacher and Dilthey the hermeneutic problem becomes a philosophical problem.⁹⁵

It is here, and because of this, that Ricoeur sees that the place of attachment of the hermeneutic problem in philosophical endeavor is within the "domain of *phenomenology*."⁹⁶ The assigning of understanding to method leaves it entrapped within methodology and the "presuppositions of objective knowledge and the presuppositions of the Kantian theory of

⁸⁸ Ibid., 255.

⁸⁹ Ong, 10.

⁹⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 56.

⁹¹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 3.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 6.

knowledge.⁹⁷ In the Kantian philosophical perspective all knowledge begins with experience and reasoning is the assimilation of knowledge into our existence.⁹⁸ Methodology pursues this knowledge, and consequently, what is known and how it is known is restricted to methodology.

It would seem that in part Ricoeur's objection to this view is that the knowledge is acquired by experience rather than just experienced. The reader, in order to understand, experiences understanding rather than acquires it. Essentially in the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein*, Ricoeur sees a mindset that doesn't drive a wedge between an ontology of understanding and an epistemology of interpretation.⁹⁹ Heidegger's concept of *Dasein's* temporality is a continuum between birth (Being towards the beginning) and death (Being towards the end).¹⁰⁰ What takes place in this in-between is a sequence of experiences in time.¹⁰¹ However, *Dasein* does not exist as the sum of these experiences, which are transient, but always exists in the now, or present experience.¹⁰² History as a science treats these historical events, or experiences, as "*Object*" and the event is discarded.¹⁰³ The Kantian perspective treats experience as the acquisition of knowledge¹⁰⁴, and, therefore when this occurs the event of understanding is lost in the treatment of knowledge as object. This would seem to be Ricoeur's reasoning in finding in *Dasein*, what is for him, a better model for interpretation that involves the being-there of the person interpreting. In Ricoeur's thought understanding is no longer a method of acquiring knowledge but a style of being itself.¹⁰⁵ A person works out from the place of being to objective assessment and does not discover being through methodological objectivity.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans., Norman Kemp Smith, 2nd ed. (New York: St Martins Press Inc., 1933; reprint, 5th), 41. All knowledge that is understood, or acquired, is empirical, since it comes through experience. In modernity this places the issue of understanding in the domain methodology.

⁹⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 6-7. (Italics added). In Kant's understanding there is knowledge that does not arise from experience. He reasons when all that belongs to the senses is eliminated from experience then the remainder is *a priori* knowledge and this is the field of universals that empirical knowledge cannot supply, Kant 1933, 42. The science by which this knowledge is known is metaphysics, Kant 1933, 46. The two forms of knowledge have no knowledge of one another and it would seem that this is what Ricoeur is referring to in the driving of a wedge between an ontology of understanding and an epistemology of understanding.

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, 426-7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 425.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 426.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 427. (Italics and capitalization original)

¹⁰⁴ Kant, 41.

¹⁰⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 7.

Hermeneutics is not just a matter of methodology and objective knowledge. In the work of Ricoeur there is recognition that a description of the process, a philosophy, must be developed that doesn't limit knowing to the limitations in modernism. Brueggemann has observed that the rise of science and its resultant epistemology of the Enlightenment produced interpretation informed by historical criticism.¹⁰⁶ This connection with modernism held sway for over 200 years so that the culture bound nature of the process was not perceived.¹⁰⁷ This is what Ricoeur noted about interpretation; it always occurs within a tradition and hence set of presuppositions that need to be recognized for their impact on the process of interpretation. Methodology is a means of analysis and therefore is a tool, but the meaning of the analysis, the fruit of the analysis, is not determined by the methodology but the interpreter as the user. Methodology is analysis not the means of the creation of texts, or of their understanding.

Brueggemann postulates, on the basis of his research, that the rise of modernity happened in the midst of a chaos that sought verifiable stability. Theological interpretation followed this trend and a methodology was created of a tight system of certitude where the absolute is achievable via methodology.¹⁰⁸ Ricoeur's work has highlighted that this description of the hermeneutical process is inadequate and a new evaluation of the process is needed.

In dealing with a text Ricoeur has rightly observed that there is a need to go beyond semiotics to semantics. It is the sentence as a unit that allows an evaluation of what is occurring in the discourse.¹⁰⁹ In the sentence language becomes related to world and this world is what is communicated.¹¹⁰ The sentence is therefore the basic unit of the text of a composition. It is the smallest individual unit of the author's creation.

It was noted above that composition includes elements that convey aspects of an oral situation that set a context for discourse. The composition is not simply transcription but the assertion of a will to construct and convey the viewpoint of its author. The composition will

¹⁰⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible and Postmodern Imaginations: Texts under Negotiation* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1993), 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 20.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* This helps illuminate Ricoeur's stance to move the hermeneutic problem to *phenomenology*, which he perceives relates to being and life.

include subjective elements that describe the effect on characters within the composition in a way the reader can be both empathetic and sympathetic with, it will also contain elements that show how authors themselves feel about aspects of what is narrated. It will also need to include elements that can engender perlocutionary acts, if there is an authorial intent to produce them.¹¹¹ The composition will also need to impart knowledge that belongs to the tradition in which it and the author stand, as this has a shaping effect on the composition and its interpretation. However, this will need to be achieved in a way that the reader can possess or identify with this knowledge, not just be informed about it. This involves engaging the presuppositions of the reader to seek an interaction with the authorial intent to 'see' what the author 'saw.'

4. Forms of Knowledge Operational in Language

There are forms of knowing other than rational objective knowledge that are important in understanding, which an author may wish to present to a reader.¹¹² This seems to be what Ricoeur has recognized, and sought to allow a place for, in pursuit of understanding, as outlined above. Yet the unit, or basic element, available to the author to use for creating and achieving this is words used in a sentence as the basic unit of language.¹¹³ The grammatical-historical methodology will serve as a means of analysis, for an interpreter, of the objective knowledge of the composition, but it is inadequate, on its own, to deal with the composition to achieve understanding and solve the hermeneutical problem.¹¹⁴

If, as Wright has recognized, aesthetics and belief, though subjective, are part of knowing then an author and interpreter must connect with this knowledge, which cannot occur through current methodology. Yet if this is part of the authorial communication it occurs in and through the text, or more accurately the composition. An author uses sentences in a composition as their basic unit but seeks to convey more than objective knowledge. Similarly,

¹¹¹ In the case of the text of the Epistle of James, cited above, the text of the author clearly intends the perlocutionary act to be a motivation to change.

¹¹² N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 32-33. Wright argues that it is obvious that not all knowledge possessed by a person is of the form of rational knowledge. Further the downgrading of other forms of knowing such as metaphysics and theology is a stance of modernity rather than a fact of either their know-ability or value.

¹¹³ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 166. Vanhoozer also states that the knowledge we have as human beings is indirect not direct. It comes to us mediated by language, 327.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* See also, Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 188. Thiselton notes that the work of Born and Heisenberg in post-Newtonian physics brought changed conceptions of reality. As a result methodology must be appropriate to the object of the inquiry. It is not a 'one size fits all' situation.

if, as recognized by Thiselton, the knowledge of belief is transmitted in community, then the communication of the author must engage this belief in the reader. Again the only means of this is the composition he or she creates. This concept, that there is knowledge that presents itself to the reader but that is not acquired methodologically, is an important insight gained from Ricoeur's thought.

In recognizing Heidegger's observation that language is not grounded in words themselves, or in abstract considerations about propositional logic, but in sharing communication between people, Thiselton makes his own observation of the importance of this for New Testament hermeneutics. Understanding is not simply research of words but "communication between two sets of horizons."¹¹⁵ In Thiselton this is the fusion of the horizons.¹¹⁶

Caird notes that a translator, who is therefore an interpreter, cannot succeed in translation unless they recognize that it cannot be merely transference from one language to another. They must also transfer thought forms.¹¹⁷ Stendhal similarly notes this in the search for the "what it means" of the biblical text, i.e. contemporary understanding.¹¹⁸ Caird also notes that in one sense the Bible is written in *languages* but the *language* of the Bible is the fact that it was written in words.¹¹⁹ Consequently, communication occurs between an author and interpreter beyond the level of words and their meanings, but the vehicle that must convey all of the communication, the composition, is written in words.¹²⁰ Schleiermacher saw language as the "...only presupposition in hermeneutics and everything that is to be found, including the other objective and subjective presuppositions must be discovered in language."¹²¹

It is proposed in this work that with text as composition, as opposed to text as transcription, understanding an author's communication involves objective knowledge,

¹¹⁵ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 168.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16. This is the theme of Thiselton's book. He makes reference to Gadamer's concept of fusion of horizons, which he indicates he has used. His contribution is nominating the horizons of the interpreter and text.

¹¹⁷ Caird, 2. Italics are added for emphasis.

¹¹⁸ Stendhal, 427.

¹¹⁹ Caird, 2. Caird is highlighting that the cultural gap, created by languages, should be neither ignored nor over emphasized, though written in languages, the Bible exists as a single book written in words through the languages.

¹²⁰ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 327.

¹²¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, trans., James Duke & Jack Frostman, American Academy of Religion (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 50.

subjective knowledge and thirdly what can be categorized as *pistology*,¹²² dealing with belief knowledge. The reader/interpreter acquires the knowledge of, and interacts with, these forms of knowledge in the process of understanding an author's work. It is further proposed that these categories apply to all texts not just sacred texts; sacred texts require specialized use of hermeneutics in dealing with the *pistology* not a specialized hermeneutic.¹²³ All three categories of knowledge are capable of being verbally described; the issue is their acquisition as knowledge, or presence in the text, for an interpreter's understanding of the author's composition.

The word knowledge is appropriate since it would seem almost axiomatic that what can be verbally described must also itself be known in order to be verbally described. The problem is that concepts such as the subjective and belief categories of knowledge have tended to be regarded as irrational, and consequently opposed to reason.¹²⁴ Hence, whilst their existence is acknowledged they are considered unreasonable, and therefore not knowledge as such. Nevertheless, just because they are not acquired via a process of rational reason doesn't change their value in reasoning or know-ability. They are capable of verbal description since a person can describe that they love and *that* they believe; also *what* they believe is verbally describable. As such they are knowledge. N. T. Wright noted that these other forms of knowledge are acknowledged but downgraded because they don't fulfill the criteria of the modern era's positivism that has held sway.¹²⁵ Since they are knowable they can be subjected to a process of reasoning once held as knowledge and as such constitute genuine forms of knowledge.¹²⁶

¹²² The term *pistology* (given the meaning of the study of faith as knowledge) has been created by the author of the thesis as a way of handling belief knowledge as a category. A web search revealed the possibility of this word already in usage but no definitive references to it were found nor was the word found in any Dictionaries consulted. Consequently, this word will be used with the meaning defined in the thesis. This word is simply a combining of the Greek words *pistis* (faith) and *logos* (the word or discourse about). Hence *pistology* is used to designate a study of human belief. Use of the word *theology* as a general word for belief was not adopted as this has particularity and distinct connotations of Judeo-Christian belief, but the concept of belief itself is universal. Therefore, *pistology* is a preferred term for studying belief in a universal sense.

¹²³ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 531. The example he uses is that hearing God is not a special word for hearing but a special meaning of the word hearing. Therefore, the practice of hermeneutics is the same for both.

¹²⁴ Wright, 33.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 39. In engaging in Theological Hermeneutics Thiselton notes that 'actualization' in hermeneutics strikes an accord with the account of belief in theology. A network of belief is seen in a person's disposition to respond and manifest their belief in attitudes and actions. This is dealing with the "cash-currency" of belief. Therefore, belief has been acquired as knowledge in this process.

There is knowledge that is rationally acquired, i.e. the category of *rational* objective knowledge, which is the usual concept of knowledge.¹²⁷ However, there is also knowledge acquired that is *arational* (i.e. knowledge not based on or governed by reason).¹²⁸ James Martin suggests that, hermeneutically, objectivity and subjectivity work dialectically.¹²⁹ This would imply that a dynamic interaction is occurring in interpretation that facilitates understanding. In the Pentecostal tradition the hermeneutic must function to both explain a text and activate it in the life of the person.¹³⁰

Finally there is knowledge that is acquired from *non-rational*¹³¹ sources, and this is the domain of belief, which is also part of the community knowledge.¹³² Whilst *arational* knowledge arises within a person immediately in response to stimuli in relationship to someone or something, *non-rational* knowledge is imparted as knowledge, and therefore acquired, in community relationship.¹³³ This community knowledge can be challenged, shaped and re-shaped in reasoning processes. The issue becomes how this occurs in relationship to an author's text. It is also proposed in this thesis that it is important to recognize that this knowledge can be both explicit (by assertion or reference by the author), and implicit (by reference to the tradition[s] in which the author and intended audience stand), in the author's text. Thiselton suggests that the inherited knowledge of the community, i.e. tradition, makes it easier or more difficult for an individual to raise questions about knowledge.¹³⁴ This implies that belief as knowledge impacts, by facilitating or hindering, the acquisition of rational knowledge. In this situation belief becomes essentially a context for rationally acquired knowledge.

¹²⁷ Kant, 41. This is the basic concept of Kant that is widely accepted in modern methodology. All knowledge begins with experience and that which is knowable presents itself and experience makes it known by reasoning.

¹²⁸ Wright, 33.

¹²⁹ James Martin, "Toward a Post-Critical Paradigm," *New Testament Studies* 33, no. (1987): 380.

¹³⁰ Murray W. Dempster, "Paradigm Shifts and Hermeneutics: Confronting Issues Old and New," *Pneuma* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 132. This concept is similar to Thiselton's comment on Theological Hermeneutics and the actualization of belief as part of the package of understanding.

¹³¹ The creation of the term *non-rational* and the rationale for its use is discussed in a following section entitled; (b) *Non-rational Knowledge*.

¹³² Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 702.

¹³³ Richard D. Israel, Daniel E. Albrecht, and Randall G. McNally, "Pentecostal's and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals and Community," *Pneuma* 15, no. 2 (1993): 151. The authors assert that spirituality is communicated by ritual, which are communal acts.

¹³⁴ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 706.

Therefore, it would seem to be within the bounds of reason to assume that a concern for an author in creating a composition is to seek to establish an intimate relationship with the reader, or neither *arational* nor *non-rational* knowledge can be imparted.¹³⁵ It also would seem to be within the bounds of reason to suggest that a new approach, other than that developed in the grammatico-historical approach, which can detect and evaluate the categories of knowledge other than the rational, is needed for achieving the hermeneutical aim of understanding. The reader has presuppositions in these areas of knowledge that orient them in the task of reading the text, and the author, to establish a world with the reader, must engage these presuppositions in dialogue to establish relationship.

An Introduction to *Arational* and *Non-rational* Knowledge

The preceding discussion set out to establish that these forms of knowledge exist and are knowable. The concepts of forms of knowledge other than rational objective knowledge are not new. Prior to the modernist era and current methodologies, the German philosopher Georg Hegel differentiated between what he titled Objective and Subjective Religion.¹³⁶ Objective religion was identified as “the faith that is believed,” whereas Subjective Religion is expressed in feelings and actions.¹³⁷ Subjective Religion is living and individual, whereas Objective Religion “is a matter of abstraction.”¹³⁸ Although Hegel was discussing religion, not the interpretation of texts, his discussion recognizes that there is within a person’s understanding of themselves both objective and subjective aspects, which are both vital. His observation that Objective Religion is “the faith that is believed” points to another avenue of the incorporation of belief or *non-rational* knowledge into an authors’ text. Hegel’s analogy for Objective religion is the “cabinet of the naturalist” full of specimens, which shows that his use of “faith” in the expression is related to propositional truth.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Yongnan Jeon Ahn, “Various Debates in the Contemporary Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *The Spirit & Church* 2, no. 1 (May 2000): 28. Ahn notes as a Pastor trained in evangelical methodology he found that methodology alone did not develop an interaction between the interpreter and text. The methodological approach cannot allow the objective and subjective to co-exist, as the subjective is seen to subvert meaning. This leaves a lot to be desired in his opinion.

¹³⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel, “Early Theological Writings (1793-1800),” in *G. W. F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, The Making of Modern Theology (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 43.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Newman also showed, in his work *A Grammar of Assent*, that propositions are used in making assertions.¹⁴⁰ The mental act of assent in relation to an assertion displays unconditional acceptance of the assertion.¹⁴¹ This would constitute statements of faith. Hence, the concept of the proposition equips language with a vehicle for setting out belief knowledge, which can be accepted (indicating belief and hence describable as faith) or rejected (indicating unbelief and hence an absence of faith).

The preceding section has also sought to establish that, although current methodologies are knowable, in dealing with texts employed in hermeneutics are inadequate to evaluate and detect these forms of knowledge, apart from their verbal description. Their application in the process of understanding will require more than acknowledging their existence by their description. It will require some form of understanding of how they form part of the text and are detected by the interpreter in the process of understanding.

The development of the terms *arational*, to categorize the aesthetic and subjective, and *non-rational*, to categorize belief knowledge, are original in the understanding of this author. Consequently, the following discussion of these categories as inherent within texts requires a descriptive approach that is original to this work. However, what is proposed is to find possible attachments to current debates and what is known about aspects of these categories, as a way of developing from supposition and conjecture to a healthy debate that recognizes and seeks to evaluate these areas.

Thiselton noted that philosophical concepts must be included in the task of hermeneutics to go beyond the accumulation of linguistic and historical data.¹⁴² As noted previously categories that come from outside the Bible are not necessarily wrong and the conceptual tools of the philosopher can greatly assist with understanding.¹⁴³ Gadamer, as a philosopher, saw himself as describing the way things are and not proposing a methodology.¹⁴⁴ Hence, philosophy can be seen as providing descriptive tools that can be helpful but it is not necessary to either adopt a philosophy of, or uncritically accept concepts

¹⁴⁰ John Henry Newman, 1801-1890, *Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans & Co., 1901), 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴² Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 5-6.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 465.

of, a philosopher. In this work no particular philosophy or philosopher is being put forward as the model for discussion. Where philosophical discussion is useful to highlight what is, or a possible direction forward, it will be used for its descriptive value. Therefore, it is not considered either necessary or appropriate to conduct an in-depth analysis of these things other than is appropriate to the research.

(a) *Arational Knowledge*

The *arational* category of knowledge includes the range of aesthetics, the concept of intuition and emotions that an author may seek to illicit and/or convey. It also includes the 'givens' or 'being-there' of humanity in the biblical text.¹⁴⁵ An author can state, and thereby describe these aspects, but not convey them so that the reader will possess that knowledge within their own being to move to understanding. Thiselton discusses what can be seen as an example of what is being considered. He notes that mood can be used to direct a person's attention to what is inevitable in life. It can be used to turn attention away from the possibilities to the actual and therefore posses hermeneutic value.¹⁴⁶ In this situation an author would not be looking for either psychological understanding or empathy but actual impact.¹⁴⁷ As feelings they would be considered subjective and not subject to reason and hence acceptable knowledge.

The following illustrations from Scripture assist in the understanding of this concept. Firstly, in Jn. 19:19-22 Jesus pointed out to the disciples that in saying He was going away He was speaking about His death at Calvary. He noted that this event would make them sorrowful and sad, but he then spoke of His resurrection (see v22 where He predicted He would see them again beyond that time). He told them that once they understood that this event had occurred, i.e. death and resurrection, they would have great joy. This joy would open up and direct them into an entirely new dimension of relationship with God. Essentially He set a context for understanding what their mood should be so that they would understand the possibilities before them. In post-resurrection appearances recorded in Lk. 24:44-52 He

¹⁴⁵ Kant, 42. Kant saw that there is a knowledge that is somehow inherent in the being of a person. It is this knowledge that empowers the ability to know. These are universals and are conceived of as independent of our experience, 43. This would infer that they could be seen as 'givens' of humanity, which accords with the biblical view.

¹⁴⁶ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 162.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

conducted a study where He expounded texts in the Law of Moses, Psalms and the Prophets that gave them an understanding that what He predicted of His death had come to pass. The result of this understanding was great joy, (see v52), which is what He had prepared them for as noted in the text of the gospel of John. The object of using this illustration is not discussion of the resurrection or even critical analysis of the texts considered. The written text shows that, in understanding a text, the effect was a communication of a mood of joy that in turn directed the attention of the disciples to new possibilities.

The second example illustrates that mood can cause misunderstanding. In Nehemiah 8:1-12 is recorded a public meeting conducted by Ezra the priest. He read the Law to the people and was assisted by others to help the people understand the text. When people heard and understood the text they all began to weep, indicating a melancholy attitude of remorse, thereby suggesting that they experienced degrees of guilt. However, on seeing this Ezra and those helping him told the people that their mood was incorrectly directing their understanding, see vss.8-9. The purpose of the meeting was that they should understand it was to be a special day and one of joy and blessing. It does not seem too speculative to say in this case that the mood adopted in encounter with the text directed them away from its possibilities. The mood the interpreter, Ezra, sought was one that would direct them to its possibilities.

Both the author and reader already each possess the 'givens' so that each has immediacy of affinity with these in the other. The object of the author is to elicit response. This aspect of the communicative process of the text lends itself to the *phenomenological* description of intuited knowledge, and as Ricoeur has observed, current methodology is no use here. This is also the observation of Anderson, noted above, that phenomenology cannot supply a methodological process. This is subjective knowledge, which accords with the scriptural text and can be described but not acquired through grammatico-historical methodology. It is individual and subject to description but cannot be obtained through an objective process of reasoning

The written text of Scripture asserts that the gospel, the understood then communicated text, has both a subjective and an objective category. Paul noted that the

gospel came in “word”, establishing that there is an objective element communicated. However, he also states that the gospel came in “. . . power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance . . .” thereby involving subjective and experiential elements, 1 Thess. 1:5. The phrase “much assurance” or alternately ‘great conviction’ as a concept is not quantifiable but is evidently knowable. Furthermore, it came with the word, i.e. it was imparted with the objective knowledge. It is noted in 1 Thess. 1:6 that the word was received “. . .in much affliction [which is objectively knowable] and with joy of the Holy Spirit [which is subjective but still knowable].” If the genitive “with joy of the Holy Spirit” is taken in the ablative sense of the genitive the Holy Spirit imparted the joy in the process of communication.

If it is assumed that Jesus did not communicate in Koiné Greek but, as is more likely, in Aramaic,¹⁴⁸ then the words attributed to Jesus in Jn. 15:11 are an interpretation within a composition by the author of the gospel, which show that the author perceived Jesus’ desire to impart subjective knowledge in His discourse: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.” Joy as *arational* knowledge is acquired with the objective knowledge and can be described but not conveyed in a methodological analysis of the text. Further, there is no quantitative assessment of when the reader/interpreter’s joy is full.

The ‘givens’ of the human condition, as the authors of the scriptural text present their composition, can in part be inferred from the primal history of the book of Genesis in chapters 1 through 11. There are two aspects of the biblical text in the primal history of Genesis 1-11 that stand out on this subject. Firstly, there is no record of humanity learning how to communicate and even the facility of communication by speech is a given in the biblical text. These are seemingly divine endowments and therefore in the biblical view ‘givens’ of the being of humanity. Secondly, understanding itself appears to be an inherent ability. There is no record of either humanity being taught to understand or having difficulty with understanding either the divine or the human. Both the human-human and divine-human dialogues occur naturally and immediately. The human state appears to naturally tend to understanding. Interestingly, it is misunderstanding that is the result of divine intervention,

¹⁴⁸ Stendhal, 427. Stendhal notes that the student of the Greek gospel is already once removed from the Aramaic vernacular of Jesus teachings.

see Gen. 11:1-9; the natural human condition is apparently that of understanding. The desire for understanding will always seek the resolution of misunderstanding.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, as the father of modern hermeneutics, is credited with developing the concept of General Hermeneutics in proposing a basic set of guidelines for all texts.¹⁴⁹ His basis was the assumption of the occurrence of misunderstanding and a consequent seeking of understanding.¹⁵⁰ Schleiermacher reasoned that there must be some point of contact between the interpreter and the text. However, for hermeneutics to be necessary there must also be some strangeness and with this strangeness misunderstanding becomes possible.¹⁵¹ Hermeneutics begins here and is the process that removes the strangeness by eliminating the misunderstanding.

In this scenario, as in the biblical narrative, the effort towards understanding is a result of the presence of misunderstanding. The question of understanding is not raised until the situation of misunderstanding occurs. In Acts 17:26 Paul makes the observation, it must be assumed on the basis of the Genesis record, that God made all humanity from one person. This, coupled with the primal history of Genesis 1 to 11, leads to the conclusion that in the biblical mindset all subsequent languages developed from that one event in the primal history.

Ong notes that in natural languages rules of grammar are a secondary development as a language is first spoken then abstracted to be stated and used in literacy.¹⁵² The biblical record, showing language to be a given of the created state as noted above, supports this view. This implies that language as a formal system is secondary and speech is primary in language development. Language is learned in practice in its usage rather than in theory on the basis of its rules of grammar. There is a natural affinity to be able to speak to another person, and hence communicate, as would be expected on the basis of the biblical record of all languages developing from the one common event.

¹⁴⁹ David E. Klemm, "Introduction to Schleiermacher's Address to the Academy," in *Hermeneutical Inquiry: The Interpretation of Texts*, ed. David E. Klemm, American Academy of Religion (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 56.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, "The Academy Addresses of 1829: On the Concept of Hermeneutics, with Reference to F. A. Wolf's Instructions and Asts' Textbook," in *Hermeneutical Inquiry: The Interpretation of Texts*, ed. David E. Klemm, American Academy of Religion (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 65. He sees no need for hermeneutics when (a) something is totally foreign, since hermeneutics is then not possible; and (b) something is devoid of strangeness, since hermeneutics in this case is not necessary because there is nothing strange to remove.

¹⁵² Ong, 7.

This narrative unit of Genesis provides the answer to the question concerning how and why we have different cultures, or people groups, and different languages, if all humanity descends from one person.¹⁵³ Morgenstern relates ancient rabbinic tales that the original singular language was Hebrew, spoken by God, angels and humanity.¹⁵⁴ Morgenstern, with many commentators, sees the real purpose of the narrative is to recount the assertion of the fallen nature in pride. Also in common with other commentators, such as Umberto Cassuto, he takes note that this final narrative of the primal history links directly to the Abrahamic narrative.¹⁵⁵ God chooses one people and separates them out to retain that one language, so confounding the language of the rest of humanity.¹⁵⁶ If this view was taken then all languages are developed from that one language, and language itself is the 'given'.

Cassuto argues a strong case to understand that what is meant in Gen 11:1 is that humanity had one language at this time, which they all spoke.¹⁵⁷ The account of nations in Genesis 10 suggests that humanity already possessed different languages, if the text is examined sequentially from Genesis chapter 10 to chapter 11. However, the placement of chapter 10 can be seen to be a deliberate "dischronologization" with respect to Gen. 11.¹⁵⁸ Hamilton also offers an alternate explanation that the one language was a 'lingua franca' for the different language groups.¹⁵⁹ Then there is a linguistic sequential nature to the text.¹⁶⁰ The confusion of languages results from the loss of the 'lingua franca' and hence there is a loss of communication capability.¹⁶¹ In this situation differing languages is not a development from confounding a single language, but the loss of a single language.

It would seem logical that if all humanity descended from one person then there would exist a time when all people spoke a single language. However, the phenomenon of sub-culturation, with its development of unique use of language, and the development of

¹⁵³ Julian Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis: A Jewish Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 86.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans., Israel Abrahams, 1st ed., 2 vols., vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964; reprint, 1992), 225.

¹⁵⁶ Morgenstern, 87.

¹⁵⁷ Cassuto, 239.

¹⁵⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, ed. R. K. Harrison & Robert L. Hubbard Jr., 2 vols., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 347 & 350.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 350.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 355.

colloquialisms, which can occur fairly rapidly, would lend credence to Hamilton's suggestion, particularly taken over a long period of time. Although "dischronologization" would seem to be the most likely explanation of the nature of the text, the explanation of Hamilton is not without merit. The important point is that proceeding on the idea that a 'given' of humanity is a language can be fraught with problems.

The narrative illustrates the fact that language can be tenuous and undergo rapid change. The constant is the facility of speech, or an ability to use a language. Language is a medium used in speech for communication. Language is developed for the purpose of communication and is highly adaptable by a person for the purpose of communication. The same or similar symbols of a language can have "radically different meanings" in different people groups.¹⁶² Consequently, language is used to communicate and is not the repository of meaning, which would have to be considered if language was a 'given' of humanity. The facility of speech is a 'given' of humanity. The importance of the confounding of languages is the stimulus of an awareness of misunderstanding and a need for understanding.

This is the original 'given', i.e. the facility of the ability for communication through speaking a language. The reader is presented in Gen. 11:1 of a record that states that the whole of humanity had at least a 'lingua franca', if not a single language, at that time. It is differences of language that directly raise the issue of misunderstanding in Schleiermacher's view. In the biblical view of human history the concept of hermeneutics arising due to variety of languages, leading to understanding as the resolving of misunderstanding, would not occur in the primal situation. It is the confounding of languages that makes humanity aware of misunderstanding and provides the impetus for seeking understanding.

This raises the question of what understanding would mean prior to this confounding of language leading to languages. In the silence of Scripture, as noted above, being in a state of understanding appears to be a natural state of humanity, as where there is no difference there is no need of resolution of difference. The Book of Proverbs contains many exhortations concerning *understanding* and with the exhortation to get wisdom, Prov. 4.7, is a more urgent exhortation to get *understanding*. Here the implication is not that of

¹⁶² Eugene A. Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1960), 1.

misunderstanding but of not knowing, not being in possession of the knowledge of what is wisdom.

Understanding is the result of the desire to know but requires the presentation to the individual that they are in a place of *not knowing*. The concept of misunderstanding also places the individual in a place of a realization of not knowing, hence in misunderstanding there is also a desire to know, or an individual would not engage in the process of interpretation in order to understand. However, understanding is not just being in possession of information but the appropriation of information into the presuppositional world of a person. Even where the knowledge understood is not accepted as true this itself becomes part of the presuppositional world of a person.

The author of a composition seeks to connect with the *given* of a person that they will naturally seek to understand. If the reader believes they already know and understand what the author is saying then there is a tendency to stop reading or gloss over the composition with only cursory reading. Hence, the author, to stimulate the desire to know, must create within a reader a sense of not knowing, and, may even deliberately use misunderstanding as a tool. The author seeks to connect with the tendency towards immediate acquisition of knowledge to stimulate the desire to know.

The composition, as a direct creation as written text, employs rules of grammar and the abstraction of language as part of the means of communication, i.e. they form part of its ability to 'speak.' The author can employ verbal descriptions, since as noted all three categories of knowledge can be verbally described. Understanding requires that the reader/interpreter develop direct affinity and apprehension of all these categories in interpretation. However, current methodology cannot discern or detect, in the text, the categories of *arational* or *non-rational* knowledge. Their existence can be recognized, but generally are not considered significant in the process of interpretation due to this problem. Restriction of meaning to methodological fruits could result in the loss of these categories of knowledge; at the very least it will result in a minimizing of the impact of these categories of knowledge.

An illustration can be seen in the love between a parent and child. Love itself is intuitive, a person can reason why they love but not acquire love by a process of reasoning. Even before verbal communication via language can occur, a parent can 'know' that they are loved by the child, and, conversely the child can 'know' they are loved by the parent. The knowledge is acquired *arationally* and doesn't require objective description before its acquisition nor is it imparted through objective description. An author incorporating this into a composition can describe the love but relies on the readers experience for immediacy of understanding of that love.

(b) *Non-rational Knowledge*

In the domain of knowledge *non-rational* knowledge is neither objective nor subjective. The term *non-rational* is suggested, as objective rational knowledge is neutral concerning the knowledge related to belief. It is not related to rational reason but it is not subjective, i.e. it is not dependent upon and related to feelings or simply personal opinion. The fact that anecdotal evidence suggests that it has an intuitive aspect and that belief can occur immediately does not move its classification to the subjective. An assumption to be examined in this work is the facility of 'belief' as a 'given' in the biblical text of human existence, and 'faith' as the knowledge of belief or its content. There is an aspect of human consciousness that is able to perceive and reason with this knowledge that is 'belief.' It has been previously noted that this knowledge is transmitted in relationship, and hence in community. Belief can have subjective input in that a person can know how they feel about it and they can communicate a verbal description both of the *non-rational* knowledge and how they feel about it. However, though capable of being verbally described as knowledge, a process of rational reason does not acquire it.

The philosopher Blaise Pascal in the *Pensées* published in 1656, said concerning God (and therefore by extension the domain of faith): "“God is, or He is not.” But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here... According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.”¹⁶³ He noted that a person *must* wager on one or the other of these

¹⁶³ Blaise Pascal, "Pensées," *The Modern Library*, (New York: Random House, 1941), sect. 233.

propositions, and therefore decide on one or the other, since they are already embarked on life.¹⁶⁴ Essentially the implication is that a person must bet their life on the decision. Reason as a rational process is not impacted by either choice,¹⁶⁵ which implies that rational reason is not involved in the process of choice. Therefore, this involves *non-rational* knowledge in terms of its acquisition. As describable knowledge it can be handled with a process of reason but not acquired by rational reason.

Kant follows a similar line of reasoning. He notes that if it is admitted that something exists then there must be that which exists *necessarily*.¹⁶⁶ In his discussion of *a priori* knowledge he noted that there are universals that empower the ability to know.¹⁶⁷ It would seem that this is a basis of his reasoning. The thing that is contingent exists on the basis of another contingency. Then if a person works backwards through each cause and its subsequent cause they must come to a cause that is not itself contingent.¹⁶⁸ This is the reasoning by which a person can “advance to the primordial being,” which is an absolute beginning point.¹⁶⁹ Kant sees that the natural progress of human reason is to start by persuading itself of the absolute.¹⁷⁰ However, when he seeks to deal with the question of identity of this absolute primordial being his conclusion is “the argument has failed to give us the least concept of the properties of a necessary being, and indeed is utterly ineffective.”¹⁷¹ Kant concludes that in all eras of human existence there has been the postulation of the existence of this being.¹⁷²

His conclusion is similar to that of Pascal for whom the existence of God is apprehended as knowledge by the operation of faith, i.e. the assertion of *non-rational knowledge*.¹⁷³ In the thinking of Pascal, humanity through the process of reason is not capable of knowing either that God is or what He is.¹⁷⁴ However, in the thinking of Kant the existence of God is knowable in terms of detection but an identity of that being is

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. (Italics added)

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Kant, 496. (Italics original)

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 496.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 497.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 498.

¹⁷² Ibid., 501.

¹⁷³ Pascal, sect. 233.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

unfathomable from the perspective of reason. Kant acknowledges that in the realm of *non-rational knowledge* exists but human reason is not capable of arriving at its disclosure, i.e. human reason can arrive at a revelation that it exists but not of its content. This seems to accord with Paul's reasoning in Rom. 1:19-20 that the unseen God (hence unknowable in terms of identity) is inferred by the creation itself. The difference between the two positions is that Pascal exhorts leaving rational reasoning as a way of knowing so that a person can indeed come to knowledge of the Supreme Being. Kant is content to not know and evidently sees it as unknowable.

In the philosophy of Pascal objective rational reason is abandoned and the inquirer starts with the proposition of the divine. This carries the implication that understanding starts with acceptance, or believing, and once engaged there is interpretation into the life of a person. Conversely, in the philosophy of Kant objective rational reason arrives at acknowledgment of the divine, but then ceases and abandons the search as unsolvable. The divine identity is not identifiable, through reason, thus leaving the 'essential being' as unknowable. Anything further than this is the realm of metaphysics.¹⁷⁵ In Acts 17:23 Paul used an altar, dedicated "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD," as a starting point to proclaim a knowledge of the identity he had discovered, of this unknown God, to the religious leaders in Athens. Although reference to this text cannot be claimed to represent the Kantian perspective and that of Pascal, the story does have illustrative value.

Consequently, pursuit of the divine based on rational reason can only proceed to an agnostic state at best. Both philosophers agree that rational reason concludes it can't conclude and doesn't know the answer, which is the definition of agnostic. An analysis based in rational reason can only be certain that it is uncertain and does not know. In current methodological investigation of a text the description of belief can be detected where it is explicit. However, via rational reason the interpreter can neither acquire it for the purposes of understanding nor can the degree of its impact on the author, the text or the audience be successfully evaluated. Consequently, there is no presentation of objective rational

¹⁷⁵ Kant, 46.

knowledge an author could use that will result in the interpreter reasoning belief and hence the impact of faith (i.e. belief knowledge) in understanding the author's communication.

It was noted previously that belief, and hence faith, is knowledge that is imparted in relationship and hence community. Fee has noted that not every biblical text is the Word of God in the same way.¹⁷⁶ He believes it should be axiomatic that the genre of the text is considered.¹⁷⁷ The different genres are a means of communicating and can be helpful in these areas of *arational* and *non-rational*, e.g. poetry can convey emotive information that connects with the imagination.¹⁷⁸

Narrative is an example of one means of transmission of *non-rational* knowledge in developing a composition. The biblical narrative is interpreting God into the lives of people as it unfolds. In looking at the story in the text of Deut. 26:5-10, author James Limburg noted that the reading of the story moves from "they" (being the ancestors of the reader), to "us" (the reader becomes included in the story even though never in Egypt) and then to "I" (the story becomes personalized and the reader is now at the front of the story).¹⁷⁹ The affinity of Limburg's assessment with the development of the philosophical description of hermeneutics and the world behind the text, the world of the text and the world in front of the text as moving the interpreter in the direction of understanding is unmissable. Limburg identifies within the biblical text "...three major historical works which tell the story of God and God's people."¹⁸⁰ This total narrative is the thread that unites the Hebrew Bible. In the same fashion the New Testament develops where the core of the Christian faith is a story.¹⁸¹

Story telling is a "hot", or dynamic, medium because it engages the imagination of the hearer.¹⁸² This occurs when the hearer becomes actively 'involved with' the story and thereby becomes 'part of' the story.¹⁸³ The person hearing is interpreting the story into their own understanding thereby placing themselves within the story.¹⁸⁴ This could be seen to be the

¹⁷⁶ Fee, 89.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Wimsatt Jr., 5. Wimsatt and Beardsley suggest that the meaning of a poem attaches to a person as expression of personality or state of soul rather than meaning as an ideal object.

¹⁷⁹ James Limburg, *Old Stories for a New Time* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 5.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

thrust of 1 Cor. 10:6-11 where it seems that Paul is exhorting the Corinthian believers to put themselves in the story and learn from what happened in the wilderness wanderings. They are to interpret it into their own lives. A further example of this appeal to narrative is found in Heb. 3:7-4:13.

The imagination in concert with the presuppositional world of the person is able to cause the reader to interpret the text into their world. Dealing with the text in the present, and consequently in relationship to the question “what it means,” requires engagement of the reader’s imagination (i.e. the human capacity to picture, portray, receive and practice).¹⁸⁵ Hence narrative is an important genre of the biblical text as it opens the way for bringing the interpreter to a place of understanding and therefore revelation. In this process the tradition of faith as knowledge is acquired.

Vanhoozer notes that culture presents an outworking of a person’s “ultimate beliefs and values.” It is where the belief system is lived out.¹⁸⁶ It is what gives individuals their historical particularity.¹⁸⁷ It is a means of sharing the mindset of these values and beliefs.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, a tradition “is a kind of ongoing cultural interpretation of certain foundational works.”¹⁸⁹ It was noted above that in the sub-culture of Pentecostalism ritual, hence tradition, has interpretive value.¹⁹⁰ Culture is transmitting a mindset through its tradition that becomes part of the individual members of that community. Thiselton notes that even things such as the appeal to ‘common sense’ within a community are essentially an almost subconscious recognition of the value of community knowledge in the life of the individual.¹⁹¹ This transmission happens not only geographically but also in time to successive generations.¹⁹² Fee sees hermeneutics as a community affair, the impact of which extends back to the first Christian community of apostolic times.¹⁹³ There is a significant impact that tradition has on interpretation because of the values and beliefs that are transmitted by the community as *non-rational* knowledge through the individual’s relationship to the community.

¹⁸⁵ Brueggemann, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 310.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Israel, Albrecht, and McNally: 152-3.

¹⁹¹ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 705.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 706.

¹⁹³ Fee, 69.

An extended quote from the work of Ricoeur shows that this concept should not be regarded as simply a special feature of sacred text:

We feel that interpretation has a history and that this history is a segment of tradition itself. Interpretation does not spring from nowhere; rather, one interprets in order to make explicit, to extend, and so to keep alive the tradition itself, inside which one always remains. It is in this sense that the time of interpretation belongs in some way to the time of tradition. But tradition in return, even understood as the transmission of a *depositum*, remains a dead tradition if it is not the continual interpretation of this deposit: our “heritage” is not a sealed package we pass from hand to hand, without ever opening, but rather a treasure from which we draw by the handful and which by this very act is replenished. Every tradition lives by grace of interpretation, and it is at this price that it continues, that is, remains living.¹⁹⁴

Authors stand in a tradition and have a belief about their subject matter that at the very least impacts the authorial intent. Ricoeur’s view is of tradition in relationship to the text and its system where his focus is the linguistics. Nevertheless, the principle he outlines holds for historicity as well. Tradition is the transmission of beliefs and opinions that have reached and impacted the author and these beliefs then extend from the author to the interpreter. The verbal description of belief supplies the content of the tradition. In the case of sacred text it not only influences but also shapes the authorial intent, and, consequently directly shapes the author’s composition. This belief is received and transmitted by both the author and the interpreter. If the interpreter does not place themselves within that community tradition, for the purposes of interpretation, then they do not receive the transmitted ‘community knowledge.’ If they do not receive the ‘community knowledge’ nor can they interpret the text’s message.

Fee’s observation concerning the biblical text, i.e. that interpretation happens within the Christian community, the heritage of which goes back to the apostolic times, concords with Ricoeur’s philosophical observation.¹⁹⁵ However, the opening line of Matthew’s gospel shows that this tradition itself builds on a tradition that stretches back to the times of Abraham, and, hence the end of the primal history (Matt. 1:1). The tradition in which it stands is the Judeo-Christian heritage. The beginning of John’s gospel has echoes of the primal history with its similarities to the beginnings of Genesis in the LXX.¹⁹⁶ It is in the process of

¹⁹⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 27. (Italics original)

¹⁹⁵ Fee, 69.

¹⁹⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 113. Carson highlights the clear identification with the creation.

interpretation within the tradition that this tradition itself remains living within the community. The writer of the biblical text stands in a tradition that represents itself as going back to the creation of humanity. The writers and readers of the text understand themselves to stand in this tradition as they write and read respectively, and, as Ricoeur has observed, their respective tasks remain in that tradition. They work from it and they work to it. This cannot be ignored in the hermeneutical process.

The interpreter within the community of faith and the interpreter outside the community are dealing with the same text. As was suggested previously, the authoritative meaning of a text can undergo degrees of change in differing interpreters' contexts and these two situations clearly represent differing interpreters' contexts. Interpreters who place themselves outside the community of faith can, with the qualification of consideration of the faith of the author, deal with the pursuit of 'what did it mean' but not with the pursuit of the issue of 'what does it mean.' The determinative factor is the approach to the *non-rational*, hence belief, aspect of the text not the *rational*, hence objective, aspect of the text.

Fee points out that the exegete from outside the community of faith who does not hold the belief themselves cannot deny or ignore the belief of the authors of the text.¹⁹⁷ The exegete can obtain and know the information but, as was observed previously, understanding is assimilation into a person's presuppositional world and in the biblical text this is the presuppositional world of the believing community.¹⁹⁸ In the case of belief, to understand is to hold the belief. Unbelief is an absence of belief due to a decision not to acquire belief. The only other option, which is to be agnostic, is by definition 'to not know,' hence to not have acquired the knowledge of belief. The issue of hermeneutics is not the validity or otherwise of the position taken by the interpreter or author, as validity is a matter of perspective.

The above discussion of the category of *non-rational* knowledge shows that *non-rational* knowledge is not communicated through rational means, i.e. rational methodologies. Its very nature places it in a different category of knowledge to rational knowledge. However, as has been noted, all authorial communication through written text happens through

¹⁹⁷ Fee, 27.

¹⁹⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 15.

language and is expressed in words. Hence, all knowledge is subject to verbal description. The verbal description of *non-rational* knowledge is found in the tradition of the community. In the area of belief knowledge, i.e. faith, a person standing in the flow of tradition acquires the community impartation of *non-rational* knowledge. This verbal description is available to interpreters, as a context and understanding of belief, in the life of the community and individual, in the interpretation of texts standing in that tradition. In the orthodox Christian community this mentoring tradition is seen as personified in the Holy Spirit. However, as noted by Stendhal for an interpreter to deal with the 'meant' of the author it is not necessary that the interpreter take any belief position on this personification.¹⁹⁹ The impact and effect is detectable and can be evaluated in the tradition of the community. If the interpreter wishes to address the contemporary meaning this will entail dealing with belief in the person and work of the Holy Spirit in dealing with the written text.²⁰⁰

Some Scriptural Illustrations of *Non-rational* Knowledge

It has been proposed in this work that belief can be seen in the biblical account to be part of the being of humanity as a 'given.' A brief outline of this will show a basic understanding at this point. In Rom. 4:3, in the midst of a discussion concerning being justified by faith, the evidence Paul quotes is Gen. 15:6 where it is recorded that Abraham believed God and this was imputed to him as righteousness. Paul notes that this predates circumcision, law and covenant with the nation and so transcends them as the means of righteousness. The act of circumcision was conducted with a faith he already had, Rom. 4:11, which by inference stems from the declaration recorded in Gen. 15:6. It is not reported that God gave him belief as an endowment at that moment, what is recorded is that God responded to the operation of belief by imputing righteousness. In fact there is no record of endowing or causing belief, there is only the recording of its operation. In this passage the faculty of belief is a given. The issue is what a person does with that faculty.

The Scripture in Heb. 11:3 declares that it is by faith that we can understand or discern that the ages were structured and made to function by a Word of God. The echoes of Genesis certainly link 'ages' with the concept of the creation of the universe. Yet the phrase

¹⁹⁹ Stendhal, 422.

²⁰⁰ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, 14.

can also mean eras of human existence. The same formation of the dative case for both 'faith' and 'word' is unqualified, which indicates that they are functioning in a similar way in terms of impersonal agency, hence the statement "by faith....by a word..." seems sound. The verb 'to know' or 'to discern' is Present Active Indicative, indicating being in a state of knowing. Therefore, either the appeal is seen to be to a form of 'leap of faith' mentality, or that faith results in a know-ability. Hence, indicating that because of belief in God a person can believe the statement in the sense of acceptance without really understanding it. Conversely it can also mean that through the agency of belief a person gains specific knowledge, i.e. faith, which is an understanding that this universe and its eons are creations of God.

The passage Rom. 10:8-17 certainly suggests that faith is a knowledge that can be given verbal description, i.e. the Word of God, and is passed on, or transmitted, in community. In Rom. 10:17 the article precedes the word faith and so this indicates that it is the Christian faith that is transmitted not faith as an object in itself, i.e. it is 'the faith' that comes through hearing not the concept of faith. The events recorded in Acts 3:1-16, on the healing of a lame man, portray immediate faith knowledge that results in the healing.²⁰¹ In another interesting narrative in Acts 14:8-11, on another case of a lame man being healed, the Scripture declares that Paul perceived in the man himself faith to be healed. This was an immediate knowledge the man received whilst listening to Paul communicate. It is also significant that Paul could perceive the presence of this knowledge in the man. If the knowledge is indeed *non-rational* and is transmitted and acquired only this way it would follow that only a person having belief in that tradition would perceive it, yet this is not required to describe it.

The Scripture notes that Jesus declared of Himself that He was "the truth," Jn. 14:6. It does not record Him as declaring He was "the information" or set of facts. He asserts himself to be the truth, and as such truth is living and dynamic, not conceptual and static. The worldview of people consists of their presuppositions of what is real and true.²⁰² Truth is the

²⁰¹ The implication is this knowledge is in Peter since at no time is the lame man recorded as having had that knowledge until healed.

²⁰² See a later section in Chapter 4, (a) Connecting Presuppositional Worlds, and Charles Kraft's concepts on worldview.

context into which information fits to make it real and living. The *non-rational* category of knowledge provides the context for understanding of the category of *rational* knowledge.

The Impact of *Non-rational* Knowledge on Understanding

Every interpreter in approaching the text comes to the material "with interpretive frameworks already in place."²⁰³ The Christian faith, expressed in its tradition, cannot be excluded from the interpretive process in dealing with texts since other "faiths," e.g. modernity, empiricism, naturalism, are not excluded.²⁰⁴ Therefore, interpreters, holding a faith other than that of the authors of texts, should seek to understand and make accommodation for their own prejudices.²⁰⁵ Whilst they should acknowledge that an unbiased stance is not possible, Marshall has noted, referred to previously, that this need not be over-exaggerated in terms of an interpreter's ability to undertake the task. The interpreter, from outside the community of faith, cannot exclude the faith of the author and its impact on what he had written in understanding his message, and, must consequently allow this faith to be the 'glasses' they wear in the interpretive task.

Fee states that the aim of all true biblical exegesis is spirituality.²⁰⁶ Only when exegesis is done in this way is it consistent with the intent of the text.²⁰⁷ Bultmann recognized that interpretation involves a presupposition of vital interest of the interpreter for the subject matter of the text. As a result the interpreter investigates the text in a purposive manner.²⁰⁸ The biblical text is addressing itself to the spirituality of the interpreter and only when the interpreter investigates the text from the perspective of the believing community are they positioned to be consistent with the intent of the text.

²⁰³ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 160.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Stanton, 62.

²⁰⁶ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, 5.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutical Inquiry: The Interpretation of Texts*, ed. David E. Klemm, Series in American Academy of Religion (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 119.

Chapter 4

The Conundrum and Paradox: A Way Forward

Part 2: Five Issues Impacting the Hermeneutical Process

Introduction

The previous chapter particularly brought to the fore the need to re-evaluate the nature of the text. The authorial intent is implied by the very nature of the composition, and in the proposals considered it stands as a logical aspect, though difficult to define and evaluate. The final proposal specifically focuses on this aspect of the entity of a composition. Following this there is a summary of the implications of the five proposals and the outlining of the working assumption of the research that will be the basis of the unfolding discussion.

5. The Nature of Authorial Intent in the Interpretative Event

Thiselton proposes that in dealing with historic texts such as the Bible two sets of variables must be brought into close proximity. These are the horizons of the interpreter and the text, which for Thiselton means working towards a fusion of these horizons and this is the subject matter of his book *The Two Horizons*.¹ The fusion of horizons involves philosophical descriptions and categories. Thiselton agrees with the thought of Wittgenstein that philosophy doesn't lead to propositions but functions at the level of clarifying propositions.² Thiselton also sees grammatico-historical methodology as indispensable in the horizon of the text.³ Another important component in this fusion is the study of language itself, which is seen as central to hermeneutics and by implication, to solving the hermeneutic problem.⁴

Ricoeur also considers these two horizons, which he titles as the "time of transmission" and the "time of interpretation."⁵ Ricoeur's object is to seek a means of relating these two times and bringing them together, which is the same form of reasoning as Thiselton's fusion of horizons. He observes that there is no apparent connection between them that performs the task of allowing interpretation to enter "the time of tradition."⁶ The time of tradition is the history of the text and hence its time of transmission. His proposition is to

¹ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 17.

² *Ibid.*, 29. Thiselton sees that Wittgenstein's concept of philosophy was to open the eyes of the reader to see what was always there, 371.

³ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 559.

⁴ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 369.

⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*

postulate the existence of a third time in the process of understanding, which he calls the “time of meaning itself.”⁷ He designates this as a “temporal charge, initially carried by the advent of meaning.”⁸ Evidently this is a transient appearance within the process that will facilitate the intersection of the times of transmission and interpretation. The pattern for such a “charge” is found in the concept of the symbol, which Ricoeur has developed in other works.⁹

The symbol has the structure of double meaning, not only semantically but also non-semantically; the non-semantic aspect is a later development in his thinking.¹⁰ The non-semantic aspect develops because the symbol lacks autonomy and is bound by the differing disciplines that draw various lines of approach to the symbol, e.g. in religion, psychoanalysis etc.¹¹ The issue is not a particular symbol for use but the very principle of the symbol to have double meaning, hence the temporal charge operates with symbolic function.¹²

So as to allow this function to operate Ricoeur establishes his view that there is an aspect of the total picture that is independent of the observer, or interpreter. He views linguistic studies as having established a reversal between system and historicism.¹³ Historicism had been the primary approach to the task. In historicism what comes first is the study of the past, which is now regarded as established as not being independent of the observer. However, in the system of linguistics, the author uses the system itself to communicate.¹⁴ The system is evaluated synchronically not diachronically; it is the meaning of the usage of the semiotic tools at the time of usage that is important not their development diachronically.¹⁵ The diachronic analysis is descriptive and philosophical. Further this system is operating in the author at an unconscious level and hence is non-reflective and non-

⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 45.

¹¹ Ibid., 58.

¹² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 36.

¹³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 32.

historical.¹⁶ This is important as it establishes a relationship with the observer and the system that is independent of the observer.¹⁷

The symbol has non-semantic double-meaning and similarly there is not only the linguistic but the non-linguistic aspects that provide context to language such as social systems that communicate, e.g. language, kinship etc.¹⁸ Since these aspects operate independent of the observer, they are capable of functioning between the times of transmission and interpretation.¹⁹ In symbolic function it would seem that Ricoeur sees this concept develops the temporal charge that allows intersection and hence understanding.

One important inherent assumption in this line of thought is that the author has unconsciously used the system. In fact, as previously noted, in the case of composition this may be at least incomplete if not incorrect. In the work of Ong it was observed that a composition is created directly into written form. Therefore, it would seem logical to assume that the author will have consciously thought through the use of the linguistic system to some degree. In the case of the oral situation, or spoken dialogue, it may seem reasonable to assume that the speaker, as an oral author, does unconsciously use the system. Conversely, in the case of composition it is reasonable to assume a conscious usage. The author may even use that system itself to convey meaning. There is every reason to assume that to some degree the author, prior to writing, has indeed been reflective in considering the system of linguistics they will employ. Certainly, during the process of writing, this will form a conscious part of the author's thinking. In this case the system is not a neutral medium of conveyance of communication but an active integral part of the message.

The concept that the system is independent of both author and interpreter is an innovative approach. On the surface this would indeed seem to be the case, since the observer cannot change the system that was. However, the observer observes from within a system and it would seem also simplistic to assume that the system from within which they

¹⁶ Ibid., 33. It can only be assumed that his thought is that this aspect is independent of the author since it is non-reflective and non-historical.

¹⁷ Ibid., 34.

¹⁸ Ibid., 36. Ricoeur is highlighting the fact that language is not just word meanings but carries cultural factors that communicate in the verbalization of a language.

¹⁹ Ibid.

observe is not to some degree impinging on the system they observe. It is also reasonable to assume that their observation will be undertaken with a consciousness of their own system.

Ricoeur's viewpoint taken overall seems to propose another way of stating the grammatico-historical approach. The semantic moment of the system (the 'grammatico' component) is examined first synchronically and then the non-semantic moment (the 'historical' component) is examined diachronically. The synchronic is science and the diachronic is description. This analysis may seem overly simplistic but does broadly show the issues identified by Ricoeur. The difference between Ricoeur and the evangelical approach is the method of approach. In Ricoeur it is through the text and its properties as text but not as composition, since no value is given to the authorial intent. The evangelical approach is the text as created by an authorial intent, therefore having historical particularity that is part of the science.

In the work of Ricoeur the written text escapes the horizon of the author.²⁰ In his thought, authorial intention may be impossible to attain and even if attainable it may be useless, or even a hindrance to interpretation.²¹ The text carves out its own niche by severing itself from the authorial intent.²² The text consequently, in this reasoning, becomes autonomous with respect to its creator; the author.

Even the view that the reader is absent in the writing and the author absent in the reading, noted by Ricoeur, should be qualified. The statement is on the surface temporally true and really just a logical observation. However, it is not philosophically true. The author of a text has an intent they wish to convey to an intended audience and the concept of that audience shapes the composition. It is not the intent that is shaped by the audience but the communication of that intent, i.e. the composition. The author is not just communicating, they are communicating to someone. Furthermore, the author is communicating a specific something not just anything.²³ The occasional nature of epistles is beyond dispute.²⁴ The occasion is the reason the author wrote the text and by extension it can be said that there is a

²⁰ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 30.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 25.

²⁴ Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, 23.

reason in all texts that occasions the author to write. The authorial intent is what they intend to do in response to the occasion. This leads to the creation of the text.

Ong noted that reading a text results in the reader converting it to sound, either literally or figuratively in the imagination.²⁵ This means that the reader carries on a dialogue even if in the imagination. This dialogue may not consciously be with the author as such, but it is a dialogue with the authorial intent by virtue of the fact of dealing with the composition. Therefore, the author is at least unconsciously, if not many times consciously, present in the reading. Philosophically this would mean that an imagined reader is present in the writing and an imagined author present in the reading. In such a situation the text is not autonomous and independent of the author and nor is the reader able to ignore the author in the reading, the detachment is temporal, not philosophical.

The basis of Ricoeur's interpretive dialogue is a dialogue with the autonomous text, hence his seeking of an answer, in the text, to the hermeneutic problem of relating time of transmission to the time of interpretation. His answer is to search for an element that fulfils that of symbol but is independent of the observer. The critical hinge to his argument, and perhaps his philosophy, is the autonomy of the text from the authorial intent. Therefore, the text can be examined on its own merit as independent of the author. As noted above, if the observations on the author and reader and their involvement in the writing and the reading are valid this will undo the hinge of the concept. Nevertheless, the philosophical description of what answers the criteria for relating transmission and interpretation, as being found in the symbol, is illuminating.

(a) The Symbolic Function of the Authorial Intent

In consideration of the issue of a biblical text's relevance for the contemporary situation Fee declares: "nearly everything depends on the presuppositions of the interpreter."²⁶ In this contemporary postmodern concept the emphasis has moved to the text and reader. The contemporary situation implicitly recognizes that the interpreter is indeed independent of the text and original audience both linguistically and historically. They are an unintended audience. Therefore, following the suggestion of Ricoeur, what is needed is a

²⁵ Ong, 8.

²⁶ Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, 27.

'particle' that is independent of the text (not 'from' the text) and independent of the interpreter (again not 'from' the interpreter as if there is no connection there is no possibility of hermeneutics). Consequently, by independent what is required is that it is unchanged by the text and the interpreter. It is proposed that the authorial intent fulfils that criterion, if the authorial intent is seen as the antecedent of the text and not contained in the text.

Perception of the authorial intent as the antecedent of the text results in the following format of their relationship; 'if the authorial intent (concerning the *sache* or matter) is, then the textual communication (resultant written text) is.' However, reversal of the situation is not possible, i.e. their relationship cannot be formatted as; 'if the textual communication (resultant written text) is, then the authorial intent (concerning the *sache* or matter) is.' This situation occurs since the result cannot be the condition, or cause, of the decision to act. The existence of the written text points to, or refers to, the existence of an authorial intent, but as its antecedent. Further, Vanhoozer notes that the author is the controlling presence that gives unity to the composition.²⁷ The author is not only the cause of the text, the "that it is," but also determines what it counts as, the "what it is."²⁸ Consequently, the authorial intent is the condition (*protasis*) under which the written text exists (*apodosis*). The text cannot be the condition under which the authorial intent exists.

The ultimate purpose in hermeneutics concerns understanding a discourse that Vanhoozer sets forth as: "what someone says to someone about something."²⁹ In the postmodern situation advanced by Ricoeur, where both the author and intended audience are excluded, the form of this statement simply becomes, 'something is said.' Yet the 'someone' who communicates is the author and the 'something,' the communication, is in its saying determined by the authorial intention. The relationship between these two things is the 'someone' to whom it was said. Consequently, the authorial intention is a set of presuppositions an author possesses that shapes their view on a matter, which they have decided to communicate on a subject. Hence, using the term Vanhoozer borrows from Gadamer, it is the context of the *sache*, or matter, to be communicated in which it must be

²⁷ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 104.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

²⁹ Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 25.

viewed.³⁰ The communication is not the mind of the author on everything it is specifically the mind of the author on the *sache*. The authorial intent exists before the text and is that to which the text refers. It is also the condition under which the text comes into existence and, as such, the authorial intent is the antecedent of the text. As the antecedent it itself is unchanged by the text, the flow of authority is from the *protasis* to the *apodosis* not the reverse. It is also unchanged by the interpreter, as any interpreter's meaning, or intent, different to the author's is not the author's. The authorial intent qualifies, to use Ricoeur's terminology, as that which can fuse the relationship of the time of transmission and the time of interpretation.

The convergence in the works of Thiselton, Vanhoozer and Ricoeur is on the text as the point of dialogue. However, Thiselton and Vanhoozer investigate the text to illuminate the authorial intent that led to the creation of the text. This is consistent with the relationship that exists between the author and the text. In the case of Ricoeur the text, as 'detached' and therefore 'autonomous,' discloses its own intended meaning to the reader and the relationship is now reversed, since the text becomes the cause of an intended meaning for the reader, i.e. the text is now the antecedent of the reader's meaning without reference to authorial intent. In fairness to the work of Ricoeur it should be noted that his observations about tradition can be seen to give the author a voice in the process, but it is not a decisive voice. It is important to acknowledge that 'detached' is a valid description of the temporal relationship between the author and text. Autonomy, however, authorizes the text to act decisively, independent of the author, which is not acknowledged as the case.

However, the philosophy of Thiselton and Vanhoozer makes the assumption that the authorial intent is either located in the text or attached to the text. If the view is that of location within the text, this could be seen to lead to an almost philosophically pantheistic idea that the text and the authorial intent are identical, or alternately that which is created, the text, contains its creator, the author. These inferences would not be philosophically those of the biblical perspective yet they would be difficult to refute from a hermeneutical viewpoint if the locus of the authorial intent is the text. On the one hand it would seem illogical to state that

³⁰ Ibid., 31.

an infinite God is identical with a finite revelation of Himself. Also on the other hand it would seem equally illogical to state that all that can be known of God, the creator, is contained within the text, or creation.³¹

However, if the view is that of attachment the issue becomes how the authorial intent is attached to the text. It will depend on whether the concept of attachment is taken literally, and therefore the issue is primarily linguistic in nature. When this literal view is taken, in order to avoid the idea of the authorial intent being contained within the text, there will also need to be a corresponding proposal on how the investigation of the authorial intent is to move from a linguistic to a non-linguistic approach. Conversely, if the concept of the attachment is figurative the nature of the attachment is referential.

This would seem paralleled in the text of Rom. 1:19-20. The created world is a source of direct knowledge about the creator.³² Consequently, as a source of knowledge, the creation functions like a text and refers to the creator in its knowledge. The paradox of 'invisible' and 'clearly seen' in the text appears to be a deliberate paradox.³³ The use of such a deliberate paradox of 'invisible' and 'clearly seen' points to the referential nature of the text as knowledge of God. The referential nature is inherent and primary; there is no need for another proposal on how it is referential.

The classic view of texts was that of their ability for reference to worlds outside the text.³⁴ This fell into disfavor in modern times seemingly due to "...ontological conundrums centering on the nature of reality and the nature of referents."³⁵ This disfavor of referentiality was related to a "...desire to avoid the metaphysical problems that focus on the relationship of language to reality."³⁶ Walhout suggests the term "*descriptive reference*" as a way of overcoming the problem.³⁷ In this way language can be allowed to point, or refer, to "objects or states of affairs" that are extra-linguistic without becoming embroiled in ontological

³¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 32. Cranfield notes that although God has truly revealed Himself in His creation it is obviously only to a limited extent.

³² Erickson, 154.

³³ Cranfield, 32.

³⁴ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 55.

³⁵ Clarence Walhout, "Narrative Hermeneutics," in *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 72.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁷ *Ibid.* (Italics original)

arguments.³⁸ The basis of this argument is in reality not about metaphysics *per se*, and it will be shown that it is primarily about Western Metaphysics and specifically its development in onto-theology. The result of this debate was the concealment of the ontological issues that are involved and are critical, such as the ontological nature of the authorial intent itself.

These issues will be pursued in this work.

If the text is detached from the author, as Ricoeur has pointed out, then unless the authorial intent is seen as inherent in the text, or directly attached to the text, it can be argued that the text is detached from the authorial intent that caused it, rendering authorial intent ineffective. When the authorial intent is seen as the antecedent of the text, this temporal detachment is not significant, since the text inherently refers back to authorial intent as the referent of the text, but it itself is not a part of the text. The 'meant' of the author is available in the written text and can be methodologically pursued by an interpreter.³⁹ It is the 'meant' of the author that refers back to the authorial intent. The authorial intent then assumes the potential double meaning of the symbol; it is able to relate both to the "what it meant" of the author and the "what it means" of the interpreter, being able to be expressed in other languages and thought patterns.

If instead the authorial intent is viewed as inherently contained in the text, i.e. textual meaning equals authorial intent, then the detachment from the author is also not significant. In this case it would be assumed that the authorial intent detached with the text and meaning, as authorial intent, would be a linguistic property of the text. Yet Vanhoozer himself suggests that meaning should not be seen as a property of texts.⁴⁰ Meaning is a function of persons, it is something they do and a text is a site for a work of meaning.⁴¹ The person, either the author or interpreter, imputes the meaning itself.⁴² It would seem that it would be unwise to proceed on the basis that authorial intent, which directly relates to the issue of meaning, is inherent within the text, since meaning would then be a property of the text.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Stendhal, 422.

⁴⁰ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 202.

⁴¹ Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 26.

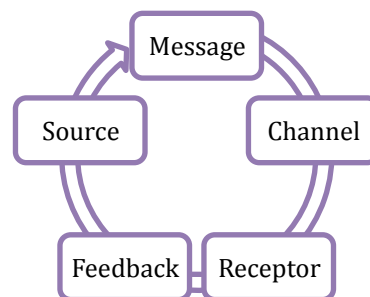
⁴² Ibid.

This seems largely the position of Vanhoozer although he does not state that the authorial intent equals meaning of the text. It is the implication of his position. If Ricoeur's contention of detachment is valid, then unless the authorial intent can be re-attached, or the authorial intent does indeed somehow reside in the text, or the authorial intent is directly attached to the text, this does present a hermeneutic problem for the interpreter who desires to use the authorial intent as a reference in meaning. Authorial meaning is the 'what it meant' of an author for a particular audience at a particular time. Reader meaning is the 'what it means' of an author to a particular audience in the contemporary setting. The relationship between the two, the antecedent of both, should be the authorial intent. It is proposed that recognition of the difference between authorial intent and meaning circumvents the problems.

(b) Authorial Intent in Communication Modeling

If interpretation is a communicative event in encounter with the text,⁴³ as advocated by the above convergence on the text, then the basic concept of how the authorial intent is to be viewed in this communication should be examined. A model of communication that occurs makes the 'text' the default source of communication and the interpreter the receptor of that communication. In *Christian Communication Reconsidered*, Bluck suggests that the basic circular model is a good place to start.⁴⁴ Whilst it must be noted Bluck is speaking about communication of the gospel not hermeneutics, if the interpretive event is a communicative one this communication model should still hold. The basic diagram is as follows:

Fig. 1. The Circle Model of Communication



In this model the Text = Source, i.e. that which is communicating with the interpreter; the Interpreter = Receptor, i.e. that with which the Source is in communication; and in this

⁴³ Ibid., 27. Vanhoozer states he believes in authorial discourse and the possibility of understanding it. He notes in a footnote that this is not an "ideal object" but a "communicative act."

⁴⁴ John Bluck, *Christian Communication Reconsidered* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 9.

case the Authorial Intent would = Message, i.e. the *sache* or matter communicated; the act of Reading would = Channel.

Vanhoozer agrees with Gadamer and Ricoeur that hermeneutics is ultimately a matter of discerning the discourse: "what someone says to someone about something."⁴⁵ The interpreter employs methodologies and academic approaches but the aim is what the author, or in Ricoeur's view the text, said and did with regard to a matter.⁴⁶ The *sache* (or matter) of the text is the master that both the author and interpreter must serve.⁴⁷ It is the substance of the communication. However, the obvious question is: "Can the creation be master of the creator?"

In fairness to Vanhoozer's work, it should be observed that his view is that the *sache* is presented in a language and he is proposing the concept that both the author and the reader are citizens of language.⁴⁸ Consequently, both must be responsible members of language in the communication, hence the concept of *sache* as master. Vanhoozer's view of language is that it "is a kind of sacrament, a means of communicating meaning through verbal signs."⁴⁹ It seems reasonable to state that what the author wishes to convey must be conveyed with regard to the means of conveyance, i.e. language. However, language is the means used by the author in communication. The means of anything is used at the discretion of the user, as master. An author can use language incorrectly and can even employ incorrect usage as a communicative device.⁵⁰ It is the desire to communicate that is master for the author, not the matter to be communicated. Observance of the rules of language is dictated by this desire to communicate. Consequently, the mechanism of communication is the prime issue for the author.

Vanhoozer's position is that the source of the text is the author, who is not only the cause of the text and responsible for its creation, the "that it is," but also what it counts as, the "what it is."⁵¹ His interest is in what the author has said, but considering these observations on communication, in his scenario, the author should become the source and the authorial

⁴⁵ Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 25.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 204.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 80. Thiselton alludes to this in the Apocalypse of John.

⁵¹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 228.

intent the message with the text as channel. The author is indeed the source of the creation of the text, as Vanhoozer has observed, but for interpretation to be possible as a communicative act in the contemporary setting, the author must be replaced by the text as the source. The problem of an author as source is that all agree the author is no longer present.

In theological hermeneutics, in the case of the biblical text, an answer may be sought by proposing dialogue with the Holy Spirit, as being the divine author remaining attached to the text. However, as observed in the 'Introduction' in discussing the same issue in the conundrum of Scripture, this does not solve the hermeneutical problem of dealing within the human realm. Even in adopting an orthodox view of Scripture as the Word of God it is still a communication to humanity, though of divine origin in this view, and must be understood from the human realm to operate out into the divine realm.⁵²

Fee, as a scholar within the Pentecostal community and having an absolute conviction of the Spirit's involvement with the interpreter and text,⁵³ acknowledges that exegesis using the tools of grammatico-historical methodology is essential in dealing with the 'meant' of the author.⁵⁴ The recognition of the involvement and attachment of the Holy Spirit to the text, in orthodox evangelical understanding doesn't circumvent the hermeneutical issues.⁵⁵ Any suggested special hermeneutic would have to remove the text from normal processes and considerations. This would result in the conundrum of Scripture being answered by a separation of the sacred and text. If this is to be avoided the text remains the source, since there is no way of establishing an authoritative voice of the divine author within the normal process.

When the text is the source then the argument regarding meaning becomes one of linguistics,⁵⁶ which is the direction for both Vanhoozer and Thiselton. This is also the ground Ricoeur stands upon, without the constraint of authorial intent. Whilst there may be reference to what the author meant, the only meaning in the process is that of the interpreter. The only true judge of what the author meant is no longer available.

⁵² Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 90. Thiselton notes that the Spirit works through normal human processes. This is consistent with the recognition that the purpose is communication with humanity and occurs within the human realm.

⁵³ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁵ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 90-91.

⁵⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 202.

Vanhoozer defines a text as “*a communicative act of a communicative agent fixed by writing.*”⁵⁷ He later gives a more expanded version: “A text is a complex communicative act with *matter* (propositional content), *energy* (illocutionary force), and *purpose* (perlocutionary effect).”⁵⁸ The first quote shows the pre-eminence of the author and the second really is an expansion of the comment “fixed by writing” in the first. Essentially, Vanhoozer focuses on the illocutionary act, what the author does in the writing, as the access to the authorial intent. He states that the literal sense of a text “is the sum total of those illocutionary acts performed by the author and with self-awareness.”⁵⁹ In the language used in the text and by the interpreter’s observation of grammar, using a methodology of speech-act theory, the authorial intent can be identified and known. This does not place the authorial intent within the text as containing meaning, but it does indicate and imply an attachment of the authorial intent to the text, which in itself would satisfy the criteria of communication for interpretation to be possible.

The advantage of this approach is that the source now becomes the authorial intent for the purposes of the communicative act. The text takes the place of the message and reading, or hearing, the place of the channel in the communicative act. In this situation either the text is a form of referent to the authorial intent, e.g. as in the Ricoeurian concept of symbolic function of text, or it is an equivalent of the authorial intent in written language. However, in a discussion concerning the use of the concept of metaphor to describe texts found in Ricoeur, Vanhoozer is disparaging of this concept.⁶⁰ His primary concern is indeterminacy, which is a feature of the metaphor having the facility of double meaning. Ricoeur uses metaphor as the “touchstone” because of this feature but he uses it as an entrance to the concept of the symbol; having the same tendency but the extra dimension of non-linguistic double meaning.⁶¹

Whether or not it is Vanhoozer’s intention his reasoning leaves the authorial intent essentially hermeneutically equivalent to the written text. The text becomes a means of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 225. (Italics original)

⁵⁸ Ibid., 228. (Italics and parentheses original)

⁵⁹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 178. In this section Vanhoozer develops this concept of dealing with the text in Speech-Act theory, especially the illocutionary act as the means of understanding the authorial intent.

⁶⁰ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*. See pages 131-135.

⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 45. This is the subject matter of the chapter. Ricoeur’s use of symbolic function as a description of the interpretive process is noted previously.

enfleshing the authorial intent. In Christian theology the divine authorial intent was enfleshed in Jesus, however this was not an enfleshing within the text. Even in this case, Jesus is the antecedent of the text.

Bluck's consideration of Christian communication highlights an immediate problem for this situation. Bluck notes that the message can never be acquainted with meaning, since meaning is receptor dependent.⁶² If the text is the equivalent of the authorial intent, as the 'meant' of the author, then it is not just a means of meaning but also actually a vehicle of meaning. This would suggest a transfer of meaning to the receptor via the vehicle of the text. Vanhoozer does not consider meaning as a property of texts. Rather it is a function of persons, something they do.⁶³ His view is that a text only has meaning (as a noun) when someone means (as a verb) something in its use.⁶⁴

Certainly Vanhoozer's suggestion and observations agree with Bluck that meaning as a function of persons belongs properly to the receptor, in this case interpreter. Yet here is the conundrum of his concept; how can that which does not have meaning be the meaning of the author? For there to be any approach to accepting this model of interpretation as a communicative act the 'meant' of the author would need to be demonstrated as enfleshed in the text, i.e. meaning would indeed have to reside in the text. Therefore, every individual text of the composition is a piece of the authorial intent and failure to interpret any part, or indeed loss of an individual text, would result in an incomplete authorial intent.

(c) The Referential Nature of the Authorial Intent

It would seem more productive to proceed with the concept of the text as having descriptive reference to the authorial intent, i.e. as has been proposed the authorial intent is the referent of the text and acts as its antecedent. Ricoeur's model has demonstrated how this can happen. Following the advice of Thiselton, there can be a use of philosophical description without adoption of its mindset. The very concept of interpretation for the contemporary situation is the idea that what was said can be restated in other words, and

⁶² Bluck, 10.

⁶³ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 202.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

languages.⁶⁵ The contemporary meaning is effectively sought as that which the author would have meant if they had stated it in the contemporary situation. It can also be adapted to differing disciplines; the interpretation of the biblical text into the contemporary situation assumes it can address the totality of life. This suggests that authorial intent possesses the symbolic function of double meaning both linguistically and non-linguistically when it is considered as the antecedent of the text.

If, as proposed previously, the authorial intent is seen not as enfolded in the text but acting as the antecedent of the text, this automatically includes the idea of the text as inherently referential to the authorial intent. The issue is how is this referent function operative? How does authorial intent relate to the 'meant' of the author and hence result in understanding of the 'meant' of the author as 'meaning' in the interpreter? Thiselton asserts that understanding remains "...a single, complex, interactive, process in which the interpreter's own developing understanding undergoes constant revision, modification, and correction."⁶⁶ It is therefore a dynamic process rather than a static fixed process. Thiselton sees that the formation of a comprehensive theory of meaning is unrealistic. This is not an observation of skepticism about meaning but a realization that an abstract idealized concept of meaning is unrealistic.⁶⁷ There is a need to consider the particular cases, i.e. the situational context.⁶⁸ Meaning is not only dynamic but is not 'one size fits all' and undergoes adaptation.

Certainly Vanhoozer is not suggesting a static process. He asserts a process of questioning to determine which inferences the interpreter makes are valid and do justice to the authorial intent.⁶⁹ Whilst he does not use the word dialectic it nevertheless fits the model he suggests. The model of a dialectic, where the other pole of the dialectic is the text, will bring the interpreter full circle back to the hermeneutics of Ricoeur.

Vanhoozer, with most theologians, recognizes that no theologian sees from the divine perspective.⁷⁰ Yet theologians have to deal with the existence of absolute truths.⁷¹ So it

⁶⁵ Stendhal, 427.

⁶⁶ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 559.

⁶⁷ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 530.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 183.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 309.

would seem that in the model of Vanhoozer the interpreter moves in the direction of absolute truth. If this was the case, then the passage of time should result in clear perception and less dissention, which does not occur. Also it should result in less commentaries and commentaries gradually approaching the definitive meaning of the Word of God, which is also not occurring. As an ultimate destination it should also result in a mono-cultural world, as that is the only way there will be even a possibility of the divine perception of absolute truth. Even then there is an inherent assumption that this is, or would be, the divine culture. There can even be an assumed allusion to this in texts such as Eph. 4:11-16, as apparently lending credence to this concept.

Yet this ignores the fact that the multi-cultural world is not a human but divine creation, Gen. 11:1-9 & Acts 17:24-27. Further, Acts 17:27 puts a positive spin on this multi-culturalism as facilitating communication of the gospel. It was noted, in mentioning these texts previously, that the creation of misunderstanding places the focus on understanding in communication and thereby activates the presuppositional world of a person. It would seem that the presupposed divine influence does not desire humanity to resume a mono-cultural situation. The search of the absolute as a pure value is not realistic and not consistent with Scripture. What would be consistent with Scripture is a maturation process that sought a relative value and expression of the absolute within the interpreter's historical particularity.

Marshall's observation that an authoritative meaning in one context may have a different authoritative meaning in another context was discussed previously. It was noted that changing meaning implies that some aspect of the communicative process is changing with change of context. The presuppositional world, and hence worldview, of the interpreter changes from one cultural situation to another. Further, the tendency to subculture within a culture shows that at least nuances of differences exist within a culture. What is sought is not a watering down or diminishing of the absolute, but rather an understanding of the absolute in the relative situation.

Postmodernism has rejected the concept of the absolute because modernism failed to produce it. This has occurred as modernism sought the absolute as a pure ideal value,

⁷¹ Ibid., 153.

which does not recognize that within culture it is not producible as an abstract value but only as a value relative to the context of the interpreter. Meaning as an act of persons is always contemporary and situational. The issue that avoids relativism as a defining ideology is the maintaining of a relationship between the relative value and the absolute, where the absolute is always the antecedent of the relative value.

Fee has noted that the need to arrive at an absolute value seeks elimination of ambiguity by imposition of legalities.⁷² Cultural diversity is a creation of God, and God speaks through an eternal word historically conditioned in this diversity by His own choice.⁷³ The interaction of the divine and human leads to a concept of diversity within an essential unity. There is diversity due to historical particularity and unity due to the divine origin.⁷⁴ Parker notes that the belief that textual criticism seeks the recovery of the original unified text of Scripture is mistaken.⁷⁵ There is no one original text and there are differences in the texts that are extant because of situational adaptation.⁷⁶ The indeterminacy of the text is not a hindrance to interpretation but allows a process of adaptation.

Both the text and the interpreter live in indeterminacies but this should not be seen as a problem but as an opportunity for understanding. As Fee noted the tendency to pursue the absolute as absolute leads to settling the uncertainties by a legalistic approach that has the effect of regimenting society. If this was successful, the question must be asked whether God might not feel He must act again as He did in Gen. 11:1-9?

Vanhoozer observed that in the hermeneutics proposed by Schleiermacher the object was to know and understand the author better than they understood themselves.⁷⁷ This would indicate that what would be required is for the interpreter to adopt the mindset of the author. This is also not realistic as a total objective. The authorial intent *is* the view of the author due to the presuppositional world of the author, but not on everything. It *is* the view concerning the *sache* or matter of the text. The desire of the author is for the intended audience to see what the author saw about the *sache*. The authorial intent, in acting as the

⁷² Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, 33.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁵ David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁷ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 231.

antecedent of the text, i.e. it is what the text refers back to, is what has preceded the text and acted as the cause of its being as text.

Concluding Remarks and Five Proposals

The *prima facie* case for the five issues outlined above provides sufficient basis for them to be functioning propositions rather than contingent assumptions. Although they do interact each one stands on its own merit and they are all within an understanding of the current state of hermeneutics. They are not new of themselves but some do contain new perspectives that are simply extensions of what is understood. The statements of them here are not necessarily the headings that designate them in the text, but are statements of their essential content based on the flow of the text.

Proposition 1. The Impact of a Changing Audience is Relativity in Meaning

This seems a logical position that is based on an analysis of the works of Marshall and Thiselton, especially in recognition of this impact in biblical texts. Vanhoozer, although not acknowledging impact on changing meaning, also acknowledges that the presuppositions of the interpreter are indisputably impacting the task. Fee also grants this as essentially a given in hermeneutics. If the extension of this concept to a general rule is valid, which seems to be a position widely held, then the fact that uncertainty is part of the process must be considered. The object is to outline a descriptive method that takes account of that degree of uncertainty and operates in its presence. Further a descriptive method that not only operates effectively in its presence but also avails the use of it in the process is desirable.

Proposition 2. Authorial Intent Functions as Antecedent of a Composition

The thesis has highlighted that there is a difference between orality and literacy, which is important. It has highlighted that a written text is a direct creation, which is different from the inherent assumption traditionally made hermeneutically that viewed written texts as similar to oral discourse. Whilst some commentators have noted that there is an important distinction, they have not clarified that this distinction is because composition is a directly literary act. The composition as a conceptual creation is the means by which an author communicates to an intended audience. The written composition is the creation of a text that has that authorial intent as its antecedent.

The composition involves creation of a text that must convey not only information but also elements that are part of a dialogical situation, but not directly transmitted as information. The only vehicle for this as a semantic unit is the sentence and so an authorial meaning is associated with the text that is designed to allow recreation of the authorial intent. The object is that the interpreter understands the authorial intent. The authorial intent is the direct cause of authorial meaning and so is related referentially to it, but the authorial meaning is also situational in context within the text. Consequently, the authorial meaning refers to the authorial intent but does not contain it.

It is possible to give simple illustrations, e.g. advertising copy, that show authorial intent can be seen as achieved without fully achieving understanding of the authorial meaning in every instance of text. Consequently, it is not an unrealistic suggestion that while authorial meaning has linguistic attachment to the text, authorial intent is directly related to the text but not directly attached to it in a way that would allow current epistemological methodology to access it. Ricoeur has noted that the author becomes detached from the text the moment it is released into the world of readers. If the authorial intent is seen as attached to the text, an argument must be developed to illustrate that it remains attached, as in Vanhoozer and Thiselton (since Thiselton sees hermeneutics as involving a dialogical event with the text in a similar concept to Vanhoozer). If the argument for it remaining attached is not convincing then an argument will need developing that shows how it becomes re-attached to the text. It seems more fruitful to accept its relationship to the text as described above and seek to describe how this comes within the hermeneutical process. Linguistic and historical analysis is critical in approaching authorial meaning, but understanding of the authorial intent is arguably seen as being beyond this step.

What is new in this dissertation is the proposal that the authorial intent acts as an antecedent of the text. It represents a new perception on current discussion and is an innovation that distinguishes authorial intent from authorial meaning. If the authorial intent is the antecedent of the text that guides the development of the text, it is both consciously and subconsciously part of the authorial mindset during the development of all the text in the composition. In Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Fee there is common agreement that the authorial

intent is driving the production of the text. The only innovation is to note that it guides the composition and also note that it is not something seen as contained within every text in a composition. The authorial intent is that which gives rise to every text in the composition and that gives every text cohesion as an integral part of the composition.

Proposition 3. Texts Engage Interpreters in an Event of Understanding

An author creates their textual composition as a means of communication due to their authorial intent concerning a subject matter. The authorial intent develops initially within the horizon, and hence world, of the author. However, the commitment to communicate causes the author to frame the text in the light of the horizon, hence world, of an intended audience, which represents a fusion of horizons of author and intended audience that essentially functions as though there is a world of the text. Factors such as the operative effects of the text cause the text to begin to open up a world for the reader that is a world opening in front of the text.

The advent of the unintended reader, which includes readers from differing cultures or even subcultures to those anticipated by the author, introduces a new horizon in the interpretive process. The text now is opened into a new world in front of the text, rather than itself opening up a new world in front of the text. This raises issues such as historicity and hence, for understanding, the examination of what a text meant and subsequently what it means in the world of the reader.

The event of understanding must consider all three worlds. If the impact of the world of the author is not evaluated elements such as the tradition in which the author and their work stand will be lost. As Ricoeur has noted, if this element is lost the text becomes a dead text. If the world of the text is not evaluated there is no basis for knowing the 'meant' of the author. If the only world considered is the world in front of the text then the only meaning possible is the reader's with no basis for meaning that is relative to that of the author.

However, in this process the text is not just conveying information as a passive vehicle for meaning. Knowledge is not just acquired due to the efforts of the reader but imparted and experienced in the process of understanding. Since the textual composition is a direct creation into literary form it must supply not only information but also context and

explanation. The only vehicle available to the author is the sentence as the basic unit of meaning and the presupposition of language. The problem is that methodologies developed for undertaking the analysis of a text have all been developed in modernism and consequently assume that knowledge is acquired. Not only is methodology seen as a means of acquiring knowledge it also assumes that knowledge is of the form of rational objective knowledge. Modern methodology is therefore inadequate to deal with forms of knowledge other than rational, e.g. subjective elements and belief. It will be argued that the subjective elements are what engage the reader in dealing with a text to draw the text into their own world. It will also be argued that belief, or *pistological* elements, create the context or relation to reality in which informational elements such as objective knowledge are held. It is important to re-examine the text and its function in all aspects in the event of understanding.

Proposition 4. Understanding Involves *Rational, Arational* and *Non-Rational* Categories of Knowledge

Theology has long recognized that there is a dimension beyond the rational human mind and that the human constitution involves what is often referred to as a metaphysical aspect. Generally speaking this is usually separated from the concept of knowledge and not discussed as knowledge. This avoidance of discussing this as knowledge has developed in modernism, under the influence of philosophers who have separated faith from knowledge. It has also been largely assimilated into the theological position. In more recent times this has begun to be strongly challenged in theological circles, although it has already been widely challenged and accepted in philosophical works. The work of N. T. Wright is mentioned as challenging this *status quo* in thinking.

Consequently, some of these concepts are not new and innovative as a proposal. The concept of knowledge beyond the scope of rational knowledge can also be inferred in the works of Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Fee in discussions concerning the believing community and tradition. The designation of the subjective element as *arational* is merely a recognition of a lack of relationship to reasoning from a rational objective perspective. However, the designation of the concept of faith knowledge as *non-rational* and the explanation of that designation is considered to be new in this writer's understanding. Nevertheless, the broad

concept that faith and belief are different categories to human reasoning are not new but is widely accepted. Hence the newness is one of categorization and implication because of this description.

It is also considered that the creation of the term *pistology* is new. It is created in part to help avoid baggage and preconceptions involved in using the term theology. It is created as a universal term that recognizes that belief is a 'given' of humanity, which is supported in the biblical text, and not just belonging to the community of faith. It is an aspect of the being of humanity. The biblical text of 2 Thess. 3:2 has been used to indicate that some people do not have faith, i.e. not all people are people who hold beliefs. However, the definite article is present and so a sounder reading would be "not all have the faith," which, in the context of the passage, would indicate the Christian faith. Christian faith is not only an act of belief, it is belief in something, i.e. there is also content, see Rom. 10:8-10. Belief is a faculty of all people hence belief in Christ for salvation can be commanded. The belief of a person sets the context for their approach to the task of hermeneutics, i.e. the recognition that interpreters are never without presuppositions in approaching the task, which includes the belief dimension.

When it is recognized that there are other categories of knowledge, even just to the recognition that subjective elements are normal, acceptable and not only part of, but also integral to, existence and hence interpretation, this becomes a methodological problem in dealing with texts. Current philosophical descriptions become inadequate and this indicates a new way of looking at accepted concepts is needed.

Proposition 5. Authorial Intent Acts Referentially in the Interpretive Event

This proposition picks up on a concept suggested by Ricoeur in the hermeneutical process. Ricoeur noted the potential for double meaning in the symbol lends itself to being a model for the process of dealing with texts by interpreters. Vanhoozer looks at but rejects this concept, due to 'indeterminacy'. However, part of the problem is the concept of the 'determinate' or 'absolute.' He admits no theologian enjoys a 'God's eye view' (as do most theologians) yet ignores the relative nature implied in recognition of this.

Acknowledging the referential nature of the authorial intent as able to relate to both text and interpreter is a more positive view, when this concept of relative value of the absolute in the human situation is accepted. It has long been recognized that a text can be restated in another language and culture. The very concept of dynamic equivalence, widely accepted in theological circles in interpretation and translation, shows the ability of the authorial intent to relate to a time other than the time of its expression into written text.

The Preliminary Working Assumption:

The Written Text is an Entity that acts as a Vehicle of a Composition that itself Provides a Vehicle for a Reader/Interpreter in Understanding

The traditional view of the text as essentially a vehicle for the concept of an author's meaning, or intention, has been demonstrated to be untenable. Since meaning is directly derivative of thinking, such a view presupposes some form of inter-subjectivity between author and interpreter, i.e. some form of interconnection of the psyches involved. Ricoeur, Gadamer and others, considered in the five proposals above, have highlighted the detachment of text from author in the case of the written text, which creates the 'distanciation' observed by Gadamer, so that it renders such a view untenable in the contemporary situation.

In what appears to be an attempt to avoid total relativism, where meaning is solely that of each individual interpreter, Gadamer highlights the universal nature of language, which then is developed by Ricoeur as the 'sense of a text.' The text, having escaped the horizon of the author's intention is freed to release the meanings inherent in language, and this supplies some form of constraint so that the reader/interpreter is not freed to make whatever he or she will of the text. The text in this case has become a vehicle of meaning but without constraint due to authorial input or guidance. The act of *parole*, as a willful act that creates the composition, is essentially reduced to being undetectable and as a result the entity of the composition becomes lost. The loss of this in the postmodern paradigm is itself a clue that points to the entity of the composition as distinct from the entity of the text, to which it is linked.

The text, as entity, is not a person and, since meaning is agreed by commentators considered in this work to be an act of persons, the reality is that meaning is essentially at the

behest of the reader/interpreter. In the work of Gadamer and Ricoeur, as leading voices in postmodern thought, there is a conscious decision not to consider either the historicity of the author or original addressees. This decision, though argued on the basis of issues such as distanciation, is not compelling. The result of their decision is a nebulous situation where there is no real constraint upon the interpreter in meaning. The nebulous nature of such a proposal has been realized in the development of postmodernism as it has moved beyond them, which has led to reader-response hermeneutics that in the extreme situation becomes purely the reader's meaning. The only constraint suggested in the extreme situation has been the idea of the reading community.

Some rectification of this situation can occur by not ignoring the situatedness of the author and original addressees. Grammatico-historical methodology makes possible a reconstruction of authorial meaning in relationship to the text. The author lived in a historical situation and this is accessible to a large degree, and so the semantic range available to the author is available to be accessed by the contemporary interpreter, as an unintended audience. Similarly the intended audience lived in a historical situation and a semantic range of understanding can be reconstructed. The author has consciously considered both these aspects in choosing their semantic units in the act of *parole*.

The author intended to communicate with the audience and recognition of issues such as genre, occasion and agenda, used in the communication, make possible a reasonable approximation of the authorial meaning in the text. The use of the term authorial meaning does not need to imply any relationship to the psyche of the author, since at this point what is being dealt with is not what the author *means* but an understanding of what the author *meant* in their text. Since the interpreter and the author are both persons, both are capable of thinking and hence an interpreter, by adopting the presuppositions of the author, can willfully construct an approximation, or guess, to use Ricoeur's term, of the authorial meaning as related to the text.

It is here that the term authorial meaning can be misleading. There can seem to be an implication that the reconstructed meaning is in some way directly identified with the author. However, as Ricoeur and Gadamer have both demonstrated, in the task of

interpretation what occurs is 'I (i.e. the reader/interpreter) interpret' so as to make what is foreign one's own. Therefore it is an act of the interpreter not the author, and so in reality the meaning reconstructed is the interpreter's meaning, not the author's. However, it is an interpreter's meaning that has recognized that which is related to the entity of the text is a composition; furthermore it is a composition that has unique identity due to authorial intention. Each composition is rendered unique as a composition in and by the act of *parole*, which is a willful or intentional act. What the interpreter has sought to do in this situation is to recognize constraint of meaning that is inherent in the composition, so in this way retains the unique entity of the composition, which is related to the text as an act of *parole*. The recognition of this constraint in reconstruction of meaning directly acknowledges the existence of the intention of the author. Any difficulty with identifying or dealing with this authorial intent does not negate its existence.

As indicated above in the proposals examined the concept of the authorial intent is not easily disposed of, yet engaging and identifying it presents an impasse to the hermeneut who seeks to retain its value. The attempts to accommodate it within current epistemological methodology in Vanhoozer and Thiselton are not convincing, although their argument for its existence are. Vanhoozer's book *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* is essentially devoted to the topic of defending the impact of the author on the meaning of a text. The first half of his book is an insightful and extensive examination of the inherent dangers in the postmodern movement in the interpretation of texts, and especially its extreme understanding in Deconstruction. Thiselton has addressed the positives and negatives in his numerous volumes examining the philosophical disciplines and their implication for Christian interpreters. Yet on the subject of authorial intent his primary emphasis is upon the adverbial understanding, which as discussed above really achieves no more than the acknowledgement that the text is evidence of its existence. However, this view offers no real indications on its evaluation.

Even within Pentecostalism there are diverging views concerning the postmodern turn, from people such as Timothy Cargal,⁷⁸ who advocate embracing the postmodern turn, and alternately people such as Robert Menzies,⁷⁹ who advocate strongly for cautious dialogue rather than embracing it. What is generally recognized is that in this area of authorial intent there has been an elucidation of certain problems with the Romantic viewpoint, and hermeneutics has been changed, with the result that authorial intent has become passé as a subject, and its advocates viewed as traditionalists at best. Hence the impasse, which is that there is solid reasoning for the existence of authorial intent but no clear way forward in current methodology to evaluate its impact on interpretation. Primarily Vanhoozer, and to some degree Thiselton, seek the answer in Speech-Act theory in the concept of the illocutionary acts performed by the author in the text. What will be covered in the development of the thesis is that the speech acts, i.e. the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, remain locked into an epistemological evaluation of the ontology of the impersonal event, and Ricoeur's work in *Oneself As Another* has underscored the terminal nature of this ontology in dealing with the question of the agent.

The entity of the composition, with its implication of intentionality, which is essentially lost in not only detaching the entity of the text but declaring it autonomous with respect to meaning, highlights the need to examine the entities of the text and composition and their relationship. The realization that a literary text is not only to be engaged with in terms of rational knowledge but also *arational* and *non-rational* knowledge further exemplifies the need to re-evaluate the entity of the text. These act essentially as dimensions of the text, which therefore goes from a one-dimensional entity, in the approach adopted in current epistemological methodology, to a three-dimensional entity. Whilst epistemology can recognize the existence of language associated with these other forms of knowledge it is inadequate to deal with them. Furthermore the realization that the concept of 'intention to'

⁷⁸ Timothy. Cargal, "Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Post-Modern Age," *Pneuma* 15, no. 2 (1993): 170. He contends that pastors in the Pentecostal pastorates already operate a form of pre-critical hermeneutics. The general argument he presents in his article is that Pentecostal pastors should seek their hermeneutics in the postmodern approach.

⁷⁹ Robert P. Menzies, "Jumping Off the Postmodern Bandwagon," *Pneuma* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1994). Menzies recognizes what Cargal points out, i.e. that the Pentecostal pastorate could be susceptible to postmodern thinking, however, he advocates caution in acceptance of its primary tenets. Menzies especially recognizes the potential loss of the implications of authorial impact, 116.

directly relates to the agent points to the idea that authorial intent has at least an ontological nature that has not been considered in the task of hermeneutics. The need to rescue this aspect of the entity of the composition, i.e. the authorial intent, is not just a matter of safeguarding the idea that God can speak in and through the text, it is a matter of rescuing the entity of the composition itself, which is a literary criterion. As Vanhoozer has observed, the “fates of the author of traditional literary criticism and of the God of traditional theism stand or fall together.”⁸⁰

In the light of the discussion so far, the text acts as a stimulus to meaning in the interpreter. Hence, it stimulates engagement of the authorial intent in a dialectical, or self-dialogical, fashion about the subject matter of the text, but it not only stimulates, it also shapes the self-dialogue. Consequently, the text of an author is not an enfleshing of the authorial intent but a vehicle to allow interaction with the authorial intent. Authorial intent is not in the text, as in Vanhoozer,⁸¹ but is better viewed as a direct referent associated with the text. Missiologist and anthropologist Charles Kraft defines meaning as “the structuring of information in the minds of persons.”⁸² If meaning exists for persons, as noted previously, and occurs in the minds of persons then the strict concept of authorial meaning, as opposed to the interpreter’s reconstruction of it, exists in the living author not in the text.

In literacy, as opposed to orality, words appear similar to things. Ong states people think of words as the “visible marks signaling words to decoders, i.e. we can see and touch words in texts and books.”⁸³ Consequently, meaning can appear to be in the words. Vanhoozer indicates his agreement with Ricoeur’s assertion that the sentence is a new entity with a meaning not just based on the sum of its parts, e.g. words and phrases.⁸⁴ This is the field of semantics.

Written words are a residue of discourse and oral tradition has no such residue.⁸⁵ In a sense, interpretation can be seen as the re-animation of the residue. Meaning is associated

⁸⁰ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 71.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 29. He discusses his view of the implications for the church if no meaning is seen “in texts.” There is some ambivalence in his view as in “Discourse on Matter,” 25, where he designates texts as “the site for a work of meaning” and notes words have meaning for people not as inanimate objects.

⁸² Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 135 & 148.

⁸³ Ong, 11.

⁸⁴ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 204.

⁸⁵ Ong, 11.

with the living text, i.e. within a person not in a written text. In Heb. 1:1-3 the definitive statement of the communicating God is stated as being the person of His Son, Jesus. This definitive statement is in a person, not a text, and so Jn. 1:14 declares that the word, or discourse of God, became flesh. The referent, the person of Jesus, exists before the text and the text has a referential link to the person. The living word and its meaning exists in a person. In all instances of composition in texts, the living word and its meaning exists in the authors. The text is designed to associate readers with it.

In the hermeneutics of Ricoeur, symbol is used as a description of the process of dealing with a text due to the symbol's ability of double meaning. If the text is a vehicle for relating to the authorial intent, and not a vehicle of the authorial intent, the authorial intent shares qualities with the symbol. The authorial intent relates to the meaning associated with the author's text but is not attached to the text, it exists whatever the state of the text. Also a text can be re-stated in another time and in another language. The very concept of dynamic equivalence in translation acts as essentially anecdotal evidence that the authorial intent stays related to the text but not attached to it. Hence, the authorial intent is capable of double meaning, i.e. it can relate to the time of transmission and to the time of interpretation.

Authorial intent shapes what an author has decided to communicate and inherently involves their presuppositions concerning a matter. The authorial intent in this process is acting as the antecedent of the text. This is the proposal in this dissertation, of this description concerning the relationship between text and authorial intent. The text makes reference to the authorial intent. The object of Vanhoozer's emphasis on speech-act philosophy is to "break free of the tendency either to reduce meaning to reference or to attend only to the propositional content of Scripture."⁸⁶ However, it has been observed that the author, in a composition, must use reference to communicate what is not communicated in transcription. The categories of knowledge involving *arational* and *non-rational* aspects don't communicate without reference. These elements are suggested as vital in interpretation, where the *arational* attaches the interpreter to the text, engaging them in the task, and the *non-rational* sets the view of reality that will be the context for understanding. Interpretation of

⁸⁶ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 163.

this referential aspect of the text is indispensable in interpretation of the *sache* of the author. The presuppositions of the reader must be engaged so as to deal with these issues and this involves reference.

(a) Connecting Presuppositional Worlds

The facility of speech as using a language, in the biblical record, is a given of humanity; to use Heidegger's concept it is an aspect of *Dasein*, the being-there, of a person. Ong notes that in his view human society essentially always has a language that is usually spoken.⁸⁷ Language is the means by which a person can express their view to another person. It therefore functions between the presuppositions of a person and the world. Consequently, it is an important means of gaining insight into the worldview of another person, and subsequently of communicating with them.

Kraft states that people groups organize their perception of reality to determine what "... can or should be, what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible and impossible."⁸⁸ These perceptions are therefore the presuppositions through which life is viewed, evaluated and lived. It is from these presuppositions that the makeup of what constitutes their worldview will be developed.⁸⁹ Their worldview determines the values system of the people group and from this basis interacts with and impacts every other aspect of their existence as a people group.⁹⁰ The concept of understanding includes the ideas of perception of meaning, significance and explanation of something; it also includes the idea of being knowledgeable about the nature and character of things, i.e. it is to understand something. Clearly understanding happens within the presuppositional world of a person and is expressed in their view of reality, i.e. in their view of the world or worldview.

These presuppositions can be converted into verbal descriptions for the purpose of communication, i.e. converted into language. In actual dialogue with another person, not only is verbal communication present but also non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication can be rich in significance.⁹¹ Also, it has been noted that there are categories

⁸⁷ Ong, 7. He notes that sign languages are a substitute for speech and are therefore secondary not primary.

⁸⁸ Kraft, 53.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ong, 7.

of knowledge that are not available in the text through rational processes, and hence methodology, but rely on the experience of the reader, in the case of *arational* knowledge, and the *pistology* of the reader, in the case of *non-rational* knowledge. The presuppositions of a person include all forms of knowledge, and in dialogue, via the means of language and interpersonal interaction, these are communicable.

The rational aspect of a text lacks some of these dimensions. The author must use verbal description to create an opportunity for understanding in these other areas, i.e. the author must create a composition. Hence, the text facilitates the understanding of the presuppositional world of a reader/interpreter by acting in a way that can associate authorial meaning with interpretive meaning. It acts between the presuppositional worlds of the author and interpreter. Since presuppositions constitute the view of reality, they are capable of being approached from differing perspectives, giving them the same flexibility of double meaning in the symbol. When the text is seen as a vehicle for the composition, hence authorial intent, which includes the presuppositions of an author on a matter, the text can function for a multi-disciplinary approach to the authorial intent.

It was noted above that in the historic text the historical particularity of both author and audience, and the authorial intent, are fixed. Due to the nature of transmission, recovery of a single original text or complete knowledge of the historical particularity may present difficulties. There are critical disciplines that can address these issues so that any uncertainty can be evaluated in the process of interpretation. However, when the view is taken of text as a vehicle of the composition as opposed to its identification with the composition, since the authorial intent as antecedent becomes a referent of the text, any indeterminacy in these areas need not be seen as critical to either understanding the authorial intent or impeding access to it. This accessibility of the authorial intent allows it to function in both the time of transmission and interpretation.

This view of a text positions the reader at a distance from the time of transmission, and not part of the intended audience, to deal with the 'meant' of the author. The interpreter from outside the community of faith must give due regard to the tradition both of the author and the intended audience up to and including the time of transmission. Further, this view of

the functioning of a text positions the interpreter within the community of faith, and standing in the same tradition as the text, to be able to arrive at a concept of the authorial intent in a contemporary situation, i.e. the contemporary 'meaning' of the historical 'meant' of the author. In order to achieve this, the interpreter must observe the same constraints as the interpreter from outside the community of faith, to arrive at the concept of the 'meant' of the author. They must regard the tradition of the text and its transmission as well as the tradition of the community, of which they are part, in regard to the text. It is a relative value of what the author would mean if placed in the contemporary situation of the interpreter.

(b) Implications for Biblical Hermeneutics

There are implications for biblical interpretation that are significant in theological hermeneutics. When this concept of the text is adopted there is no need to suggest a special hermeneutics. The assertion that God has spoken in the text is a belief about the text. Even where a writer asserts that they speak for God or from God there is nothing about the language that inherently makes this claim different from any other claim. The difference is the *pistology*⁹² (or theology in the case of the biblical text) of the author, community and hence individual within the community. The recognition of the text as a vehicle of the composition that is available for the interpreter in understanding the composition, positions the interpreter to access the knowledge involved in understanding, so that they can incorporate the *rational*, *arational* and *non-rational* categories. All these categories are part of the presuppositional world of a person and so all must be engaged in the interpretive process.

Fee sees spirituality as the aim of exegesis of the biblical text, and only when it is done with this aim is it done in accordance with the intent of the text.⁹³ In the biblical text spirituality relates to involvement with the Holy Spirit.⁹⁴ Vanhoozer asserts that God is present in Scripture "as a communicative agent" as the ultimate author.⁹⁵ In this situation, an interpreter with a *pistology* consistent with Christianity can employ a special use of hermeneutics in direct communication with God as the ultimate author of the text. In dealing

⁹² See previously for the suggestion of this word as a way of studying and dealing with the understanding of belief knowledge.

⁹³ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 34.

with the Scripture the reader is not just being informed about God but is actually interacting with Him.⁹⁶ Communicating with the supernatural requires a corresponding set of beliefs.⁹⁷ It requires a relevant *pistology*, or in the case of biblical text, a theology, i.e. a set of presuppositions concerning beliefs.

It was noted above that the interpreter from outside the community of faith is able to deal objectively with the 'meant' of the author for the intended audience. Due to a different *pistology* to both author and audience they cannot deal comprehensively with the authorial intent in relationship to contemporary meaning. They can evaluate a verbal description of both the *arational* and *non-rational* aspects by the author and audience; like all knowledge these categories are subject to verbal description. They are able also to investigate the tradition of the text and community, since the time of transmission of the text, in order to gain some objective understanding of the meaning of the text developed over time, as in Reception History, to the intended audience.

However, special use of hermeneutics is required for understanding what the text means in the contemporary situation. As Ricoeur has noted, regarding all texts, they stand in a tradition and that tradition only lives when understanding occurs within the tradition. Fee asserts that for the exegete to come to full understanding of the biblical text they must approach the text with an absolute conviction concerning their *pistology* that they are dealing with God's word.⁹⁸ In Fee's estimation spirituality must precede exegesis as well as follow it.⁹⁹ Hence, the requirement of a special use of hermeneutics is simply sound hermeneutics that deals with the text within its own tradition.

Fee has noted that not only did the Spirit inspire the authors of Scripture but they also brought their own spirituality to their task.¹⁰⁰ True exegesis should engage the author's spirituality and not just their words.¹⁰¹ This engagement should happen in such a way as to become part of that spirituality.¹⁰² As in the issue of narrative discussed previously, this

⁹⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁷ Nida, 18.

⁹⁸ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, 14. The term 'pistology' is not used by Fee. It is used as a descriptive term whose derivation has been alluded to previously.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

approach allows the readers to orient themselves so that they are able to communicate with the *pistological* knowledge of the authorial intent and be impacted by it.

In engaging the presuppositional world of the author they are engaging a presuppositional world that gave rise to the authorial intent, which purposed the creation of the text. In this setting, the reader is positioned by direct engagement with the presuppositions of the divine and human author to find, in their own presuppositional world, a contemporary meaning.

It is important to realize that both the interpreter and the text stand in traditions that form the context of the task of interpretation. Thiselton discusses the issue of *reception history* and retrospectively considers it to be something he should have included from the beginning.¹⁰³ This involves studying the history of texts, and how they are perceived and received by the community of faith, which shape theology and are in turn impacted by theology.¹⁰⁴ This draws the tradition of the community, in dealing with texts, into consideration when approaching the concept of contemporary meaning. In this way it represents a thread of the interaction with the divine mind by the community of faith, of which the interpreter is part. This is not to advocate traditionalism, which controls the process, but tradition as mentor, which informs the process. Due to the nature of *non-rational* knowledge, as belonging to the community, and passed on in community, these issues will be important in the hermeneutical pursuit of understanding.

The Thesis Statement

Consideration of the preceding proposals suggests that a new philosophical description of how texts function and are interpreted should be developed. This is what is proposed as the working assumption of this thesis. The concept is that a text acts as a vehicle of the composition that in turn provide a vehicle for the interpreter that allows interaction with the authorial intent. There are implications for hermeneutics that are significant if this assumption is accepted as valid. The concept of 'special hermeneutics' becomes legitimately a 'special use' of the hermeneutics that applies to all texts. The belief aspect of sacred text cannot be separated from the text, since the belief of the author and the

¹⁰³ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 36 & 39.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

intended audience forms an integral part of any text. The nature of the biblical text as sacred text, where that belief is seen to directly control the authorial intent, and thus the text, requires a special use of hermeneutics rather than a special hermeneutic. Furthermore, the belief of the interpreter and their treatment of the belief of the author and intended audience are critical.

The thesis statement of this work is that: "Authorial intent is what gives being to the entity of the composition in relationship to a text, so that an observer is positioned to understand what the author understood, i.e. see what the author saw."

Chapter 5

“The Reports of the Author’s Death have been Greatly Exaggerated”

Introduction

The concepts of the conundrum and paradox have acted as a broad basis to open dialogue concerning the issues involved. The concept of the conundrum deals with issues related to authorship and the presence of voices associated with the text. The paradox deals with issues surrounding the nature of the text and how it is a vehicle for a message, how the voice “speaks” to the reader. These three aspects of firstly authorship, hence authorial intent, secondly the nature of the text, with its relationship to the composition, and thirdly the understanding of the composition and the subsequent issue of interpretation, constitute the subject matter of the following chapters.

The conundrum must first be considered as this touches on the very possibility of the idea of an authorial message associated with the text. If the author has no voice, there is no authorial message and the only possible message is that from the voice of the reader. In this situation there is no conundrum, since the reader has become both the creator and the vehicle of the message. The paradox, hence the nature of the text, becomes important once it is established that the author has a voice and there is a message that has been communicated, of which the reader is the means of the continuation of discourse.

The postmodern declaration of the autonomy of the text has rendered the concept of authorial intent as *passé* and any impact of the author on interpretative meaning as irrelevant. There is no authorial voice and any voice is simply an interpreter giving voice to the autonomous text. The purpose of employing an adaptation of the Mark Twain quote as the chapter title is that it exemplifies the situation. The reports of the death of the author are exaggerated and what has occurred is a failure to recognize the author’s continuing impact. Is it possible that the autonomous text is perhaps a version of the author concealed and imprisoned in a philosophical guise?

1. The Concept of Authorial Intent

Whilst not addressing the issue of authorial intent as message, Ong suggests that writing is the interruption, or suspension, of discourse and the reader is the vehicle of

resuming the discourse.¹ Only with the advent of the reader, through whom the discourse is resumed, does verbalized meaning continue.² The text, as written text prior to being engaged by the reader, is “but a visual design.”³ In being engaged by the reader the text is part of the discourse, but “the utterance making the discourse is *not in* the physical text but *only in* the reader or readers (or, originally, in the writer).”⁴ The text is only expressed through the reader and only through interpretation are written marks changed back into meaning.⁵ The text “has an author and no longer a speaker.”⁶

Consequently, if there is an authorial voice associated with the creation of the written text, which in Ong, as in Gadamer and Ricoeur, is noted as originally existing in the event of writing of the text, it is, by extension, the authorial discourse that is resumed by the reader. However, if there is no authorial voice involved in interpretation of the text, as asserted by all three of these writers, then the question must be asked, what, or whose, discourse is resumed?

As Ong has clearly highlighted the text is not the discourser, the reader is; the text is the matter that is the basis and substance of the discourse. Therefore, the written text, prior to its attachment to and engagement by a reader, has as its referent a discourse of which it itself is purely representative. It is not the discourse but refers to the discourse. The voice of the resumed discourse is the reader’s voice. Since the discourse does not originate with the reader the only logical conclusion is that it is the author’s discourse that is resumed by the reader’s voice. Accordingly, it can be asserted, on the basis of the reasoning above, that the written text has as its referent an authorial discourse. Another way of stating this would be to say that the authorial discourse is the antecedent of the written text.

In the preceding Chapters a case was presented proposing that authorial intent is best seen not as authorial meaning, being the meaning of the text. This would be coincident in part with what Ricoeur calls the verbal meaning of the text. The authorial intent is best understood as the antecedent of the text. This is not inconsistent with current discussion of

¹ Walter J. Ong, “Text as Interpretation: Mark and After,” *Semeia* 39, no. (1987): 9.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* (Italics added, parenthesis original)

⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 349.

⁶ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 30.

written texts. Authorial discourse is the resultant communication as originally disclosed by the authorial intent.

The central issue is whether or not the author has a referential 'voice' in this disclosure that the reader should 'listen' to in the formation of understanding. Subsequently, if operational, it must be examined as to how this 'voice,' to be effective, can operate in a non-oral situation. If the reader's discourse *is* the continuation of the authorial discourse, although the text may *appear* autonomous, due to its temporal detachment, this is illusory. The author had an authorial intent, which is then expressed in an authorial discourse, in the form of a communication, which is the resultant written text. Subsequently the reader is continuing this discourse. The very concept of continuity is suggested by the concept of the sequence of the communication, i.e. someone (an author) said something (the composition in relationship to the text) to someone (either as an intended or unintended reader). This would seem to preclude autonomy.

If the reader is resuming the discourse of the author, does this imply that the reader should operate simply as an agent of the author? In one sense this would seem, on the surface of things, to be a logical inference. Further, if this situation is the case, is the proposal essentially that the reader should become some form of neutral voice either of, or for, the author? However, this would coincide with what Ricoeur identifies as "the Romanticist ideal of coinciding with a foreign psyche," which he specifically rejects.⁷

Gadamer, in dealing with the issues involved with historical written text, gives an effective illustration that highlights the folly of assuming that the reader can become the *de facto* voice of the author. In a discussion of literary tradition he observes: "in order to be able to express the meaning of a text in its objective content we must translate it into our own language."⁸ It has been noted previously that translation involves not only transference of one language to another but also thought forms and presuppositions.⁹ Therefore, even if the

⁷ Ibid., 92.

⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 357. Later in the discussion he shows that his discussion concerns interpreting texts; "This is now confirmed by the linguistic aspect of interpretation. The text is made to speak through interpretation," 358.

⁹ Caird, 2.

reader is using the same language as that of the author of the text, interpretation moves beyond language and Gadamer's observations provide illustrative value.

The process discussed by Gadamer involves the assimilation of what is different into what is familiar, and, despite any objectivity that may be employed by the reader, the "alien being of the object" has already been subordinated into the reader's own conceptual frame of reference.¹⁰ Therefore, at best the interpreter represents a relative understanding of the authorial intent from the perspective of the interpreter. As Gadamer states, "To try to eliminate one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible, but manifestly absurd."

The reader is indeed a voice of continuation of the authorial discourse, yet not from the viewpoint of the author but that of the reader. The issue is not that of the reader getting inside the author's mindset, which as Gadamer has observed is an absurdity, but rather of seeking to understand what the author would understand from the reader's perspective, i.e. within the reader's perspective. This is in effect the impact, as noted previously, of a changing audience, or reader, on meaning, i.e. what occurs is a relative understanding of the author's communication.

It is well known that an author can adapt and change what they say in the light of changed circumstances, such as feedback and input from a differing readership than that originally anticipated. An author can re-work, re-develop and re-submit their written text; this is called revision. The revision supersedes the original as a more contemporary understanding of the author from the original. It is simply the intentional disclosure of the author of a new understanding. Hence, it could be seen that the unintended reader's resultant meaning, especially historically distanced from the author's original discourse, represents a form of revision of that discourse in the light of changed circumstances represented in the presuppositions of the reader.

In the thinking of Ong the utterance and utterer are totally separated once the text comes into existence, which is similar to the view of Ricoeur.¹¹ The utterer "once he has written down his text, may as well be dead" in its interpretation, and it is in this sense, for

¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 357.

¹¹ Ong, "Interpretation," 9.

Ong, that writing creates autonomous discourse.¹² The reader is therefore resuming not a dialogue, as with the author, but a monologue. In Ong's view, this situation he has outlined "is, or should be, utterly commonplace in reader-oriented criticism and related criticism."¹³

In the case of a written text the authorial discourse is itself transmitted immediately as a monologue. Ricoeur's understanding is grounded in the concept that he is contrasting oral discourse as dialogue with the event of writing, a relationship which is then "shattered by writing."¹⁴ It is an inescapable conclusion that there are no partners in dialogue either in the writing or in the discourse resumed by the reader. The creation of text is in the fashion of a monologue, as it is in the continuation of discourse. Monologue is structured differently in that it must intentionally include aspects that are inherent in the dialogical situation; and this distinction must be evaluated in the pursuit of understanding.

The notion of the text as autonomous is the prevalent postmodern position on the concept of authorial voice. This means essentially that the text, in being released from the restraint of the author, has been removed from the impact of any authorial presence, and therefore authorial voice, in the task of interpretation by the reader.¹⁵ As a result postmodern interpretation has moved away from an emphasis on what texts say to an emphasis of what readers do with texts.¹⁶ This concept of an autonomous text must be addressed and examined in the discussion of any presupposition of authorial intent.

2. Autonomous Text: Extinguishing the Voice of the Author?

Gadamer and Ricoeur have established a sound and valid argument that highlights the effect of concepts such as detachment of the text from the author and the impact of aesthetic and historical alienations, which are issues that constitute a significant consideration in both interpretation and understanding.¹⁷ However, detachment is a temporal condition but autonomy is an authoritative state, and autonomy is neither the necessary nor even an

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 35.

¹⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Gadamer's thinking on this issue is particularly set out in 352-357. The reference by Ricoeur to the detached autonomous text has been considered previously.

¹⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 149.

¹⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, "Communicative Action and Promise in Interdisciplinary, Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics," in *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 134. Thiselton views Gadamer and Ricoeur as the "two exponents of hermeneutics who have achieved the greatest weight in the twentieth century..."

inherently valid consequence of detachment. The abolishing of the author is also tied to the loss of the absolute in postmodern thought. The recognition of alienations and distanciation, within the interpretive process, do impact the accessibility and perception of that which is absolute, but this does not demonstrate non-existence. The loss of authorial voice together with the loss of reference to that which is absolute contribute to this view of autonomy.

The very concept of voices associated with a text raises philosophical issues, since it infers a presupposition of the ability of a text to refer to that which is outside the text. In the postmodern philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur there is not a denial of the presence of the author as creator of a text and its subject matter in the act of writing, but rather it is a denial of effective voice in interpretation, once the text is written and escapes the horizon of the author.¹⁸ In the thinking of Ricoeur the authorial-discourse is fixed in the act of writing so that the “human fact disappears” and “material marks” now act in conveyance of the message.¹⁹ Philosophically the result is that the authorial “voice” is effectively extinguished in the subsequent understanding of the written text. Ricoeur’s implication is that detachment from the author, being detachment from personality and hence the author’s psyche, is also equivalent to the extinguishing of detection of any impact of an imposition of the will of the author on the text. Gadamer, for his part, states: “What is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships. Normative concepts such as the author’s meaning or the original reader’s understanding represent in fact only an empty space that is filled from time to time in understanding.”²⁰

Gadamer describes a means that he believes assists the integrity of the authorial-discourse in written text in the absence of effective authorial voice. Based on an analysis of Plato’s dialogues Gadamer noted Plato’s own observation on the weakness of writing, which is that it is exposed to both intentional and unintentional misunderstanding.²¹ The text is now on its own in the absence of the author, who, in the situation of direct discussion, is able to

¹⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 153. Wolterstorff observes that Ricoeur’s concept is not based on a rejection of authorial-discourse interpretation. The authorial-discourse is integral within the linguistics of the text. As such Ricoeur’s is an “argument against the autonomy of authorial-discourse,” (*italics original*). The text is now that which is autonomous with respect to the hermeneutical event with the reader.

¹⁹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 26.

²⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 357.

²¹ Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 126. See also *Truth and Method*, 354.

provide insight and clarification.²² Gadamer's observation is that Plato's expressed answer was to create within the text a dialectic that would direct the reader.²³ However, in studying the dialogues, Gadamer also believed he uncovered an inherent pattern in the dialogues, which was based on the concept that all real knowing lies in the solution of the problem of the *One* and the *Many* (emphasis added), e.g. he observes that letters have meaning but when brought together in a word meaning relates to the whole not the individual letters.²⁴ A process of internal referencing between these positions, i.e. what essentially amounts to a hidden dialectic, directs the process. Ricoeur takes a similar view, which is that a "dialectic of event and meaning" is set up that governs the semantic autonomy of the text, maintaining discursive integrity.²⁵

However, Ong, whilst also declaring the autonomy of the text in regard to authorial-discourse, asserts that the concept of 'fixity' in regard to a written text, so important as above in Ricoeur and Gadamer, is not valid. The removal of the utterance from the author doesn't remove the text from discourse, as no utterance can exist outside the sphere of discourse, i.e. outside a transactional setting.²⁶ Putting the discourse into written text can only "interrupt discourse, string it out indefinitely in time and space," but it does not "fix" the discourse.²⁷

His reasoning is that a text is not essentially an utterance, as it doesn't "say" something, it is "but a visual design."²⁸ The utterance, the saying of something, occurs through "a code that is existing and functioning in a living person's mind."²⁹ When a reader takes this visual structure and "converts it into a temporal sequence of sound, aloud or in the imagination, directly or indirectly – that is, when someone reads the text..." the discourse is resumed.³⁰ Ong's observations do not cancel or contravene what Ricoeur and Gadamer have declared on the autonomy of the text, in that Ong is still a proponent of the text as an autonomous linguistic unit. Gadamer suggests that interpretation itself, which incorporates

²² Ibid.

²³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 354.

²⁴ Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 148.

²⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 23 & 25.

²⁶ Ong, "Interpretation," 9. In the philosophy of Gadamer and Ricoeur already considered it is clear that they hold a similar, if not the same, concept.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

the reader's interaction with the text, is a mediating aspect that disappears as a linguistic endeavor bringing the *sache* into speech.³¹ Ong is simply highlighting that discourse is something a person does, not something a text does.

His observation does highlight that what is fixed is the linguistic unit that is the text, not the meaning. Discourse, and hence meaning, is something a person does not the text; the text is the subject matter of the discourse. As 'visual marks' the written text has no meaning until someone reads it, hence meaning is a function of persons not texts.³² The discourse about the matter of the text does not resume without the introduction of someone meaning something in the saying. The written text is the "residue" of discourse, which by implication needs re-animation for resumption of discourse.³³ This re-animation happens with the advent of the reader. In Gadamer's words, "Writing is the abstract ideality of language."³⁴

This observation, that the reader in encounter with the text supplies the voice of meaning, is not one either Gadamer or Ricoeur would disagree with; it is their position also. It is also a position that, in all probability, neither Vanhoozer nor Thiselton, in their work considered so far representing the evangelical position, would disagree with in principle, for both see meaning as a function of persons not texts. Yet, it does imply that the concept of verbal meaning of the text, so important in the work of Ricoeur and Gadamer, must be a referential world that is not seen as resident within the text, since the text does not have meaning until someone means something in engaging the text. This referential world must be capable of communication with the reader, i.e. it must have a 'voice,' however that 'voice' is heard. Consequently, any argument against authorial presence, based upon a perceived inability of a 'voice' exterior to the text impacting the reader, does not in itself hold in this reasoning.

The concern of both Vanhoozer and Thiselton, and indeed orthodox Christianity, is the relationship of the readers meaning, to that of the author, which led the author to communicate in the first place. The position of both Ricoeur and Gadamer is that the text at the time of writing was the result of a meaning the author had, but the subsequent

³¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 359.

³² Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 202.

³³ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 11.

³⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 354.

detachment from the author and nature of the situation is such that the text contains internal linguistic structures that direct the reader on the matter, or *sache*, of the text. The author's meaning is now in the hands of the text and reader.

However, the view of textual autonomy also involves a presupposition that the matter is directly available in the text. If what Ong has highlighted is correct, the result is that the written text is only form, not content, and hence does not, as written text, contain the 'matter' of the text, which is content not form. The matter of the text is supposedly that which can be translated into other languages and cultural situations, i.e. hermeneutics concerns the matter of the text. Evidently this content can only become available in the re-animation, i.e. on the resumption of the discourse. Therefore, the only way that the linguistic marks can deal with the content, or matter, is by reference, since the matter is not within the text. This situation therefore impacts interpretation of all texts, not simply sacred texts.

Ricoeur explains how, for him, the verbal meaning, or sense, of the text remains within the text. He takes as his lead the work of Husserl and Frege; proposing the concept that meaning is not an idea in the mind, but "an ideal object" that can not only be identified, but also continuously re-identified and restated.³⁵ This ideality is neither a physical nor a psychic reality, and, in the thinking of Husserl as understood by Ricoeur, these noematic objects are irreducible to the psychic side of the acts themselves.³⁶ Consequently, the understanding of the author, which the author intended to communicate, expressed and set out in the text, is irreducible back to the consciousness that gave rise to the statements in the text.

Therefore, his implication is that irreducibility to the consciousness of the author is equivalent to, or includes, irreducibility to the authorial intent. Yet if meaning exists in people not texts this ideality now exists in an extra-textual situation that is neither physical (i.e. in the text) nor psychic (in the thought world of the author – since in the event of writing the author's is the psyche involved). Ricoeur's aim is not to deny referential meaning external to the text; he has merely developed an approach to remove it from what he views as the Romanticist's concept of authorial intent. The referential world of the author and that of the intended

³⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 90.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

audience, and any ability to direct the reader back into them, are lost in the temporal detachment that results in the creation of the autonomy of the text. Ricoeur's concept of a referential world is one that opens up in front of the reader, and the psyche of the reader supplies meaning.³⁷

(a) Authorial Intent in the Detachment: The Transforming Act of *Parole*

This hidden assumption that either there is an equivalency of the authorial intent to the consciousness of the author, or that there is an integral non-detachable union between them, is important and must be examined. Ricoeur's reference to the detachment of the intention of the text from the verbal meaning of the text suggests his own view is presumably the latter.³⁸ Gadamer has raised the issue of the consciousnesses of the reader in interpretation, referred to previously. Clearly, if consciousness of the reader is significant in the interpretation of the text, then that of the author is significant in the creation of the text. It is illogical to assert that the consciousness of one is highly significant and that of the other is insignificant. The consciousness of the author forms the background, the crucible and resource of the authorial intent, i.e. it is essentially itself the antecedent of the authorial intent, which has been argued previously is itself the antecedent of the text. The authorial intent is not the consciousness of the author but a product of that consciousness on a particular matter, the *sache* of the text. Ricoeur offers, in a discussion concerning the relationship between *event* and *meaning*, a model for understanding both the union and the possibility of detachment of authorial intent from the consciousness of the author.

Ricoeur's concept of *event* is not only that of the physical situation of dialogue where people are communicating.³⁹ An important part of his concept of this *event* concerns an act of *parole*, communicated in the discourse, i.e. it is the message of the communicator not just the act of speaking.⁴⁰ This act of *parole* gives rise to the said of speaking and this is what is

³⁷ Ibid., 36.

³⁸ Ibid., 29.

³⁹ Ibid., 12. The physical event of someone speaking is an aspect of the total event, but not its entirety.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3. Ricoeur uses as his basis Saussure's concept of *langue* and *parole*, with *parole* being a temporal event of language and *langue* as the set of codes from which it is developed. (Discourse is "the event of language," 9, and Ricoeur explicitly identifies his concept of discourse with that of *parole*, 7.)

exteriorized and retained as *event* in written text.⁴¹ Saussure noted that whilst *langue* is not a function of the speaker the act of *parole* is an individual act that is willful and intellectual.⁴²

Consequently, the act of *parole* is an act of intentionality;⁴³ as such it is a transformation of the authorial intent from the consciousness of the author into a communicable form suitable for being understood. In the act of *parole* the authorial intent is detached from the psyche of the author, undergoing its transformation into a communicated message. It therefore remains an integral part of Ricoeur's *event* and cannot be dismissed on the basis of an inference without analysis, *event* being so important in his Interpretation Theory. This is mirrored in the act of understanding that takes place in the consciousness of an intended reader, i.e. it is the act of *parole* that is understood. It is this act of *parole* communicated in the discourse that is subsequently available to the unintended interpreter/reader.

In Ricoeur's understanding of discourse a basic dictum is that "*If all discourse is actualized as event, all discourse is understood as meaning.*"⁴⁴ In the case of dialogue, the event of speaking itself (which is the result of an act of *parole* resulting in a message for communication) undergoes *Aufhebung* resulting in the situation where "the event is cancelled as something merely transient and retained as the *same* meaning."⁴⁵ Alan Bass, the translator for Derrida's *Writing and Difference*, suggests that Hegel's term *Aufhebung* is basically untranslatable due to its double meaning of conservation and negation.⁴⁶ The term suggests on the one hand a form of *sublation*, yet the term *sublation* suggests a degree of identifiable retention, which does not do justice to the idea of *Aufhebung*, which suggests retention yet without being identifiable. On the other hand it suggests the idea of *subsumption*, suggesting absorption, which also is inadequate as the concept of retention is lost.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12. (Italics added)

⁴² Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger, trans., Wade Baskin (New York: Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, 1959), 14.

⁴³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 3. Ricoeur notes, "a particular speaker produces *parole* as a particular message." He further notes that a "message is intentional; it is meant by someone."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12. (Italics original)

⁴⁶ Derrida, *Writing*, xix. In his "Translator's Introduction," Bass states that the "various attempts to translate *Aufhebung* into English seem inadequate." He therefore retains the German word in his translation.

What Ricoeur has seemingly ignored is that in the act of *parole* an *Aufhebung* occurs where the authorial intent is both negated, as consciousness of the author, and then conserved, as message, in the event of speaking. Therefore, in this *Aufhebung* the authorial intent has undergone a transformation in that it has been negated in one state of being, as an aspect of the consciousness of the author, to being conserved in another state of being as an integral aspect in the written communication of the author. It is in this state that it is therefore retained in the detachment of the written text from the author; as a result autonomy cannot be assumed as inherent in the detachment. Whilst the authorial intent's identification and evaluation may be problematical this does not negate its presence, it is a separate issue to that of existence.

There are some interesting observations that arise from the positions of both Ricoeur and Gadamer that suggest the impact of this presence in the author's act of *parole*. Both make reference to the author of the text and that the idea of the dialectic is a device to protect and assist the matter the author is communicating. In this aspect itself they show that the text is not autonomous, since they have just described restrictions inherent in the text and expressly designed by the author, i.e. the text cannot say whatever it would like, it exists to address the matter the author communicated. This would also indicate that the jump to autonomy from temporal detachment is somewhat arbitrary in itself.

This is further indicated when Gadamer appears to endorse Plato's observation about the weakness of the written text, which is that once the author's discourse exists as written text it can be subject to misconception. Therefore, by implication, in this concession is a recognition that, in the presence of the author, the act of speaking means the oral text of the speaking is not autonomous. It is once the text is written and the author becomes a reader that the text becomes autonomous for Gadamer and Ricoeur.

(b) Authorial Intent and the Written Text

Gadamer shows what would appear to be his primary reason for his assertion that there is a change in relationship in written text. He states that in contrast to the spoken word there is no other aid in the interpretation of the written word. Thus the important thing here is, in a special sense, the 'art' of writing. (*This is*

the reason for the enormous difference that exists between what is spoken and what is written, between the style of spoken material and the far higher demands of style that a literary work has to satisfy.) The spoken word interprets itself to an astonishing degree, by the way of speaking, the tone of voice, the tempo etc, but also by the circumstances in which it is spoken.⁴⁷

However, this distinction is exactly what the author must allow for in the creation of a monologue as opposed to the dialogical situation. The author must intentionally include within the text that which will direct the reader despite that which is absent due to the nature of monologue as opposed to dialogue. This intentional endeavor is composition.

Ricoeur, in his discussion of "Message and Reference," shows that his thinking is similar in that referencing is grounded in the dialogical situation; it surrounds the dialogue, which is shattered by writing.⁴⁸ It is significant that his assertion is that what is shattered is the event of dialogue as the means of communication, hence creating the situation that, in the thought of Ricoeur, dialogue becomes the base model for understanding communication.

However, in this thesis it is suggested that the commonality between speech and literary text is that they are both communication, nevertheless both can take not only the format of dialogue but also the format of monologue. A monologue is created directly as a monologue and meaning is both anterior and has a unitary source, or single authorship. Conversely, meaning in dialogue unfolds in a situation of duality, or dual authorship. Whilst both parties in a dialogue may anticipate the meaning they intend, and even seek to control the unfolding of the dialogue to reach that intention, the reality is that meaning of a dialogue is posterior not anterior. Both are forms of communication but involve very different dynamics at the point of origin. However, in yet another sense a dialogue is itself a series of monologues, with each party responding to the monologue of the other, and each then modifying or clarifying their responsive monologue. It is the event of writing that leads to that appearance of the text and the nature of this created text must be considered.

⁴⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 355. The italicized section in parenthesis is inserted as the text of a footnote at the conclusion of the phrase "the 'art' of writing." The italics are added to distinguish the footnote from the text. This is quoted in its context as it emphasizes his perception of the importance of what he is saying to the viewpoint he has, which extinguishes the voice of the author.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 34-35.

Ricoeur examines the presumption that all literary text occurs as something anterior to speech itself.⁴⁹ If the concept taken of speech is that of an individual act of parole then speech and text have a similar status with respect to language.⁵⁰ Whilst it is historically demonstrable that speaking precedes writing in time, in the contemporary situation, where writing may be chosen over speaking as the format of communication, writing then “takes the very place of speech, occurring at the site where speech could have emerged.”⁵¹

Consequently, the literary text as a direct creation exists as a literary text only when it is not transcription of speech.⁵² It is the direct inscription “in written letters what the discourse means.”⁵³ Ricoeur subsequently acknowledges that in the act of writing there is a “direct inscription of intention.”⁵⁴ Ricoeur’s analysis is consistent with the assertion in this work that this inscription has as its referent an authorial intention and without that authorial intent it becomes at best a stretch of linguistic components, *langue*. Ricoeur asserts that the system of language, *langue*, is not itself a message, having only “virtual existence,” and only the act of parole gives actuality to language.⁵⁵ The message, i.e. the literary text, is the result of *parole*.

Ricoeur’s reasoning is sound showing that the literary situation is not an instance of dialogue.⁵⁶ The creation of the composition separates the act of writing and that of reading with no line of communication between them.⁵⁷ Ricoeur subsequently considers the possibility of discussing an author’s work with the author, so his implication cannot be that communication cannot occur between the writer and reader. A situation can even be envisaged where the author can be temporally present in the reading, however the two acts, i.e. writing and reading, still occur separately and do not involve dialogue in the acts themselves. Dialogue is subsequent to the act of *parole* that gave rise to the text, which becomes the subject of any ensuing dialogue. Hence, the creation of literary text is not an act of dialogue. As Ricoeur states, the composition “...produces a double eclipse of the writer

⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 102.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁵⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 9.

⁵⁶ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 102.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 103.

and reader” and “...thereby replaces the relation of dialogue.”⁵⁸ Hence it cannot be the basic model for the text.

Ricoeur shows that although he himself has shown that writing and dialogue are different events, yet his analysis of the situation of speech betrays his basic understanding of the dialogical situation as the basic model.⁵⁹ It is on this basis that Ricoeur derives the concept of semantic autonomy. This situation creates what could almost be described as an *ontic fallacy*. At the very place of its being as communication Ricoeur uses the paradigm of dialogue, which it is not, but is instead monologue. Consequently, his development from that situation will have an epistemological weakness at its foundation that will reverberate throughout his theory. The idea of intent is inherent in the text and the concept of autonomy on the basis of detachment is flawed.

A further observation can be made by considering a quote from each author, i.e. Gadamer and Ricoeur, that demonstrates their own implication of direct presence and voice attributed to authors they are referring to. In discussing an aspect of Plato’s work Gadamer states: “Plato’s intention seems quite clear to me...”⁶⁰ Similarly, Ricoeur, in discussing Frege’s text states: “This postulation of existence as the ground of identification is what Frege ultimately meant when he said that we are not satisfied by the sense alone...”⁶¹ It is important to put these quotes in the text rather than in the footnotes because of what they show. The issue is not the matter the text relates to in the quote, but rather the form of reference to other authors. Gadamer and Ricoeur both give the authors they refer to actual presence in the naming of them, i.e. they are attributing their conclusions to the thoughts of the authors in the saying of the text. Further both attribute their own comments to the intent of the authors they are discussing, not the intention of the texts they are discussing. This is either a mistake in the writing or a recognition that to discuss an author’s discourse is to discuss what they intended.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 104. It was noted above that in *Interpretation Theory*, 34-35, Ricoeur describes the situation of writing-reading to be an explosion of the “dialogical situation.”

⁶⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 368. This is an example of the sort of thing that occurs in relationship to many other authors, whose work he considers.

⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 21. As with Gadamer this is a sample of what does occur in the work of Ricoeur.

Ricoeur, as does Gadamer,⁶² asserts that what is to be understood in a text is not authorial intent, as laying “hidden behind the text”, nor the historical situation of an intended audience and issues related to this (in his work it is irrelevant as to whom a text is addressed, since it is read by whoever picks it up, e.g. Ricoeur himself).⁶³ What is to be appropriated is the meaning of the text itself, “nothing other than the power of disclosing a world that constitutes the reference of the text.”⁶⁴ As a result, his contention is that in this process his interpretation theory has moved as far as possible away from the ideal of Romantic hermeneutics and the pursuit of understanding a “foreign psyche.”⁶⁵ Whilst the movement away from the concepts of Romantic hermeneutics is not disputed what is disputed is that the authorial intent is a matter of a “foreign psyche.” There are sufficient grounds to assume the presence of the authorial intent as in some manner associated with the text.

(c) Authorial Intent and the Referential Nature of the Text

In Ricoeur the text discloses by reference a world before the reader, yet somewhat arbitrarily is incapable of referencing the world behind the text, i.e. that of the author and intended audience, which is evidently a foreign world incapable of being understood, due to the “non-ostensive reference of the text”, for its impact on the meaning of the text.⁶⁶ Perhaps the reasoning of his view of the text’s inability to reference to the world of the author and audience is his own presupposition that hermeneutics must move away from the presuppositions of Romanticism.⁶⁷ Wolterstorff, in evaluating Ricoeur’s concept of text sense, notes that this tendency to limit reference means that what is ignored is what Wolterstorff has called designative content.⁶⁸ The same noematic content can have differing designations depending on who is the speaker of the sentence, and this is often missing in the linguistic

⁶² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 300. Gadamer makes a similar observation about the historical approach. The historian, in seeking to go into the hidden realm behind the text, is seeking something the text is not designed to give. The ultimate failure of this approach, for Gadamer, is that the historian has the same problem as any reader; they cannot detach themselves from reading in their own situatedness, 304. Ricoeur, in discussing his conclusions in *Interpretation Theory*, notes Gadamer’s contribution to the understanding of moving beyond the authorial intent and the audience. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 92.

⁶³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 92.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 87. Ricoeur, returning to the issue of reference, notes; “The sense of a text is not behind the text, but in front of it...What has to be understood is not the initial situation of discourse, but what points towards a possible world thanks to the non-ostensive reference of the text.”

⁶⁷ Wolterstorff, 147. Wolterstorff also makes reference to this possibility in Ricoeur’s reluctance to admit a reference his language seems to acknowledge.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 138-9.

unit.⁶⁹ Walhout has noted that often the desire to avoid the concept of reference is because in the modern situation it has become tied up with metaphysical questions of reality.⁷⁰ His suggestion of the term *descriptive reference* to overcome this has been discussed previously.

This problematical debate may indeed be behind Ricoeur's reluctance to pursue what he seems to lean towards in the very idea of reference. The basic concept he has accepted is that the verbal meaning, as an object of ideality, is distinct from and irreducible to the thoughts relating to the authorial intent, mentioned above.⁷¹ Vanhoozer acknowledges that the central insight he attributes to Ricoeur is his concept that interpreters situate themselves in front of the text, which in Ricoeur's concept of symbol gives rise to thought, opening up a new world in front of the text.⁷² This is the only referential world he allows.

However, if focusing excessively on the past without regard to the future, i.e. the present reader's unfolding situation, hinders vision in the present for the future, then perhaps it can be equally stated that excessive focus on the future without regard to the past, i.e. the tradition that the writer has written from and the context in which the discourse occurred, is in danger of losing its roots, which will impact the determination of the validity of future directions. As an illustration, it can be conceded that, in order to use a map to get to where a person desires to go, what is primarily needed is knowledge of where a person is in relation to where they want to go. However, knowledge of where they have come from can act as a reference and supply information about whether where they are is the result of a mistaken understanding of the course to be followed, which may need retracing or course correction, and also to give a context for understanding the journey as a whole. There is no reason that precludes an interpreter's ability to discern past understandings back as far as the author.⁷³

Although Ricoeur's primary focus relating to meaning is the world that opens up in front of the reader, in fairness to the work of Ricoeur, it must be acknowledged that he does recognize the importance of tradition. However, its value is descriptive in his theory of texts,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Walhout, 73.

⁷¹ See also, Wolterstorff, 146-7.

⁷² Vanhoozer, "The Joy of Yes," 27. The concept of Ricoeur's use of symbol as illustrative in hermeneutics was discussed in the propositions of Chapter 3.

⁷³ Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter," 27.

forming a backdrop in the determination of meaning.⁷⁴ It is not determinate in meaning. The issue of alienations and the impact on these issues of authorial intent and intended audience, raised in Gadamer, affect perception of the authorial intent; they do not address the issues of availability and desirability.

How is it, therefore, that these authors, holding the view just expressed (Gadamer approaches the situation differently but the view is the same), can give presence and authority to authors from a foreign world, as just noted above? Ricoeur gives some insightful thoughts on the anti-historicist reaction, typified in Frege and Husserl. Historicism is based upon a presupposition that literary content, the writing of the author, receives its "intelligibility from its connection" to the intended audience and their context.⁷⁵ The alternate concept, suggested by Frege and Husserl, which Ricoeur takes as his launching position, is outlined above. Ricoeur himself adopts the anti-historicist stand,⁷⁶ and takes the view that the concept of verbal meaning relates to sentences and an ideality referenced by the sentence, not what someone has in their mind.⁷⁷ Thus rendering as irrelevant the intent of the author and the context and understanding of the intended audience.

The goal of interpretation is to "render contemporaneous, to assimilate in the sense of making similar" and this goal is realized in actualizing "the meaning of the text for the present reader."⁷⁸ The means of actualization is the concept of appropriation. In this total hermeneutical process, in Ricoeur's view, the problem of historicism is overcome and what occurs is in fact "faithful to the original intention of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics."⁷⁹ A true understanding of the authorial intent is achieved, not in understanding the authorial intent at the time of writing, but in "the power of disclosure implied in his discourse beyond the limited horizon of his own existential situation."⁸⁰ In other words, the author saw something in their

⁷⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 27. Ricoeur's analysis sets meaning to be a function of the synchronic aspect, which concerns linguistics and is the science of the system. Tradition is the diachronic aspect and is descriptive. Understanding is not the recovery of meaning, but understanding the system allows recovery of meaning, 33. Perhaps his understanding of the role of tradition, though the word is not used the idea of the word is within the discussion, is his discussion of *appropriation* (italics added), which is to do with the actualization in the life of those addressed by the discourse. He even notes that this concept could be seen, if misconceived, as a return to the Romantic concept incorporating authorial intent, *Interpretation Theory*, 92.

⁷⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 89.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

subject matter that they committed to writing; what they saw has the power of transcending their own situatedness into the world of the reader. Ricoeur views appropriation as similar to Gadamer's proposal of the fusion of horizons, in that the world-horizon of the reader is fused with that of the writer, and "the ideality of the text is the mediating link in this process of horizon fusing."⁸¹ The text is no longer representing either the author or reader; it is mediating between them in the pursuit of applied meaning.

Ricoeur highlights that the text has a power of disclosure the result of which is to see what the author presented to be seen; yet for Ricoeur seen in its potential for the present unfettered by the past. Yet to achieve this in Ricoeur the author must first disappear in the past to reappear in the present. This language is very similar to what is proposed as happening in the act of *parole*, an *Aufhebung* in which the authorial intent is transformed from the consciousness of the author to become an agent of disclosure in the composition related to the text. The authorial intent is first negated to then be retained in the composition. Therefore, Ricoeur's analysis perhaps also highlights the disappearance of the author as consciousness to reappear in the guise of autonomy in his work.

There cannot be a contention of the reappearance, in the interpretive event, of the consciousness of the author; hence any concept of authorial intent related to the text is indeed independent of the psyche of the author. However, nor can there be a contention of an authorless text. The argument for autonomy is driven by the presupposition of opposition to interpreted meaning being tied to the consciousness of the author. The suggested transforming of the authorial intent from consciousness of the author into an aspect of the composition, in the act of *parole*, is the way forward for understanding the negation and retention of authorial intent in the interpretation of written texts. The inability to recognize this in the postmodern philosophical paradigm is related to their view of the text.

The argument advanced by Ricoeur, of the autonomous text, is simply one that allows the reader to proceed directly to the "what it means" of a text without any consideration of "what it meant." The argument asserting the autonomy of the text is effectively the authorizing of the reader to proceed directly to "what it means," i.e. the assertion of the

⁸¹ Ibid.

autonomy of the text is the presupposition, or prejudice, that the reader hermeneutically proceeds on. Ricoeur's belief is that the internal dialectic of the linguistic processes of the text will provide sufficient direction to guide the reader in fulfilling his concept of, what is essentially, a proposed interpreted authorial intent.

Stendhal recognized that, with historical documents, the question of meaning split into two senses: "What did it mean?" and "What does it mean?" Further that these two senses must be kept apart so that the descriptive nature of the pursuit of the "what it meant" of a text can be examined in its own right.⁸² However, in a real sense every written text once released by the author into the world of readers has already become a historical document. This is the inverse implication of what Gadamer noted about the concept of the contemporary addressee. He asserts that this concept is shaky and can have only restricted validity, as the problem is 'what is contemporary?' Where is the line drawn since yesterday and tomorrow are contemporary with the present?⁸³ Similarly, everyday prior to today is history and the time at which the text is completed and released is already history at the time of release.

Consequently, the approach that distinguishes between "what it meant" and "what it means" has general validity and application in the handling of all texts. When the history of the text is recent the two senses will effectively merge; it is the passage of time, with its changes in situatedness, which will lead to the distinction between the two senses. The investigation of "what it meant," in effect what Ricoeur labels historicism, yields an understanding of the intent of the writer at a particular place and at a particular time that provides the basis for an understanding, or to use Ricoeur's phrase, a basis for an *actualization* of "what it means." Stendhal also recognized moving to "what it means" is neither a direct nor simple process, it involves translation not only of words but thought forms and is a creative act.⁸⁴ This is the same place to which Ricoeur desired to arrive, but, unlike Ricoeur's contention, it is achieved without disregard of the author, their setting and that of the intended audience.

⁸² Stendhal, 419. The work of Stendhal and the issues of "what it meant" and "what it means" have been considered above.

⁸³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 357.

⁸⁴ Stendhal, 427.

3. Autonomy: The Disputable Theory not the Indisputable Fact

The real question is the validity of the proposition of the autonomous text, so fundamental and important to Ricoeur's hermeneutic.⁸⁵ What is proposed to happen in writing is the detachment of meaning from the event.⁸⁶ In this situation the semantic autonomy of the text "appears."⁸⁷ However, it must be noted that the "appearance" is proposed as based on the unconditional acceptance of the first proposition, concerning detachment of authorial meaning from the event. Meaning, as has been emphasized previously, is an act of persons not texts; hence acceptance of this first assertion is based on a faulty understanding of both the entity of the text and the issue of meaning.

Since it is a proposition that is conditional on another proposition, it is more properly an implication, and as such must be regarded as conditional not unconditional.⁸⁸ The problem is that he proceeds with the theory treating this as unconditional, no longer an implication. This is revealed only a few pages further where he states: "Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text, which results from the disconnection of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text, of what the author meant and what the text means."⁸⁹ This implies that, for Ricoeur, the authorial intent belongs to the event and in the disappearance of the event is disconnected from meaning in relationship to the written text. This leaves meaning as a function of the text.

However, there is also a further inherent presupposition in this statement that is revealed in his conclusions to *Interpretation Theory*. The concept of verbal meaning, being textual meaning, as opposed to the concept of authorial meaning, as thought in the mind of the author, is due to a prior acceptance by Ricoeur of the concept of verbal meaning of a sentence being an ideal object independent of the author.⁹⁰ The result of his acceptance of this is a presupposition that verbal meaning, which relates to the individual sentences in the discourse, and authorial meaning, which relates to the mind of the author, can and do exist as separate entities. Wolterstorff, in his analysis of Ricoeur's hermeneutic notes that it is

⁸⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 30.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 25. The adjectives he uses to describe the situation, "nascent and inchoate," in his context, suggest something just begun but with a sense of promise and potential.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Newman, 259.

⁸⁹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 30.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

reasonable to “assume that the well-formed sentences of a language *have meanings* – that they come with meanings.”⁹¹ Where used by people literally, the noematic content (Ricoeur’s *sense of the text*⁹²) of what the person says is just what the sentence means.⁹³

However, people often don’t speak either literally, or use literalness as an exact measure. Hence, the authorial intent, since the author is the user of the sentence, and it’s meaning, must become determinate.⁹⁴ The authorial intent is not what the author is thinking on a matter, but rather, in the written text, it is what the author has communicated in disclosing their thought on a matter. The object should not be, and in this there can be agreement with Ricoeur, to get somehow into the thinking of the author, as a retrograde step to go backwards into the mind of the author, as Ricoeur highlights about Romanticism.

Authors are pointing forward to what they “mean,” hence for them it is not a “meant.” Consequently, understanding for a reader is what an author “means” in the situation of the reader, but, to establish this authoritatively for the reader requires first an examination and understanding of the “meant” of the author when they wrote. The object is to understand the thought of the author on a matter, and in their expressing of that thought they have used sentences in a composition. The composition is the context of the individual sentences, and composition is a creation of an author, not something created by language; language is the medium of communication of the composition.

The sentence, as has been previously noted, is the basic unit of meaning in discourse, however, the meaning of the discourse is no more just the sum total of verbal meanings of the sentences, than the meaning of individual words is the sum total of the meaning of the sentence. The authorial intent is that which is behind the usage of the meaning of sentences that will give the sentences meaning in the discourse. Having examined in detail Ricoeur’s contention of text sense interpretation Wolterstorff concludes that “the *meaning* of the sentence used in some act of discourse, coupled with the *linguistic*

⁹¹ Wolterstorff, 140.

⁹² Ibid., 139. (Italics original) Wolterstorff shows how the noematic content is Ricoeur’s *sense of the text*.

⁹³ Ibid., 140.

⁹⁴ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 204. Vanhoozer notes that sentences are meaningful actions by a person not simply the result of a language system. It follows that their employment in discourse is similarly meaningful.

context of the sentence on that occasion, is not enough to determine the noematic content of that act of discourse.”⁹⁵

Thiselton, in consideration of the issue of the study of the meaning of individual words, notes that an individual word separated from its context in a text is not a primary bearer of meaning, but “a stretch of language.”⁹⁶ In extending this to the sentence as a unit of meaning, remembering that Ricoeur notes the theory relates to sentence meaning, consider as an example of the potential problem the following sentence: “That was filthy.” The usual verbal meaning would be that what ever “that” was, it was either disgustingly dirty or extremely offensive. However, if it were found to be in the mouth of a late 20th Century youth sub-culture in Australia it would actually mean that whatever “that” was, it was really good. The person using the words and phrases intends the meaning of them. Therefore, it is the authorial intent that would be decisive, or the primary context, for correct understanding and usage of verbal meaning, which is the secondary context.

Since the basic semantic unit of a composition is the sentence, it would not then seem unreasonable to suggest that, although a sentence can have a basic linguistic meaning, when separated from its context in the composition it should not be considered to be the primary bearer of meaning but also a stretch of language. Consider the following example, from the biblical text, of a sentence taken from a composition: “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only,” James 2:24. Davids notes that in this statement James comes close to the appearance of a direct contradiction of Paul.⁹⁷ He examines the thinking behind a possible contradiction of Paul, done either deliberately or accidentally, and concludes that had this been James’ intention he would have totally misunderstood Paul, and that James’ “...use of biblical citations and the meanings of the similar expressions are totally different.”⁹⁸ In the context of the composition James can just as easily be seen to be using his own independent ideas developed from the common Jewish tradition, in which they both

⁹⁵ Wolterstorff, 152. In a later discussion, where he returns to the this issue of text sense, he asserts that, after a discussion in which he illustrates his own thinking, the critical assumption of text sense interpretation is that every text has one sense and this assumption is false, 171-3.

⁹⁶ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 129.

⁹⁷ Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. I Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 130. The statement by James appears to be a direct contradiction of Pauline passages such as Rom. 4:2&6 and Gal. 2:16.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

stood.⁹⁹ Davids then offers an exegesis of the text, showing that in the context suggested, based on a review of Pauline texts, Paul would have endorsed the essence of what James was saying. He then concludes the discussion of this verse by saying: “The important point is that one must not read this verse with Pauline definitions in mind, but rather must allow James to speak out of his own background.”¹⁰⁰

This constitutes an example of what Wolterstorff concluded, i.e. that the same noematic content can involve differing meanings depending on who the speaker is, as noted above in the discussion of Ricoeur’s concept of text sense. However, not only the speaker but also the audience is impacting on meaning, for if James had addressed the letter to either Rome or the region of Galatia, then the meaning would be, or at least have the appearance of, a direct contradiction of Pauline thought. If the statement quoted from James were authored by one of the people Paul opposes in his letter to the Galatians, the intention would be direct contradiction. Paul says of these people that they must be totally rejected, Gal. 1:6-9; that their motivation is suspect, Gal. 4:17 and their agenda is their own preservation, Gal. 6:12-13. This is not Paul’s view of James, Gal. 2:9. It has been previously noted that Ricoeur does acknowledge the importance of the tradition in which a text stands, although his discussion primarily concerned the literary tradition. However, in this case, even a consideration of historical tradition could be misleading since James, Paul and Paul’s opponents in Galatia all share a common Jewish tradition. The identity, i.e. signatory, and intention of the author together with the identity of the intended audience are decisive in meaning, without which potential meanings could cancel one another out, or, in a worse case scenario, set in motion opposing views of justification that would be difficult to reconcile as inspired by the same Spirit. Although the above is a single illustration and could be claimed to be a unique case, any example sets a precedent, since the assertion is that the situation can’t happen.

The authorial intent is, in the event of writing, the context of the linguistic meaning of the semantic unit, i.e. of the sentence. The author in their discourse has also intentionally employed this semantic unit. Yet the contention of Frege and Husserl, which Ricoeur

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 132.

accepts, is that this verbal meaning is irreducible to the intent of the author, which therefore presupposes dissociation or there is no connection even at the time of the event of writing. Therefore, the decision that there is dissociation of authorial intent and verbal meaning, in the detachment of the text from the author, is itself an inherent presupposition, unsubstantiated at its point of assertion.

The assertion of detachment has led to an implication of dissociation of what is itself only implied to be dissociable, i.e. event (and by implication authorial intent) and verbal meaning. This is what has led to an implication of autonomy of the text in meaning. The above reasoning does not disprove what amounts to this assertion of Ricoeur, which is the semantic autonomy of the text. What it does do is show that semantic autonomy is far from being an established assertion at this point; it is part of his theory of texts, not an assertion to be used as a basis for the theory. Not only is it a theory it is a disputable theory.

The result is that it would seem that the assertions of the extinguishing of the authorial voice, and hence authorial intent, and that of the autonomy of the text are premature and can be debated. They are implications that have become presuppositions in his theory of texts and, as such, open themselves to questioning. Consequently, there is no need to abandon the presupposition of authorial intent, the presence of the voice of the author and the autonomy of the authorial-discourse, all of which also can equally be argued as implied, and therefore valid for consideration. The one thing that all the viewpoints considered agree on is the existence of the author and the fact that they have intended a message. The issue concerns whether or not that authorial intent, which led to the written text, can be detected in relationship to the text, and if so is it determinate in a reader's meaning.

As regards to the author and their intent, the movement in hermeneutics has seen the pendulum swing from the author to the reader. In the classical approach of Schleiermacher to hermeneutics the issue in interpretation was an understanding of a text essentially from within the mind of the author, i.e. the pursuit of authorial intent was seen as definitive. The rise of interest in the situatedness of both the author and reader, and the perceived impact on interpretation shifted the pendulum. This situation also highlighted the detached nature of the text from the author. Questions began to be asked as to the accessibility of the authorial

intent, and in the questioning, the movement from a sense of certainty to uncertainty had ramifications for meaning, especially if the detached text was then considered as autonomous. The focus on linguistics amplified the difficulty in accessing the authorial intent and so shifted the hermeneutical pendulum further away from the pursuit of authorial intent. Even if seen as existent it was considered irrelevant. In deconstruction the pendulum has swung fully to the side of the reader, and now the author, and hence authorial intent, are absent as presence and voice in interpretation.

The concept of an autonomous text has failed to take account of the retention of the authorial intent in the act of parole. The argument that detachment results in autonomy is not compelling. The recognition of the transformation of authorial intent in the act of *parole* was not recognized and sight of the author was lost. It is proposed in this work that the primary reason for this is the failure to recognize the entity of the composition in its relationship to the entity of the text. The current theory on the entity of the text has resulted in its concealment and therefore also the concealment of authorial intent, but despite this concealment the current theory has no way in which to contend and deal with the logic of its existence, recognized before the writing occurred.

The current theory on the entity of the text also searches for some way to explain why this pronounced autonomy is suddenly constrained, and not able to act with unrestrained abandonment. In both Ricoeur and Gadamer the recognition of restraint on meaning cannot be established without an indication of that constraint itself being an intention of the author. Therefore, the author intentionally develops a constraint, which is inherent within the text but detached from the author. In this inference Ricoeur and Gadamer, albeit unintentional, infer the *Aufhebung* described in this work. Hence, authorial intent is negated to reappear as almost the 'spirit' of the text.

Deconstruction has recognized that autonomy means autonomous, not semi-autonomous, and has sought to cast off the restraint. Deconstruction has recognized that any idea of restraint related to an intention of the author allows the 'ghost' of the author to 'haunt' the process of interpretation. If the concept of autonomy is a term that reflects a philosophical inadequacy, as argued in this work, then there needs to be recognition that something else is

happening that needs to be disclosed. As the title of the chapter suggests, perhaps the announcement of the death of the author has occurred in the author's presence, hence the reports of the author's death are indeed exaggerated. Consequently, the presupposition of the author and their impact in textuality requires further consideration.

Chapter 6

The Presupposition of Authorial Intent

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the issue of textual autonomy with respect to the concept of authorial intent. The suggestion of authorial intent and its impact is evidenced and the argument for autonomy is far from convincing. However, at the same time what must be acknowledged is that, in current methodological understanding, the issue of authorial intent is fraught with difficulty. The question must be asked whether or not the concept of retention or importance of authorial intent is simply the attempt to legitimize an idea whose real purpose is some form of defense of the presence of the divine, i.e. an attempt to protect the very idea of God. Consequently, the very presupposition of authorial intent must be considered as a general concept. The following discussion raises this issue.

The Possibility of Authorial Intent

The question of the accessibility of the authorial intent, with its associated difficulties, is really a secondary issue to the question of its existence. If it exists in relation to a text then how it relates must be pursued. If in connection with texts, as in deconstruction, it is a phantasm then there is nothing to pursue. Therefore, the question of the presupposition of authorial intent must start with a consideration of its very possibility and hence with deconstruction's view related to this issue.¹

Kevin Vanhoozer asks a question in the light of the claims of deconstruction, which in his view has sought to undo the author, i.e. deconstruction has sought to remove any semblance of authorial authority to controlling meaning.² He asks whether there is a voice in a text and, if so, is it the author's?³ Vanhoozer argues that the author is the first cause of the existence of the text and the controlling presence giving unity to the textual composition.⁴ Hence, in this scenario, the authorial intent represents access to the absolute meaning of any

¹ This is the basic format of Vanhoozer's book *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* His starting point is the issues deconstruction has raised, from which point he pursues the issue of authorial intent.

² Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*. This is the theme of Chapter 2, 43.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 104 & 228.

text, i.e. if perfect communication between author and recipients occurred the intent of the author would be the perception of the audience.

In the temporal absence of the author, as in the case of written text detached from the author, since it is the author's voice that gave rise to the text, the text itself is the only avenue to this absolute. Whether considered by direct reference to an author's meaning, or as meaning itself in some way incarnated⁵ in the text, as in Ricoeur and Gadamer, or alternately, some combination of these positions. Vanhoozer contends that the removal of the concept of the ultimate absolute lies at the heart of deconstructionism, i.e. the God's-eye view of reality doesn't exist in deconstructionism.⁶ The loss of the concept of the absolute leads ultimately to the loss of the author's voice, and the subsequent loss of authorial intent, which is replaced by the autonomous text freed from constraint.

In the thought of Derrida, considered a leading voice in deconstruction, "*There is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text...]."⁷ Concerning a literary text, "there has never been anything but writing" and "what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence."⁸ Derrida is not contesting the existence of an author who wrote but that a text has no ability, once written, to refer to any exterior world, including therefore, author. Hence there is no "natural presence" of the author either referenced in the text or related to the text.

If there is no "natural presence" related to the text, then there is no voice, authorial or otherwise, associated with the text.⁹ Consequently, in the view of deconstruction the only "natural presence" is that of the reader, who is therefore the only voice. Since meaning should not be considered a property of texts, but rather, as a function of persons,¹⁰ the reader, as the only person, is the only voice of meaning. Meaning then becomes a function of the reader not the author.

⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 378. Gadamer's view is that the Christian idea of incarnation does more justice to the nature of language. He does note that his reference is not to embodiment, as this would imply something that can be disembodied. He is contrasting the Greek concept, where embodiment simply means taking human form, whereas the Christian idea is God actually becoming human. This is conceded not to be the language of Ricoeur, but it does fit with his general concept of the semantic autonomy of the text. The text is meaning.

⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 49.

⁷ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 158. Italics are original.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 202. As Vanhoozer acknowledges, a text only has meaning (as a noun) when someone means (as a verb) something in its use.

Gadamer argues, on the basis of how horizons work in distancing historically and on the nature of language, that there cannot be any one interpretation that is correct “in itself.”¹¹ A changing audience was shown to lead to the situation where meaning can undergo relative change due to changed horizons.¹² Gadamer’s concept, which is essentially the same idea expressed differently, is that historical life of a tradition depends on constantly new assimilation and interpretation.¹³ However, despite that fact that meaning undergoes apparent change with respect to differing audiences, Gadamer still asserts that “being bound by a situation” (i.e. the new hermeneutical situation) doesn’t make validity of a meaning dissolve “into the subjective or occasional.”¹⁴ As Gadamer notes, “There can be no speech that does not bind the speaker and the person spoken to” in a communicative relationship.¹⁵

Therefore, the reader cannot be considered as released from the obligations inherent in communication and relationship with the author, and most importantly not released to make of meaning what they will.¹⁶ Stanley Fish, speaking from within the mindset¹⁷ of deconstruction, sees the only constraint on a reader’s meaning is the community to which the reader belongs.¹⁸ This is similar to the recognition of the impact on meaning of the community in which interpretation occurs, discussed above. Deconstruction has helped to bring into view the importance of this consideration in meaning. However, it is also important to realize that in deconstruction this is the *only* real constraint recognized and there is no recognition of a world outside the text and hence, no voice of the author.¹⁹ This would appear to be why there is an open disregard of any obligations inherent in communication, and relationship, between the reader and author in deconstruction. The author as real presence is erased.²⁰

¹¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 358.

¹² In this work this is discussed in the first proposal in Chapter 3.

¹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 358. He states “every interpretation has to adapt itself to the hermeneutical situation to which it belongs.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 202. Vanhoozer suggests that both author and reader are citizens of language, which as an environment is shared by both. There is a relationship in receiving an author’s communication.

¹⁷ An important aspect of deconstruction is that it is a philosophy, or mindset, that has led to a view of textuality. It is not a discovery of a view of textuality that demanded a new mindset. It begins with a philosophical agenda and this will be considered in this chapter.

¹⁸ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980; reprint, 2000), 304.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 303. (Italics added)

²⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 109. Thiselton discusses this concept of “erasure” in Derrida’s work. He notes the comments by Gayatri Spivak, as Derrida’s translator, that for Derrida erasure is the absence of presence, (see

Derrida asserts that his work has shown that the sign, so important in the work of Saussure, which is comprised of signifier and signified, which exteriorizes, is something created in the logocentric system of writing and doesn't exist before writing.²¹ His assertion is essentially that the concept of the sign is a contrivance created for the system of writing, not the recognition of how things function. If exteriority is lost then the sign falls into decay, but he also notes "our entire world and language would collapse with it," so rather than suggest moving onto something else the answer is to deconstruct the sign.²² The sign refers to another sign rather than signifying that which is exterior.²³ Therefore, instead of a view of reality there is an endless interplay of signs.²⁴

(a) A Philosophical not a Linguistic Decision

Thiselton exposes the real heart of the issue, concerning the debate on a text's ability to refer and exteriorize: "...the path by which Derrida reaches this view of textuality is an explicitly philosophical one."²⁵ Wittgenstein observes that the primary responsibility of philosophy is description not prescription, it "may in no way interfere with the actual use of language: it can in the end only describe it."²⁶ Thiselton also raises this issue concerning the nature of philosophy as a descriptive task, and notes further that this is an assertion by Bultmann and is accepted as axiomatic in Gadamer.²⁷ The function of philosophy is not the resolving of contradictions, but the positioning of the reader to have a clearer view.²⁸

However, this descriptive task of philosophy is, of necessity, interpretive, i.e. it will involve developing an understanding of what is reality in what is described, and in performing this descriptive task it is conducted by a person having existing presuppositions about

Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, xvii). It is interesting to pick up the quote where Thiselton left off; "...of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience." The author, as originator of a text, is successfully erased.

²¹ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 14. Derrida considers logocentrism to be "the metaphysics of phonetic writing" that imposed itself on the world controlling writing, 3.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 111. This is Vanhoozer's assessment of *Grammatology* and what Derrida is seeking to do in suggesting it. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 104. Thiselton, using Derrida's own words, shows this concept. Wolterstorff, 159. Wolterstorff gives a lucid and detailed examination of Derrida's work. After examining what Derrida is saying on this issue he tenders his "answer with apprehension" that shows he has reached the same conclusion as both Vanhoozer and Thiselton. Wolterstorff states as part of his assessment of what Derrida is asserting, "Everything is a "trace" of other things. Everything points to other things..."

²⁵ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 104.

²⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans., G. E. M. Anscombe, Germ. & Eng. ed. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1953), sect. 124.

²⁷ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 28.

²⁸ Wittgenstein, sect. 125. Admittedly Wittgenstein is considering the subject of mathematics, but the context implies it is generally illustrative as implied in sect. 126.

reality.²⁹ The description is conducted from within a viewpoint of an already established conception of reality, i.e. the description itself is an interpretation, not pure objective description. Nevertheless, the view of what is seen, i.e. the description, can be examined without taking on the worldview of the one describing.³⁰

Philosophy is not the proposing of theory but an activity that is undertaken, in the sense that it involves clarification of thoughts.³¹ Consequently, the result of philosophy, i.e. its completion, is not the proposing of propositions, but clarifying them.³² Therefore, it would seem wise to suggest that it is important to distinguish where description has moved to proposition and inference, and hence is no longer philosophy. If, as previously considered, composition is recognized as the imposing of a will on discourse, i.e. the author intends to write on a subject and subsequently composes the discourse, then it follows that when philosophy moves to proposition and inference it moves into a realm of composition, no longer description. The author now represents a worldview and is making an assertion concerning what *is*, i.e. meaning is assigned to the description; it is no longer a description of what *is*.

An important aspect of philosophical inquiry is metaphysics, the field of which is the study of being or reality.³³ As an aspect of philosophical endeavor it concerns asking questions related to reality and being.³⁴ It is this philosophical aspect that Thiselton notes constitutes Derrida's pathway to a view of textuality, i.e. as a philosopher his view of what *is*, i.e. his description in his discourse in *Of Grammatology*, is in fact an interpretation viewed through the lens of his own metaphysics. It will be argued that the metaphysical position he argues from, but does not acknowledge as metaphysics, is metaphysics of absence.³⁵ The

²⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 358. Gadamer notes; "To try to eliminate one's concepts in interpretation is not only impossible, but manifestly absurd."

³⁰ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 10.

³¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, ed. C. K. Ogden, trans., F. P. Ramsey, Germ. & Eng. ed., International Library of Psychology Philosophy and Scientific Method (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1922; reprint, 1958), sect. 4.112.

³² Ibid. Thiselton notes this important aspect of Wittgenstein's work, see Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 29.

³³ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 446.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 40. Derrida argues for the absence of a signatory, i.e. the meant of the author, and the absence of a referent, an absence of presence of 'other,' which results in anteriority of meaning impacting the text, i.e. gives 'voice' to otherness. This view implies that meaning awaits creation by a reader not understanding by a reader.

failure to acknowledge this shows that he views himself as describing the situation either from an un-metaphysical, or a non-metaphysical stance.

(b) The Metaphysics of Presence and Absence

Metaphysics, for Derrida, is the culprit of the debasing and repression of writing that has essentially hijacked what writing should have been.³⁶ The science of writing has been shaped, restricted and ordered by “metaphor, metaphysics, and theology” and now the science of *grammatology* has arrived as a liberating force from this repression.³⁷ In this new science a glimpse is caught of the closure of the “historico-metaphysical epoch.”³⁸ It is not the end of the epoch, seemingly because the new era arises as a dislocation from within it.³⁹

It would seem logical to assume that Derrida would envisage the total escape from metaphysics. However, when Derrida is questioned on this subject he does not see the escape from metaphysics as possible.⁴⁰ In this is the recognition that metaphysics cannot be left behind. The problem is that any argument against metaphysics is of necessity a metaphysical argument.⁴¹ The issue of metaphysics is part of the presuppositional world, or worldview, of a person and everyone has a worldview,⁴² consequently, any argument against a particular worldview is an argument from within a worldview.

It is the metaphysics of the Western world, and the philosophy on which it developed, that seem to be the real target of Derrida’s own discourse.⁴³ “Logocentric metaphysics” has impacted this development since the days of the early Greek philosophers, i.e. the impact has occurred over the span of three millennia in Derrida’s view.⁴⁴ Wolterstorff states “Derrida is metaphysics’ relentless, indefatigable, fight-to-the-death opponent; his brief against discourse interpretation is that is its metaphysical.”⁴⁵ The concept of signification belongs to the history of metaphysics and “in a more explicit and more systematically articulated way to the

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

³⁷ Ibid., 4. (Italics original) It should be noted that in a note concerning the use of the word “theology” Derrida includes the metaphysics of atheism in that which has repressed writing.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans., Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 17. This was an admission by Derrida in an interview with Julia Kristeva and is also noted by Wolterstorff in *Divine Discourse*, 162.

⁴¹ Wolterstorff, 162.

⁴² Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 71.

⁴³ Wolterstorff, 156.

⁴⁴ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 8.

⁴⁵ Wolterstorff, 156.

narrower epoch of Christian creationism.”⁴⁶ Derrida shows the inseparableness of this in his thinking: “The sign and divinity has the same place and time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological.”⁴⁷

Derrida’s view is that in this current emergence of Grammatology, as representing writing as it always should have been, is also seen “the death of the civilization of the book.”⁴⁸ Wolterstorff, referring to *Writing and Difference* by Derrida, notes that in Derrida’s thinking the idea of the “Book” has controlled both thinking and writing; his tirade against it is because it carries the assumption of meaning as anterior to writing, whereas for him meaning awaits writing for meaning to come into existence.⁴⁹ Derrida considers that true writing “...is also to be incapable of making meaning absolutely precede writing: it is thus to lower meaning while simultaneously elevating inscription.”⁵⁰ In considering the views expressed by Derrida, Wolterstorff observes that if his line of thinking is followed then “...there is no divine Book on which we are to model our books, no divine thoughts after which to think our thoughts. The God of Leibniz – indeed, the Jewish God – will have to go.”⁵¹

It may be that it is a coincidence, yet the implication of “the death of the civilization of the book” stated in *Of Grammatology*, in the light of these other works by Derrida, is one that carries theological overtones, i.e. the death of metaphysical society in general but especially that of all belief in a divine being as the ground of all being. It seems the divine being must to be cleared from the scene so that authorial intent, as giving meaning to writing, can at last be expelled, so that meaning passes into the hands of the reader and hence finds its true place as the result of writing, not its cause. Writing becomes the antecedent of meaning, not the reverse. Clearly his opposition to metaphysics drives his view of hermeneutics. Wolterstorff concludes his examination of Derrida’s argument against discourse interpretation by noting it is an argument against its perceived metaphysical subjugation, yet on the subject of metaphysics Derrida doesn’t offer any argument, just his avowed rejection.⁵²

⁴⁶ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 13.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁹ Wolterstorff, 161. Wolterstorff gives an extended quote from *Writing and Difference*, 11, showing the force of Derrida’s feelings on this issue.

⁵⁰ Derrida, *Writing*, 10.

⁵¹ Wolterstorff, 161.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 171.

Vanhoozer notes that the oft quoted statement of Derrida: “There is nothing outside the text” (which is also noted above) is often misinterpreted.⁵³ He observes that this has been trivialized to imply that Derrida is stating that things don’t actually exist until writing occurs.⁵⁴ What Derrida denies is exteriorization of the text as providing any basis of meaning that is “stable” and “determinate.”⁵⁵ This concept has just been discussed in the preceding paragraph. Yet, there may be a deeper significance to Derrida’s reasoning. What Vanhoozer seems to imply is that Derrida is simply trying to push meaning into a relativistic state where no definitive *a priori* meaning exists. This may indeed prove the eventual outcome for those who follow his supposedly non-metaphysical metaphysics.

However, in his discourse, Derrida, in one section, follows a line of thought in his consideration of writing that implies a different agenda. He begins by noting the general usage of the word ‘language’ in referring to a number of activities, and then observes that everything becomes included, therefore, under the term writing, presumably because language soon defaults to writing in his view of the impact of metaphysics.⁵⁶ Writing moves into many spheres controlling what they are and become.⁵⁷ His discussion arrives at the contemporary biologist who refers to writing as describing the “the most elementary processes of information within the living cell.”⁵⁸ From this place, of having arrived at a basic concept of information, “the entire field covered by the cybernetic *program* will be the field of writing.”⁵⁹ He then makes a statement showing that the direction of his thinking is indeed the overthrowing, not only of the idea of the metaphysical as a philosophy, but the entirety of that which lies behind the metaphysical, the concept of any theological conception of humanity. He states that the theory of cybernetics will by itself “oust all metaphysical concepts – including the concepts of soul, of life, of value, of choice, of memory – which until recently served to separate the machine from man.”⁶⁰ Even the very idea of humanity is metaphysical, and evidently, to find humanity it must first be dehumanized, to remove the metaphysical.

⁵³ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 63.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 9.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

If this is to be successfully achieved cybernetics must first retain the current notion of writing “until its own historico-metaphysical character is also exposed.” In other words until every last vestige of the metaphysical is exposed, even from within itself, and at last expunged. Then it is envisaged that at last what is achieved is “the origin of *meaning* in general.”⁶¹ What will this brave new world look like? He has no idea; as yet there is no indication, just that it is not ‘meaning’ as currently employed.⁶²

Clearly the destruction of the metaphysical is his agenda, as Wolterstorff, Vanhoozer and Thiselton, among others, have noted. It is not just the destabilizing and relativization of meaning that is his aim; it is the overthrowing of meaning as it itself is understood. Atheistic humanism, which is Derrida’s effective position,⁶³ understands all life as evolving, not coming to being by direct creation or even by a theistic understanding of evolution. The code is writing itself as it goes and therefore giving itself meaning. This is the pattern that nature follows in this line of thought. This is essentially what he is proposing, i.e. there is no design or anterior meaning directing the process, and meaning develops, or unfolds, from the process. However, evidently even the expression of meaning it seeks to give itself ends up interpreted by the metaphysical concept of meaning at this time, and so it becomes stuck within metaphysical language it would rather avoid.⁶⁴ His cherished hope seems to be that eventually cybernetics will expose and overthrow the whole superimposed system.

What is interesting is the tacit admission by Derrida that even appeal to language and linguistics, as in Ricoeur and Gadamer, does not overcome the fact that, for writing as understood and practiced, the author is determinate in meaning. Everything else is really only language games, seemingly deferring but not overriding this situation; authorial-discourse interpretation will always rear its head, if that head is not cut off and it is completely overthrown. Only the total overthrow of meaning as it stands will ultimately change this. Therefore, unless Derrida is right in his understanding, authorial-discourse is what must be

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 5.

⁶³ This is a description from within metaphysics, but as Derrida has acknowledged, at this time that is the language that must be used. That which seeks the erasure of God is a-theistic and humanism simply bases importance as beginning with humanity not the divine. Hence, the view proposed that this is his effective expressed position without speaking to his own *pistological* mindset.

⁶⁴ Wolterstorff, 165. Wolterstorff discusses this problem Derrida laments that the one seeking to speak against metaphysics must use metaphysical language.

interpreted, and the deconstructionist's only hope of breaking free of this tyranny is to attempt to bury the author. However, to achieve this they must first bury God and all that goes with belief. Hence Vanhoozer states: "The fates of the author of traditional literary criticism and of the God of traditional theism stand or fall together."⁶⁵

It is almost as if Derrida desires to return to the time three millennia ago when, in his view, the problem started and change the direction of what happened. Vanhoozer calls the approach of deconstruction essentially an attempt to remove "*The Ghost in the Machine*," i.e. the very concept of the author is a ploy to exteriorize language so that meaning is seen to give rise to language, and hence discourse and the text.⁶⁶ This is not the position of non-acceptance of the reality of the author, but rather the proposition that authorial intention is not determinate and that authorial voice is really only a composite of the impact of the tradition in which it stands.⁶⁷ Vanhoozer seems to suggest that deconstruction's object is to reduce the authorial voice to this.

Yet, as Thiselton points out, no individual exists having formed themselves and having pursued the quest for knowledge *de novo*; rather an individual inherits a pre-existent "shared public world" that forms the basis of the pursuit of knowledge.⁶⁸ An author is inescapably impacted by the tradition in which they stand, and their authorial voice will reflect that. Nevertheless, as an individual they are not the composite of that tradition; it has acted as a mentor and as an individual their response to that mentoring is what they have become.

In the light of the conversation above, the ghost in the machine that Derrida would like to exorcise is that tradition itself, which is where the metaphysical impact is coming from. Hence the objective to liberate the individual from that impact and the only way to do that is to first reduce humanity to machine to begin again. Through the tradition in which an individual is standing a corporate memory is transmitted.⁶⁹ This tradition and corporate memory includes belief, automatically introducing the language of metaphysics, which the individual has "taken over" from the community.⁷⁰ A "shared public world" pre-exists the advent of the

⁶⁵ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 703.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 701.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

individual and impacts their thinking, shaping the terms on which knowledge shall be tested.⁷¹ Despite the fact that the individual is free to evaluate, and Derrida particularly seeks to free the individual from this metaphysical bondage, the shared public world will condition what are the appropriate criteria for the evaluation.⁷² Thus there is an implication that tradition has a 'voice' that cannot be muted, even if the author is denied direct impact in determination of meaning.

Although, in the religious sphere, the passed-on traditions become "underrated" in modern society, the "ghost in the machine" remains un-exorcised, because the quest for the individual's knowledge does not begin isolated from history and community.⁷³ Derrida has recognized that this 'voice' speaks through the author and it cannot be silenced unless it is removed. In this recognition he has also recognized that any presence of the author will give 'voice' to that tradition, i.e. there is an impact of authorial intent even when it is linguistically erased. Perhaps in Derrida's desire to undo this impact of three millennia of tradition, which in his view reinforces logocentrism, releasing humanity from metaphysical bondage, he would echo John Dryden's words in *The Conquest of Granada*,

I am as free as nature first made man
Ere the base laws of servitude began
When wild in woods the noble savage ran

Thiselton states: "Knowing, believing and especially understanding depend on some kind of sharing and on some kind of experiencing of continuity."⁷⁴ It is language that makes possible this pooling, sharing and transmission, a transmission that is not only geographical but also within time, i.e. from generation to generation.⁷⁵ It provides the ability for continuity. Thiselton goes on to note: "Language shapes the frame of reference through which knowledge is *grasped*, and within which it is *criticized*."⁷⁶ Whilst this impact does not exclude ways of seeing the world, it does encourage ways of seeing the world, i.e. its impact cannot be denied in shaping an individual's mindset. At the very beginning of Derrida's discourse *Of*

⁷¹ Ibid., 703.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 702-3.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 704.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 706.

⁷⁶ Ibid. (*Italics original*)

Grammatology he addresses and attacks the issue of language as having become essentially perverted by this metaphysical inheritance.⁷⁷

The discourse in *Of Grammatology* is primarily a discourse against the understanding of language that stands in the metaphysically impacted tradition of logocentrism. Wolterstorff states that Derrida, in his work, "...argues that discourse interpretation rests on assumptions characteristic of what he calls 'metaphysics,' when it comes to metaphysics itself he doesn't argue but simply declares his rejection."⁷⁸ However, on examination, his attack on language is his argument against metaphysics. This appears to be the reasoning behind his attempt to deconstruct the language of logocentrism, i.e. to remove any sense of ability of exterior reference and at least mute the 'ghost (of metaphysics) in the machine' until it can be exorcised in the brave new world.

The moment a person asks a question concerning metaphysical issues they have begun to use the language of metaphysics simply by addressing the question. Hence, as Derrida admits, metaphysics is unavoidable and any other view is idealistic, existing only at the end of the deconstructionist's rainbow. It is inherent in language and the moment writing occurs it is transmitted as memory with language, which in turn makes reference to it, unless the signifier points only to another sign and the signified is denied any exteriority, resulting in the 'voice' of metaphysics being muted. This is the path Derrida follows.

Derrida observes that in his view the "epoch of the logos (i.e. logocentrism) thus debases writing...as a fall into the exteriority of meaning."⁷⁹ The concept developed, in this epoch, of the difference between signifier and signified is the basis of this fall into exteriority.⁸⁰ This 'difference' is an "appurtenance," i.e. an accessory of, or that which belongs to, the epoch, which is "organized and hierarchized in a history," this 'difference' belongs to the "great epoch covered by the history of metaphysics."⁸¹ This 'appurtenance' is fundamental to the integrity of the epoch and 'irreducible;' by which he seems to mean that metaphysics cannot be eliminated by an attempt to reduce the issue to one of science.⁸² The accessory

⁷⁷ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 6.

⁷⁸ Wolterstorff, 171.

⁷⁹ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 13. (Parenthesis added for clarity).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

always brings with it “all its metaphysico-theological roots,” together with all the baggage that adheres to these roots; it is a total package.⁸³ The absolute logos, as baggage that still clings to the roots, “was an infinite creative subjectivity in medieval theology: the intelligible face of the sign remains turned toward the word and face of God.”⁸⁴ The concept of “appurtenance” is carefully chosen, since the nature of an accessory is that it can be dispensed with and disposed of.

The system can't help itself, it exteriorizes, and in exteriorizing it references the metaphysical nature inherent in language-use. The issue it must eventually raise is that of God, therefore God is now embedded in the tradition that stands behind and is transmitted with the language. In this scenario, meaning antedates text, and this meaning is the author's meaning.

The subject matter of Derrida's first chapter in *Of Grammatology* concerns the “End of the Book.”⁸⁵ The end of the book is in fact the announcement of the death of the book, and at last, with this death, writing is re-birthed to become what it should have been.⁸⁶ Vanhoozer notes that the concept of the book “suggests totality,” it automatically alludes to an author and a meaning; deconstruction views this tendency to be “inherently theological.”⁸⁷ Derrida states that this concept of the book “is the encyclopedic protection of theology and of logocentrism against the disruption of writing.”⁸⁸ Clearly, in his thinking, the concept of the book belongs to the system of logocentrism as an invention of this system, since in his understanding this system essentially commandeered writing three millennia ago. The concept of the book is simply an attempt to avoid the inspection and exposure by the incisive insight of writing (as it is becoming in Derrida's understanding), which will reveal the metaphysics that lies as a lurking presence controlling meaning.

It is no wonder that Vanhoozer's assessment is that the real target in this is not the author *per se* but “meaning itself.”⁸⁹ Hence Vanhoozer's assessment is that, for Derrida:

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁷ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 104.

⁸⁸ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 18.

⁸⁹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 99.

“Books stabilize, control, and close down the play of meaning.”⁹⁰ If the text is removed from the context of the book, hence destroying the book, a surface covering of the text is stripped away that removes the values, ideals and meaning inherent in logocentrism.⁹¹ This stripping frees the text from any imposed unity so that meaning is unrestricted. The issue of meaning now passes into the hands of the reader, who evidently now has the opportunity to find meaning free of metaphysics.

The author, it seems, is simply the Trojan horse of metaphysics that exteriorization allows into the text, thereby loosing logocentrism to destroy the text by reforming it into a book. It is no wonder that deconstruction decided it needed to go beyond Gadamer and Ricoeur, for whom the author has at least an indirect presence, in that it is the authors’ discourse that is continued by the reader. In both Gadamer and Ricoeur this subsequently has an influence on the readers’ meaning, in the sense that the discourse is set up to dialectically bring the reader into some form of communication with the author’s discourse.

In Ricoeur’s thought the text acts as a linguistic mediator between the author and reader, and in Gadamer’s thought the text is the foundation of a dialogical interaction concerning the *sache* of the author. Meaning is the readers’ for both Gadamer and Ricoeur. However, Gadamer proposes that the object of the reader, through a communication process, is to make one’s own what is alien, i.e. the text, or discourse of what the author said, but it is still the author who said it.⁹² The meaning arrived at in this process is neither exclusively the reader’s nor the author’s: it is a common meaning.⁹³ Ricoeur takes event as the foundation, comprising the event of the saying of the author (the writing) and the event of the saying of the interpreter (the reading). Between these two events is the written text, which has semantic autonomy, and the ideality of the text mediates the fusing of the horizons of author and reader, but it is still the author’s horizon with which the reader is undergoing a fusion.⁹⁴

The end result of both is similar in that what occurs is a reader who has been impacted by an author in the hermeneutical process. In both these views the tradition in

⁹⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁹¹ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 18.

⁹² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 360.

⁹³ Ibid., 350.

⁹⁴ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 91.

which the text stands, that has impacted the author, has input and therefore impact on the reader. In deconstruction this must surely be seen as what is essentially a back door for the metaphysics that has informed the author. Therefore, it would seem that what is essential is to not only deny the author's direct 'voice' or 'presence' but to also cut off any 'voice' of the tradition in which the author has stood. The speaking subject is removed not just muted.

A key characteristic in postmodern thinking has been the removal of the "speaking subject."⁹⁵ Thiselton examines this proposition from the aspect of the nature of language, which is to observe that the nature of language involves a speaking person contrary to the proposition of removal.⁹⁶ The route Derrida takes in the expunging of the speaking voice is again decidedly metaphysical. The dominant idea of presence in the history of logocentrism, hence of a speaking voice, moved from a place of 'objectivity,' i.e. the ideality of the image and the substantiality of the likeness, via Cartesian thought to 'representation,' i.e. "of the *idea* as the modification of a self-present substance, conscious and certain of itself at the moment of relationship to itself."⁹⁷ In the context of grammar the word "modification" implies an addition, so the concept of representation is that an *idea* becomes added and associated with the text due to a supposed perception of real presence associated with the text.

Ideality and substantiality interrelate in the "element of the *res cogitans*," i.e. the mental substance or thought world of the person, by "a movement of pure auto-affection," which, in Derrida, is what consciousness is, i.e. "the experience of pure auto-affection."⁹⁸ It would seem the implication is that the mindset, affected by logocentrism, acts in giving-oneself-a-pleasure⁹⁹ by the conception of this presence, and itself gives to this presence a sense of being absolute. However, as auto-affection it is a supplement, as is writing. Therefore it is something added to speech, or oral discourse, and as such it exists in the mind

⁹⁵ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 127.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 128. He concludes this particular discussion, on the need for a speaking subject, by noting, "in the end some kind of operational purchase is needed between language and bio-socio-physical embodiment." 129.

⁹⁷ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 97. The use of the phrase "motif of presence" and the general tone of a discussion of the writings Rousseau indicates that his discussion does concern written text, and is so taken in this context. Hence, *eidos* and *ousia* are taken to roughly to mean 'signifier' and 'signified,' since *eidos* is indicated as 'ideality' and *ousia* as substantiality. (All use of italics original)

⁹⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 165. This is the essential form of expression he gives to the term auto-affection; giving-oneself-a-presence (or pleasure).

of the reader; it is not a real presence.¹⁰⁰ The movement has undergone transformation from object, to mental substance and then to an idea that rests in the imagination.

The concept of the supplement is developed from the writings of Rousseau, taken from his own understanding of himself as a writer.¹⁰¹ The danger of writing, noting that languages are for speaking and writing is simply a supplement to speech, is that representation, in writing, claims to be a presence.¹⁰² The interplay of absence and presence, the motif, is taken from the self-torture Rousseau understands himself to have gone through in coming to the place of writing.¹⁰³ It is a desire for recognition that feeds the struggle and the choice of absence is so that his true worth can be seen, which would not be seen if he was present, i.e. as in the oral situation, and writing is the visual manifestation of that struggle.¹⁰⁴ Hence, writing is a supplement, an addition, and a giving-oneself-pleasure to enjoy recognition; therefore, it is an auto-affection.

The representation appears to be a presence, but it is an absence, an addition that can be subtracted from the text, hence it must be deconstructed to denude the text.¹⁰⁵ The concept of consciousness, the experience of presence, is therefore an auto-affection, i.e. it exists as an addition. Hence, this would imply that such things as the importance of consciousness in Gadamer are simply auto-affections, i.e. the metaphysical is really just auto-affection, something that is done as a giving-oneself-pleasure, its reality is its impact on the person not its existence as real presence.

The entirety of the concept of God, including proof of existence, morality, the absolute and the impact of divinity, is all part of this element of auto-affection, and for those impacted by logocentrism God is the name of this element.¹⁰⁶ The importance of Rousseau, for Derrida, is that in this age of metaphysics he is the philosopher that had a profound insight concerning writing.¹⁰⁷ Derrida sees Rousseau's condemnation of the concept of a universal

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. See also, 98, on auto-affection being presence in the mind of the individual. Onanism is a physical expression of auto-affection, 167. An important motif in Rousseau is that, in oral address, presence is at the same time promised and refused. Derrida notes that in Rousseau the speech raised above writing is speech as it should have been, 141.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 142.

¹⁰² Ibid., 144.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 142.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 98.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

characteristic is not from a theological basis, as to its possibility, but that it “seemed to suspend the voice,” i.e. it took over the auto-affection and essentially put it on hold.¹⁰⁸ What threatens in Rousseau, and by implication what is happening in the present, is the emergence of writing as it should be, free from metaphysics.¹⁰⁹ Derrida’s assertion of this being a non-theological decision is really a subterfuge to deflect a realization that it is indeed theological. It is based on the concept that there is no real presence at hand and the only version of the divine left, if it existed, would be some sort of Deism, as Theism concerns presence. It is indeed a theologically informed and impacted decision.

The concept of presence is related to the experience of writing in Derrida’s understanding of Rousseau; the establishing of presence rather than absence that is achieved in the re-appropriation of presence in auto-affection, which is not resisted by difference, i.e. *it is not a going backwards into metaphysics, provided it is seen as supplementary*.¹¹⁰ This is in contrast to Rousseau’s theory of writing, which recognizes the danger of supplementation as addition.¹¹¹ The supplement, determining the representative image, becomes a surplus that is “art, *techne*’ image, representation, convention, etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function.”¹¹² It creates a world in the imagination and this is where the presence resides. It is the supplement, not presence, which is exterior and as such is other than the text.¹¹³ Although Derrida does not propose it, what is implied in his work is that this is the ‘voice’ with which one dialogues when they ‘believe’ themselves to be in dialogue with real presence. Therefore, it also by default relegates any supposed authorial or speaking voice, to being in reality auto-affection.

This vehicle of the imagination is capable of providing an unending supply of supplements to gratify desire, i.e. the drive of onanism or auto-affection.¹¹⁴ This concept is eventually revealed as not just having analogy in language but is indistinguishable from its physical counterpart, sexual auto-affection.¹¹⁵ It is only metaphysics that seeks to distinguish

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 144. Difference doesn’t oppose appropriation, 143. (Italics added)

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid. (Italics original)

¹¹³ Ibid., 145.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 153.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 167.

between them as an imposed sense of morality; admittedly Derrida doesn't mention the imposition of morality but he certainly implies it. This conclusion of Derrida's, concerning the indistinguishable nature of language and physical auto-affectation, is more critical than it appears in his discourse. Its use is similar to Ricoeur's use of the concept of the semantic autonomy of the text, in that it is an implication that requires first accepting the assertion on which it is based, and the inference justifies the abolishing of the metaphysical. The implication requires first accepting his proposition of writing as supplement and that what is occurring in reference is auto-affectation. Derrida's view is of pure addition and his resultant treatment is as appendix not supplement. Concerning the concept of auto-affectation, it is simply the result of assumption of no real presence, not its proof.

The basis for elimination of the 'speaking subject' occurs when the following concepts are accepted, firstly the concept of the supplement (not just the concept of addition but that writing is a supplement of speech, which in itself bears closer scrutiny), secondly the concept that auto-affectation in language (consciousness as self-inspired imagination) and physical auto-affectation are indistinguishable. Metaphysics has excluded non-presence, and in so doing establishes a concept of real presence by determining an exteriority that was in reality the supplement.¹¹⁶ The concepts of exclusion and inclusion work within the supplement, not the text.

Derrida then presents his own paradox: "one annuls addition by considering it a pure addition. *What is added is nothing because it is added to a full presence to which it is exterior.*"¹¹⁷ So the concept of "origin or nature is nothing but the myth of addition, of supplementarity annulled by being purely additive."¹¹⁸ Contra to this, Ong, whose position on authorial intent is similar to Ricoeur's and Gadamer's, observes that writing should be seen as the complement of oral discourse.¹¹⁹ Thus he carries the idea of fulfillment rather than addition. The idea of supplement is usually that of completing or enhancing, as addition, and this would also be consistent with Ong's view. This area of supplement is an area of play of

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. (Italics original)

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 5.

presence and absence, and metaphysics can occur in this supplement but cannot realize it as supplement, or addition.¹²⁰

Therefore, the realm of presence, divine or otherwise, as understood in metaphysics, is imaginary and the reality is the thinking individual; all that exists is self and auto-affection firing the imagination, this is the proposed reality. Essentially this non-metaphysics is the metaphysics of humanity replacing deity, and the vehicle of Derrida's proposition is language stripped of the metaphysics of logocentrism. Stripped of metaphysics, which belongs to the exterior supplement that as an addition is disposable, there is nothing outside the text because there is nothing outside the individual. Meaning is given by humanity not discerned by humanity, i.e. meaning is not anterior but posterior. Even communication, as conversation, is two individuals auto-affecting reciprocally each echoing the auto-affection of the other. The universal is self-centered, in the true sense of that term.

Consequently, for the deconstructionist, the absence of the 'speaking subject' occurs because it only ever exists in the imagination of the author when writing, or the reader when reading. It is never a real presence and so must be deconstructed for interpretation to occur. If the danger of not removing the speaking subject is leaving metaphysical roots and baggage attached, the danger in using deconstruction, as a methodology, is the implication of its roots of proposing a metaphysics based on the absence of presence and its baggage, which will attend removing the speaking subject.

Wolterstorff's observation, noted above, that Derrida's argument against discourse interpretation is due to its association with metaphysics is correct.¹²¹ However, Wolterstorff's view of Derrida as simply declaring his rejection of metaphysics without offering any argument is not correct. Derrida used language as a guise for a metaphysical argument and always remains within metaphysical language, despite his protestations of abhorrence. If, as in Derrida, logos is the metaphysics of presence then deconstruction is the *metaphysics of absence*. This may also be Thiselton's implication: "Derrida's exclusion of Being might be said to betray more "metaphysical confidence", even if in the service of an anti-metaphysical

¹²⁰ Derrida, *Grammatology*.

¹²¹ Wolterstorff, 171.

philosophy.”¹²² As Derrida himself declares: “Only *pure absence* – not the absence of this or that, but the absence of everything in which all presence is announced – can *inspire*, in other words can *work*, and then make one work.”¹²³

The argument against the author is *pistological* and becomes removal of the author and the very idea of a divine being, which includes the God of traditional theism; as Vanhoozer observed they stand or fall together. This occurs because in the swing of the pendulum from the author to the reader is a corresponding swing from a divine-centered universe to a self-centered universe. The argument against the presupposition of authorial intent and a need to consider it in the interpretive process is neither compelling nor convincing.

¹²² Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 108.

¹²³ Derrida, *Writing*, 8. (*Italics original*)

Chapter 7

Metaphysics: Unrealistic Constraint or Realistic Context

Introduction

It has been shown in the preceding section that deconstruction is neither un-metaphysical, nor non-metaphysical in its approach, conversely, it is best considered as the *metaphysics of absence*. However, it does raise questions about how texts are viewed and how they are approached in their relationship to authors and readers. The view of a metaphysics of presence must also be considered for its validity. Such issues as to how metaphysics is perceived and how a metaphysical subject perceives should be examined. Also if a metaphysics of presence is asserted, how is this presence communicated with and how does it communicate? Dogmatic assertion of a metaphysics of presence may answer for those committed to a metaphysics of presence, but that assertion does not address these issues and questions. In addressing such questions the opportunity is presented for a better understanding of texts and their relationship to authors and readers. Also, for the Christian, a better understanding of how a metaphysics of presence functions from a philosophical consideration can aid in understanding how the Holy Spirit communicates, without having to resort immediately to a dogmatic assertion of a special hermeneutic.

1. The Idea of the Divine and the Absolute

The previous section highlights an important inference that can be drawn. The concept of the existence or non-existence of the absolute is idealistic; it is a non-solvable problem and it is non-demonstrable within the sphere of human empirical reasoning. It can be inferred to exist through the process of reasoning, as in the thinking of Kant considered previously, but not unilaterally identified from a human perspective. However, it is not just the concept of the absolute, or presence, that is idealistic. The concept of non-absolute, or absence, as the antithesis of the absolute is equally idealistic, i.e. the non-existence of the absolute can itself only be inferred. It is a matter of a belief about reality that is beyond the capability, and it may be said warrant, of empirical reason. Whatever position is held about the concept of the absolute, the discussion is one about the absolute and the view of reality held is held by belief not reason.

The decision by an author, or reader, on the existence of the absolute, or divine, is consequently a *pistological* one with hermeneutical impact, not a hermeneutical one with *pistological* impact. It is a view of reality from which hermeneutics is conducted. Vanhoozer states, what is for him, a “general rule describing the relation between meaning and *metaphysics*: textual meaning will only be as determinate and decidable as the conception of reality that it ultimately presupposes.”¹ It is a matter of the belief of the author or reader, which the author imparts in the writing or that impacts the presuppositions of the reader in their reading. The *pistology* precedes and informs the hermeneutics. It is not a reasoned decision that demands uncritical acceptance as rational reason. The *pistology* becomes the context in which the world is seen and described, and, it becomes the context in which hermeneutics is conducted. Vanhoozer has acknowledged, with many other theologians, that no theologian enjoys the God’s-eye view of reality.² It is believed to exist or it is not. The author or reader operates on the presupposition of their belief.

Pascal noted that a person assents to one of two propositions; God is or God is not.³ Rational reason can neither decide for nor defend either proposition.⁴ If, as Vanhoozer has noted above, rejection of the absolute results in consequent rejection of the divine, then acceptance of the divine is acceptance of the absolute. Hence Pascal’s proposition could equally be rephrased as “The absolute is or it is not.” Again rational reason neither decides nor defends either proposition, and the postmodern rejection of the absolute is a belief, an assent to a proposition, which is based on inferences from its reasoning not a proposition secured within reason. It is inferred by reasoning based on presuppositions held that are not demonstrably achieved by a process of rational objective reason.

Hegel asserted that the matter of philosophy is “the actual cognition of what truly is,” but as a result it is first necessary to understand cognition.⁵ Cognition could be either regarded as an instrument to lay hold of the absolute, or, the “medium through which to catch sight of it.”⁶ However, the application of an instrument reshapes what is being observed, i.e.

¹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 123. (Italics original)

² Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 309.

³ Pascal, sect. 233.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Hegel, "Phenomenology," 101.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the instrument itself impacts what becomes known.⁷ Alternately, if it is seen as a medium through which truth is received, the problem is that truth is not seen as it is but as it is through the medium.⁸ What is acknowledged is that what is interpreted is drawn into the realm of the interpreter and can only be expressed from the realm of the interpreter, which is what Gadamer and Ricoeur have both observed.

Consequently, any attempt at identification of an absolute, from within the process of reason, immediately becomes a relative perception of that absolute, and as such it is no longer the absolute value itself. Yet it is a perception of that which is absolute. Therefore, a decision about the existence or otherwise of the absolute is a *pistological* decision based on *non-rational* knowledge, not a decision from a process of reasoning based on *rational* knowledge. The person undertaking the search for the context of the 'world' in which self and the concept of finite objects find their place, brings the enquirer to a place of needing to consider the divine and hence the Absolute.⁹ It is a decision which, once made, forms part of the presuppositional world of a person, subsequently impacting their worldview and acting as a prejudice in their thinking, which will be written into their texts as authors and can be imported into text as readers.

(a) A Pistological Decision

In Chapter 3 an argument was put forward, and a *prima fascia* case established, proposing that *pistology*, or belief, is an inherent form of knowledge common to all people that is communicated in their literary texts. It was noted that interpretation requires an interpreter to be open to the standpoint of the author's belief about the subject matter and his or her assumptions about the belief of the intended audience, for any successful interpretation of the text. If the beliefs of an author concerning the *sache* are inherent in a text, then the belief of the interpreter should not be determinate, as the basis of understanding, in the act of interpretation of the text, if the text is to be understood in the light of any authorial intent.

The interpreters' own beliefs can only be injected into the process as comment and inference subsequent to the interpretative event, often designated application or

⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans., Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 16.

appropriation. The issue of interpretation, if the object is the author's meaning, is understanding of the composition from the author's viewpoint not critique of the composition from the reader's viewpoint; any analysis of that composition must be subsequent to interpretation, i.e. it should deal with what an author said.

Unbelief and belief, in relationship to a proposition, are both *pistological* positions that determine reality for a person and equally impact both the act of writing and the act of reading.¹⁰ The only other *pistological* position seemingly possible is that of agnosticism, which is to profess to not know and be undecided, hence positioning a person as not assenting to either of the other possible *pistological* positions. On the surface this can seem an almost neutral position, as though there is such a *pistological* position as a belief of not knowing. However, to be undecided and not know is to question either position and, as Newman has pointed out, to question a proposition is the result of a mental act of doubt.¹¹ The usual concept of doubt is that of a "deliberate recognition" that a proposition is uncertain.¹² This situation is an assent to a proposition at variance with the initial proposition, and, as Newman has noted, this is the situation of disbelief.¹³ Disbelief is another way of stating unbelief and so the effect is the same as unbelief. Consequently, active disbelief in both propositions must lead to a double-minded approach, i.e. at best it results in a vacillating presuppositional world.

The individual possesses a *pistological* stance to the world that has the effect of positioning them in their perception of the world. This is an inescapable conclusion that embraces all people. It has been suggested previously that the *pistological* framework of an individual determines the presuppositions through which she perceives reality, i.e. it provides a mechanism for determining what is true or false, and hence what is accepted, and consequently what meaning is assigned to what is perceived in a worldview. It is the context in which the facts an individual holds are positioned in viewing the world. The failure in an interpreter to recognize and acknowledge this creates prejudice in perception.

¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 296. Gadamer notes that even unbelief is defined in terms of the faith demanded.

¹¹ Newman, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

(b) The *Pistological* Position: Recognition and Non-Recognition

Gadamer's discussion of the problems facing the historian in dealing with history supplies a powerful analogy. The failure to recognize self as standing in a worldview, that shapes the view of the subject matter, is naïve and results in the inability to deal with the subject matter in a way it deserves.¹⁴ This is analogous to holding a view of self as acting from an un-metaphysical stance. However, the "naïveté becomes truly abysmal" when the interpreter becomes aware of the difficulties, and then contends that their own concepts and ideas are laid aside, for the purpose of investigation.¹⁵ This would, by analogy, be the same as viewing self as being able to act from a non-metaphysical stance. Either position therefore renders the investigation, in Gadamer's view, as not able to deal with the subject matter in a way that the subject matter deserves.

The problem is not being in possession of a metaphysical viewpoint, either compatible or incompatible with that of an author; it is the failure of the investigator to recognize that they have one. The view of textuality arrived at by Derrida is distorted because of an unacknowledged presupposition of a metaphysics of absence. If someone considers himself as not possessing a metaphysical position, i.e. he sees himself as un-metaphysical in his analysis and perception, his view of textuality will be distorted. Hence it is a naïveté, impacting the discourse and interpretation of that discourse. Derrida also asserts that those who deal with exteriority as reference, i.e. the supplement, finding meaning and 'voice,' have succumbed to metaphysics, which he sees himself to be avoiding. Hence, he views himself as non-metaphysical. In the light of Gadamer's observations this can be regarded as abysmal on the part of the interpreter, in this case Derrida, and these aspects, as a naïveté, impair and distort the handling of the subject matter, which must be taken into account.

The work of Wittgenstein assists in indicating why this naïveté is caused in a situation where it may not be able to be seen. He notes that to write a book on a subject that concerned the issue "The world as I found it," the writing subject would have to also, within it, report on his or her body and how it related to this world.¹⁶ They have to report on

¹⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 358.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, sect. 5.631.

themselves within the world. However, this would have the effect of “isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could *not* be made.”¹⁷ The subject doing the description cannot be contained within the description: who then is doing the description? Consequently, the “subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world.”¹⁸ This is the metaphysical subject¹⁹ and Wittgenstein therefore asks where this metaphysical subject is to be found. His analogy to explain this is the eye and what it sees, because in looking you don’t see the eye, it does the looking and doesn’t see itself, therefore it cannot take account of itself in the looking.²⁰

Connected to this is the fact that an individual’s experience, the encounter with the world they see does not occur because the dictates of rational reasoning meant it must occur, which would therefore be the same for all those seeing the world.²¹ That is to say, an individual’s experience is not predetermined by the logic of the system, rather the individual’s experience is new and unique for the individual. Everything seen can be seen differently and everything described can be described differently.²² To use Vanhoozer’s terminology, the only one who can enjoy the God’s-eye view of reality, which would take in the totality of views, is God.

In the metaphysics of absence individuals become, in their own perception, divine in the sense of their own perspective of reality, and in such a situation everything does indeed become relative to their perception. Hence, solipsism occurs as being the perceived state of reality, i.e. that the world *is* the way ‘I’ perceive it. Wittgenstein states that the “I in solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.”²³ If the extensionless point is taken to be the center of a world, which the idea and presentation by Wittgenstein of extensionless certainly implies, then reality is only understood as it relates to the individual, i.e. the perception is that self becomes the center of the world.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., sect. 5.632.

¹⁹ Ibid., sect. 5.641.

²⁰ Ibid., sect. 5.632.

²¹ Ibid., sect. 5.634.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., sect. 5.64.

The work of Pascal, as discussed previously, puts forward that only one of two propositions is possible, God is or God is not. It is important to also recognize, at this point of the discussion, that the issue of Pascal's wager concerns the perception of the individual on the existence of God, not the existence of God. The act of believing neither makes God exist or not exist, but it changes the perspective of the individual on the world they see.

Interpretation is an issue of perception and so this observation is important to the process and understanding of the concept of interpretation. In the terminology of the above discussion this translates to acceptance of one of two propositions, i.e. 'presence is' or 'absence is' (i.e. 'presence is not'), whichever is believed alters the perception of the individual. As Wittgenstein has observed the seeing self is the metaphysical self, i.e. the one seeing already has asserted a belief in 'presence' or 'absence,' and the resultant set of presuppositions of the person seeing, is the lens of the eye that they don't see.

In the case of 'presence' the individual sees the world as existing within 'presence' and receiving meaning in this referential world of this 'presence.' The individual exists relative to the world. In the case of 'absence' the situation is essentially solipsism and the individual sees the world as existing relative to their perspective, hence they give meaning from their perspective at the center of the world, as they perceive it. The world exists relative to the individual. Consequently, hermeneutics does not disclose reality as it is in its state of being but allows a perception of reality by the seeing subject, i.e. reality is understood relative to the subject.

Wittgenstein makes a further observation about the metaphysical self that gives further understanding on the concept of perception. A result of the reasoning that establishes the metaphysical self is that this can be considered as a "non-psychological I."²⁴ The world that is seen is the individual's world and this is how the "I occurs in philosophy."²⁵ He then makes the following observation: "The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit – not a part of the world."²⁶ Wittgenstein indicates a realm of consciousness that exists beyond the

²⁴ Ibid., sect. 5.641.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

human soul that, although interacting with the world of the individual, is not part of the world, i.e. not arising within the world yet in communication with the world. Wittgenstein's observations, or descriptions, are as a philosopher and he makes no further inferences about this realm. In the understanding of Derrida it is an 'exteriority,' and as such it is the metaphysical realm that he wishes to expose as a phantasm. Evidently, for Wittgenstein, its indescribability does not make it a phantasm, just indescribable yet existing.

2. The Eternal Realm: Escaping from the Finite-Infinite Circle to Metaphysical Understanding

The theologian would understand Wittgenstein's observation to refer to the spirit realm, as a realm of existence that is not physical and not the realm of the soul, i.e. the realm of the thinking individual. Hegel is another philosopher who grappled with similar issues but from the viewpoint of religion and the concept of spirit. Hegel recognized that in the age of the enlightenment reason asserted itself, envisaging religion, as faith, being opposed to reason.²⁷ Reason became mere intellect, placing that which it viewed "better than it in a *faith outside and above* itself, as a *beyond*."²⁸ He then notes that, for Kant, this domain of knowing is incapable of being known by reason.²⁹ As a result of this conception of things "the highest idea does not at the same time have reality."³⁰ Hegel notes that the important philosophers of his time, i.e. Kant, Fichte and Jacobi, found themselves largely in agreement with Thomistic thinking, which Hegel states was that "the absolute is no more against reason than it is for it; it is beyond reason."³¹ The problem was that the only positive knowledge reason could acknowledge was therefore only from within its own frame of reference, i.e. only that which is finite and empirical.³² The eternal, as a realm beyond this, is mindless or empty for an acquisition of knowledge.³³ The realm of knowledge that could be known, the finite and empirical, is all that is in the world, the realm of ordinary existence.³⁴ Yet this is the realm that Wittgenstein noted the metaphysical self sees, yet is at the same time itself separate from it, which is the distinction Hegel notes.

²⁷ Hegel, "Jena Writings," 73.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 74.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Hegel observes that all that is left for religion is to build temples and altars in the heart of the individual, with the result that “in sighs and prayers the individual seeks for the God who he denies himself in intuition, because of the risk that the intellect will cognize what is intuited as a mere thing, reducing the sacred grove to mere timber.”³⁵ However, the very thing that is being sought, the absolute and eternal, is not given since it is perceived as beyond reason with no ability to communicate with reason.³⁶ Therefore, for the individual there is a longing to communicate with the metaphysical that Wittgenstein noted as existing, yet the existence of which is not a ‘being’ of the finite empirical realm.

The finite becomes the sole reality and therefore absolute, and as a result the finite and the infinite are both posited as absolute, with the finite and infinite standing each as the antithesis of the other.³⁷ The eternal remains beyond this antithesis, therefore effectively beyond the infinite, since the infinite receives its identity from that which it is opposite to, i.e. the finite.³⁸ Hegel observes that in this reasoning (since both finite and infinite are absolute with the eternal beyond this realm) the eternal cannot be fathomed or grasped, with the result that God is beyond “the boundary stakes of reason.”³⁹ Therefore, the metaphysical is that which is beyond the capabilities of a reasoning process based upon rational apprehension of knowledge. Philosophy got only as far in Hegel’s time of the 18th Century, as Paul already noted that Greek philosophy, based on Plato and Aristotle, had got in his time of the 1st Century, as recorded in Acts 17:23, i.e. the God of worship is unknown and evidently unknowable.

This concept of thesis and antithesis in the relationship of finite and infinite means that the reasoning process can never escape this circular path that leaves it trapped within rational reason.⁴⁰ This can also be seen to imply that the process of dialectic, which as Gadamer noted seems designed by Plato to restrain misunderstanding and misuse, both intentional and unintentional,⁴¹ is also a contributing factor in the entrapment of the process of reasoning. The nature of the dialectic is to redirect the reasoning of the individual back

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 75.

³⁷ Ibid., 77.

³⁸ Ibid. See also, 79, where Hegel states, “the infinite has a being of its own only in its tie with the finite.”

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁴¹ Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 126.

towards the pole they came from, i.e. to stop the process getting off-track. Therefore, in Hegel's view, philosophy so trapped "cannot aim at the cognition of God [hence the metaphysical], but only at what is called the cognition of human being."⁴² Thus philosophy, as understood on the basis of reason, presents a primarily abstract "concept of an empirical humanity all tangled up in limitations, and to stay immovably impaled on the stake of the absolute antithesis."⁴³ Hegel notes that in this situation the "soul as thing is transformed into the ego."⁴⁴

This is the "extensionless point" that the "I" in solipsism shrinks to, and cannot go beyond, noted by Wittgenstein. The metaphysical is denied communication from the side of rational reason, and so unless it can communicate, i.e. find 'voice,' from processes other than rational reason, it is treated as though non-existent. Therefore, eventually, as in Derrida's discourse, it is erased as non-existent. The metaphysical has simply collapsed into the realm of "I" and the solipsism is complete, in this situation the soul, as the source of rational reasoning and intellect, becomes absolute. However, there exists many "I's" within the world and, with each being absolute, the absolute has become relative to each "I," i.e. the metaphysics of absence is the basis of relativism. In this situation, when metaphysics of absence is employed, it is indeed logical that authorial intent exists only in the solipsism of the author's world, and, as a result cannot be determinate in the solipsism of the reader's world.

Hegel found in Christianity an answer to this problem, that which is not confined within reason, yet through self-consciousness is able to relate to human reason. The true and absolute finds substance in the concept of the representation of the absolute as *spirit*.⁴⁵ However, Hegel's is not a theology in the sense of viewing the world from the divine perspective, it is rather viewing the divine from the world's perspective, hence it is a spiritual metaphysics.⁴⁶ The scriptural text, Rom. 1:19-20, reveals an understanding of how God is viewed from the human side, without the benefit of an understanding from His own viewpoint.

⁴² Hegel, "Jena Writings," 81. The comments within the parenthesis are added as a natural implication in line with the subject matter under discussion.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁵ Hegel, "Phenomenology," 96. Hegel's reference to spirit is an adoption of the concept he found articulated in Jn 4:24, stating, "God is Spirit." (Italics original)

⁴⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 433. Gadamer describes Hegel's concepts as an "idealistic spiritualism of a metaphysics of infinity."

Though its context is within a Christian text, and hence perspective, its description is of the divine perspective that all humanity perceives. Paul notes that the knowledge humanity can have of God is “manifest within” the individual. There is communication from the divine side that is knowable *within* the human context of physical and reasoning limitations. Paul further notes that this know-ability of the divine realm comes from the principle of ‘reference,’ i.e. God’s divine realm, though invisible to the human eye and reason, is referenced by what He made, which is a ‘universal’ principle. It applies to the whole of existence and to all individuals. God’s personality is hinted at, “His invisible...” “His eternal power and Godhead...,” but He is not personally identified, which is the province of a theology. He remains implicated in the reference, yet not identifiable. The sense that the universe references the divine is essentially an assertion that metaphysics is indeed an aspect of existence, not a theological development subsequently added to existence. Therefore, as a principle of the universe, it should be a foundation principle of all interpretation. Metaphysics, which is accessed and developed within the individual through reference, is how the individual breaks out of the circle of the finite-infinite.

Paul, though having been born a Diaspora Jew, i.e. born outside the land of Israel, he was raised in Jerusalem from his youth and involved in the Rabbinic school of Gamaliel, Acts 22:3, 26:4. His background and philosophy is not developed on the basis of Greek philosophy. Paul shows a capacity for understanding Greek philosophy and religion, e.g. Acts 17. However, his usage is in the same fashion as in the Johannine use of the concept of logos, in which the Greek concept of logos, Jn. 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word,” is a vehicle to help in understanding what is occurring in the advent of Christ. However, Jn. 1:14, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” revolutionizes the worldview of the world impacted by Greek philosophy in the embodiment of the Word, which is contrary to Greek thought.⁴⁷ Similarly, Paul makes reference to concepts held in the Greek world, but he uses them to communicate his understanding, i.e. they are used for the purposes of communication not formation, e.g. in Acts 17:23 the unknown and unknowable God becomes known in the person of Christ.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 379. Gadamer discusses this very issue concerning these texts.

Therefore, the background to Paul's assertion, mentioned in Rom. 1:19-20, is not Hellenism but Judaism. His idea of reference may be inferred by such concepts as the creation, i.e. that humanity is created in the image of God, Gen. 1:26-27, and 'therefore' in their being humanity references the divine. There are passages like Psalm 19, where the creation is a voice of reference to the divine. There is sufficient foundation within Judaism without the need to import ideas, and his own description of his upbringing, that he was "taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God," would mitigate against importation of ideas. Paul indicates a metaphysical world, but developed on a totally different basis to that of Hegel. However, both see the metaphysical is a referent of the physical. Thus the individual in the metaphysics of presence gets outside the circle.

3. The Referential Principle: Metaphysics of Presence and Absence

Because the principle of reference is universal it can be used universally, i.e. it works within rational reason but has the ability to connect and understand, that which is outside rational reason. In Chapter 3 a case was set out to establish a basis of the existence of categories of knowledge other than rational, and since these categories are themselves knowledge, i.e. they involve what can be known, they are describable and communicable. It was further suggested that the knowledge acquired, as knowledge, could be a basis of reasoning processes.

Reference can access and allow communication with and through these other categories of the *arational*, i.e. the subjective, and the *non-rational*, i.e. the *pistological* or metaphysical. The principle of reference is therefore, in the biblical understanding of the world, a basic principle of interpretation. The ability of reference is located on the human side of the communication, since, as it set out in Rom. 1:19-20, reference uses what is known as its basis, having the ability to refer to what is not known. This is actually a basic principle of all inquiry, i.e. the use of what is known to discover what, at that time, is not known. In deconstruction, Derrida has employed the principle of reference so that the metaphysics of absence can prevent the metaphysics of presence from impacting the reader, i.e. signs refer to other signs keeping the reader within the text, which is not the discrediting of reference, but seeking a discrediting of the ability to reference outside the text. Derrida creates a new circle

to circumvent the tendency to reference that becomes automatic in metaphysics of presence, i.e. Derrida uses reference to deny the form of reference he doesn't want.

Hegel seems to have taken note of the concept of reference, with its ability to get outside rational reason, and the ability of the metaphysical to manifest within the individual through reference.⁴⁸ Hegel's view of spirit is not developed from within theology, but is rather a theologically impacted concept, adapted into an understanding developed based on Greek philosophy from Plato and Aristotle.⁴⁹ He views spirit as the direct opposite of matter, with an essence of freedom, so that all the qualities of spirit exist only through freedom.⁵⁰ His reasoning is that this freedom is operational when the existence of the individual depends on the individual, i.e. they are not dependent for their existence on that which is external to the individual within this world.⁵¹ He states in this situation that the "self-contained existence of Spirit is none other than self-consciousness – consciousness of one's own being."⁵² This freedom that is the essence of spirit is his concept of what drives history to unfold; it is "none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom."⁵³

These concepts from Hegel's understanding of history, serve as a good paradigm through which to understand and highlight two aspects that are important in his understanding of spirit. Spirit works out from its domain into that of the individual and is manifest as self-consciousness. The metaphysical world impacts and outworks in the physical world, which is subordinate to the metaphysical, and the metaphysical is "*the final cause of the world at large*."⁵⁴ This is not to say that all that is derives its source from faith, as though a version of fideism. It is to say that the perception of reality that a person possesses will give context and understanding to the world they see; the issue is not the nature of reality but the nature of perception, i.e. it is a hermeneutical issue.

⁴⁸ Hegel, "Phenomenology," 125. In a discussion of representation and its purpose he notes "*representation* constitutes the middle term between pure thought and consciousness as such." (Italics original)

⁴⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 418. Gadamer notes that Hegel's development is from within Greek thought and he states; "whoever wants to learn from the Greeks has always first to learn from Hegel."

⁵⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans., J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1956), 17.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴ Ibid. (Italics original) Hegel uses the word "spiritual" not "metaphysical," but this appears to be the concept behind his usage of the word.

Although not using the term “absence” Hegel discusses the situation of self-consciousness that “one-sidedly grasps only *its own* divestment.”⁵⁵ This situation appears to be metaphysical; a movement of spirit, but spirit as being has not moved out into consciousness and “divested” itself to become self-consciousness as he uses the term, i.e. to use Derrida’s term it is absent.⁵⁶ In this situation the individual will experience a perception of reality that is a phantasm, but since it is essentially only a facade of the metaphysical there will be no metaphysical impact from outside the person, i.e. no real presence.⁵⁷ Yet it will have satisfied itself that it has fulfilled the metaphysical issue that Wittgenstein proposed, i.e. the “I” who observes is separate from the world and is a metaphysical subject. Hegel notes that in this situation “Spirit is in this way only *imagined* into existence; this imagining is the *visionary dreaming*...that insinuates into both nature and history.”⁵⁸ This situation impacts both the view of nature, the world, and history, the place in the world and the view of tradition. Hegel’s description describes clearly the situation of the metaphysics of absence in Derrida, including the operation of imagination in auto-affection. Hegel’s discussion is of mythical representations that form part of religions in general other than true spirit, yet his description fits the understanding of deconstruction. This underlines the reality that deconstruction is indeed metaphysics, which has designated its own metaphysics as non-metaphysics, or, as has been suggested in this work, it is in reality the *metaphysics of absence*.

If the situation is not to be a phantasm, i.e. not merely imagination of the individual, but genuine and having actual being, then it comes from reception of spirit.⁵⁹ In Hegel’s understanding this comes as perception of “immediate consciousness” that in turn takes the shape of self-consciousness in the individual, i.e. the absolute spirit takes, for itself, this shape of self-consciousness.⁶⁰ Within the individual this now appears as faith, i.e. it becomes *pistological* knowledge not rational knowledge, and the person of the individual is involved in personal encounter with the divine.⁶¹ What takes place is not simply representation, which is the mode of contact, nor a trigger of the imagination creating a thought of contact, but is God

⁵⁵ Hegel, "Phenomenology," 119. (Italics original)

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid. (Italics original)

⁵⁹ Ibid., 120.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

beheld “immediately and sensuously as a self.”⁶² Furthermore, since the perception is occurring as self-consciousness within the human world, this perception of God is perceived as “an actual human individual.”⁶³ Therefore, within Hegel’s description, not only ‘voice’ of real presence is possible but also real communication. This is not the possession of an individual, which would remove freedom, but interaction and communication with an individual. In Hegel’s view this is how revelation of true religion occurs.⁶⁴

4. The Interaction of the Divine and the Human: The Metaphysical Dimension

Hegel’s concept that spirit comes as an immediate consciousness has obvious affinity with the phenomenology of Husserl, whom he preceded. Hegel’s concept is clearly one of an ‘intuitiveness’ in immediate presentation. However, this is not inconsistent with the biblical record itself. The biblical record is a discourse of God yet the hand of God is not the hand of direct authorship of this discourse within the world. In his consideration of the New Testament texts Boomershine concluded the evidence suggests Jesus was literate.⁶⁵ He therefore suggested the model of Socrates as an explanation how Jesus can be the “seminal figure” of a movement that engages literacy, when He Himself wrote nothing.⁶⁶ The Genesis record is a discourse of God that occurs in the same fashion as Boomershine notes in the life and ministry of Jesus, it is God’s discourse written by a disciple, i.e. an inspired believer.⁶⁷ Therefore, the writing of the saying occurs within the world and is not represented as descending into the world, but a creation within the world, it is the immanent record of a transcendent discourse. Also by adopting this approach, i.e. the divine inspiring the writer rather than the divine being the direct author, the divine, like Socrates, can inhabit the text in real presence and dialogue. Thus to describe Himself and His action in the world He moves Himself from the metaphysical ‘I’ of authorship to a place of having description and presence within the world the author describes.

The Genesis record opens with the divine fiat of the beginning, which is that God created the universe, and as a proposition it can be accepted, i.e. as in the metaphysics of

⁶² Ibid., 121.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Thomas E. Boomershine, "Jesus of Nazareth and the Watershed of Ancient Orality and Literacy," *Semeia* 65 (1994): 22.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

presence, or it can be rejected, i.e. as in the metaphysics of absence. It cannot be modified or re-negotiated. Following this statement of divine fiat, in Gen. 1:2, God is present as 'being' before logos issues forth in this act of creation. The earth was, in its initial state, unordered, however, the "Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." The communication, or logos, of God is not separated from His being but contingent with it, but it does not act as cause of His being. Spirit is already present prior to the issuing forth of logos in Gen. 1:3. To use Wittgenstein's concept, God is the metaphysical subject, being transcendent with respect to the world and separate from the world, which having created, He is seeing. Hence His being is not contained within it but can be identified from within it.

However, as Wittgenstein also observed, the form of the metaphysical subject can be described in its involvement with the world it sees. This form must of necessity refer back to the subject, which Hegel recognized must be linked to a discussion of spirit in the case of the divine, i.e. God is spirit. The metaphysical subject 'God' is transcendent, but the Spirit is predicated with respect to God, i.e. the Spirit enters the world of the text, becoming the form that the speaking subject describes of himself within the world. The Spirit is the immanence of God and is able to refer back to the transcendent speaking subject, since the Genesis record places Spirit in a predicated position with respect to the subject God. Hegel examined the concept of predication and noted that the subject becomes manifest in the predication of the subject; e.g. within the present discussion, in statements such as 'God is creator of heaven and earth' and 'God is Spirit' the predicate gives God presence within the world.⁶⁸ Predication refers back to the subject in the event of discourse.

The nature of the metaphysical subject's description is a discourse and Ricoeur noted that in the discourse event, i.e. speech and/or the act of writing as inscription of speech, the inner structure of the nature of the sentence is to refer to the speaking subject. The utterance's meaning refers to the utterer's meaning due to the self-reference of discourse.⁶⁹ In Ricoeur this is only in the event of discourse, i.e. dialogue, as his philosophy of interpretation is prefaced by the detachment of the written text from this event, which results

⁶⁸ Hegel, "Phenomenology."

⁶⁹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 13.

in the semantic autonomy of the text, as discussed above. Reference is a natural feature of event and detachment changes this to mute in Ricoeur, or erased in the case of Derrida.

5. The Detachment of Presence

The critical question at this point for perception of the metaphysical is the issue of detachment. Does the metaphysical subject become detached from their logos in the case of written text, due to temporal detachment, irrespective of any perceived difficulty with handling reference, as in Gadamer and Ricoeur? Another way of phrasing this, in the light of the thinking of Derrida, is to posit the question; does logos become text in its detachment? In the context of this thesis this becomes the question; does composition simply become text in its detachment? The issue of semantic autonomy hangs on this concept. In the metaphysics of presence meaning is a metaphysical issue, which is also no more than the simple recognition that the speaking subject, giving a description of the world, is the metaphysical subject. In the metaphysics of absence meaning is an issue of imagination, nothing more than pure auto-affectation. In this case it is the reader who is autonomous, not the text.

Therefore, the issue of the semantic autonomy of the text is a metaphysical issue, i.e. it relates to metaphysical perception. The only other possibility for Ricoeur's concept is that the semantic autonomy of the text is pure happenstance.⁷⁰ However, this would suggest that temporality can break the connection with the metaphysical; in this case humanity's alienation from the divine, i.e. the world of reference that is accessed in a metaphysics of presence, becomes pure happenstance. If this is Ricoeur's position what is denied is the inherent ability of the text to reference backwards to the author, as the subject, which it would in the event of discourse. Ricoeur does not question the ability of texts to reference, his discussion of symbol and metaphor, and his concept of interpretation as projecting a world before the reader, testifies to his belief as to the ability of a text to reference. His view, if it were one of serendipity, would then have to imply a failure *of*, or breakdown *in*, metaphysical perception occurring in its detachment. Furthermore, if his view is one of happenstance then it also

⁷⁰ Ibid., 100. Ricoeur, in endnote 5, p79. of the 4th Essay, discussing the concept that valid interpretation is founded on authorial intention, makes the following statement in the endnote; "the intention of the author is lost as a physical event." This would seem to imply that happenstance might indeed be his reasoning. If so, this would in turn imply that his theory of interpretation fortuitously occurs due to random chance, i.e. primarily serendipity. This serendipity means, therefore, that authorial intent in writing "has no other [means of] expression than the verbal meaning of the text itself." Ibid. This is the sense of the text, discussed previously.

faces the situation of the possibility of the reader entering into dialogue with the author, in which case semantic autonomy would be lost. Consequently, it cannot be considered as an element of written text, merely a temporal element associated with the text and as such does not negate authorial intent. He does not discuss the nature of this rupture, just the fortuitousness of the breakdown.

Furthermore, his concept is one of autonomy not autocracy, and hence the text's self-rule relates to how the rules are established within which it has autonomy, or the text is indeed autocratic. Ricoeur's theory of interpretation does set out his understanding of the 'rules of engagement' in interpretation, and one of his *created rules* is the autonomy of the text. The rules he establishes, or recognizes as inherent, cause his theory to flow to the place he desired to go to when he began, i.e. Ricoeur's theory itself reveals the very principle of authorial intention.

In the previous discussion of his concepts, it is the direct voice of the author, i.e. real presence, which is denied, but the author is granted a back door in a form of absent presence. This occurs in that the discourse is the author's, and meaning is established between author and reader as a fusion of their respective horizons, via mediation of the ideality of the text. If this is a genuine fusion the issue of metaphysical perception operates and occurs without mention, or consideration. Metaphysics, as Derrida observed, is inescapable, not as a trap in which a person exists, but as the context of human existence. Ricoeur, like Gadamer, does recognize the metaphysical task. This is seen in his definitive statement on semantics, which he calls "the theory that relates the inner or immanent constitution of the sense to the outer or transcendent intention of the reference."⁷¹

A further problem, in Ricoeur's thought, is that the text is granted as having the faculty of meaning, being implied by the concept of semantic autonomy, i.e. it has presence. Yet, as noted above by Ong, discourse is discontinued in written text until continued in and by a reader, which militates against text as presence. Hence the concept of metaphysical perception is not so easily avoided, which involves the speaking subject, or author of the text and their intention.

⁷¹ Ibid., 21-2.

In the Judeo-Christian understanding of the origins of the universe, as mentioned above, being and logos are contingent. This is also true for the description of humanity. In Gen. 1:26-30, part of the divine fiat of creation, God issues forth logos for the creation of humanity, male and female. However, in the account of Gen. 2:7 the formation is described from a concept of immanence; God forms humanity from the dust of the earth, God is hands-on and no 'logos' occurs. Yet, the human so formed is lifeless until God breathes life into the nostrils of the human, the implication of the text is that of a fully formed yet lifeless body, i.e. possessing nostrils is a detailed observation, but being does not live until the breath, or spirit, enters and expresses life. Being is directly conferred by the 'Being' of all being, and is a direct impartation not a creation by logos, thereby it is transcendent with respect to this world. It has been previously observed that language and understanding are primordial; they are there at the beginning, in the biblical worldview. However, the text of Genesis 2 shows that as with the divine, being occurs before any logos issues forth. The scriptural view is that which becomes apparent in analysis, i.e. metaphysics, sets the context of logos, and this will impact the task of interpretation that makes what is foreign one's own.

Some immediate observations can be made about the biblical concept and philosophical descriptions. In Gen. 1:3-5 light, the energy source for all life, is first brought into the realm of this universe. In this process time is created as the concept of the first day suggests the introduction of time. Everything that is created beyond this will have the horizon of time. Heidegger, in his philosophy, asserts that, in his thinking, time is the horizon of *Dasein*, the expression of individual being-within-the-world.⁷² As noted above in the Genesis account, because it is in this world, *Dasein* is created within time.

However, the biblical account also shows that, in the case of a human being, being is conferred and is not endemic to the creation, i.e. the living being did not exist just from the formation of the elements within the creation, but instead required an act of God in conferring it, i.e. human being has both dimensions, which are those of the finite-infinite circle and the eternal, resident within the one being. This would seem to be the thrust of Ecc. 3:11, "He [i.e. God as creator] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their [i.e.

⁷² Heidegger, 39.

human beings] hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.” This text also points to the problematic that has been the discussion of this chapter, i.e. one does not proceed from the finite-infinite to the eternal by a process of reasoning based on rational knowledge, but another form of knowledge is required, this is the *non-rational* knowledge of the metaphysical.

The ‘logos’ does not arise from within the creation, but it arises externally and is expressed within the creation. This also indicates the why and how of the concept of reference to the external and metaphysical, noted in the Pauline text of Rom. 1:19-20. Hence, also indicating why philosophers, in their descriptions, find themselves addressing such issues. The ‘logos of God’ from exteriority enters the realm of this existence giving meaning, hence order and structure. The sense of purpose and destiny both within and for humanity arises through the external logos, Gen. 1:26-30, i.e. such things as the drive towards achievement, the drive towards survival and in Gen. 2:18-22 the drive to relationship and community. None of this is endemic or necessitated by the nature of the universe itself. Removal of the Supreme Being and external reference of the logos has the tragic consequence of reducing humanity to that of the machine, which Derrida announces with seeming delight.⁷³

Finally, in the Genesis account, morality and ethics do not arise within the system but from exteriority of the logos, this is seen in that the first concept of right and wrong is established by God’s declaration in the garden. Adam is commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, and is warned of the consequence of disobedience, Gen. 2:15-17. Gadamer also observes that moral reasoning occurs on the basis of something already known.⁷⁴ Technical knowledge can be learned and forgotten, but moral knowledge is neither learned nor forgotten and has the appearance of being absolute.⁷⁵ Therefore, as a philosopher not holding the concept of the absolute he acknowledges the appearance of absoluteness, and hence exteriority of morality. The Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer points out that there “must be an absolute if there are to be *morals*, and

⁷³ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 9. This observation of Derrida’s has been considered above.

⁷⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 283.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

there must be an absolute if there are to be real *values*.⁷⁶ He goes on to state that if “there is no absolute beyond man’s ideas, then there is no final appeal to judge between individuals and groups whose moral judgments conflict.”⁷⁷ The collapsing of the metaphysics of presence into metaphysics of absence will remove these aspects, such as destiny and promise, together with morality and ethics. However, should they tend to arise spontaneously within humanity despite the metaphysics of absence, which they do, this makes reference to the metaphysics of presence.

6. A Turn that U-turns: From Metaphysics to Language in Postmodernism

Thiselton notes that in Heidegger’s search for the understanding of being there is “an ambivalence” in his later life.⁷⁸ Thiselton observes that the later Heidegger saw being as somehow residing in language, but, at the same time, realized that this was an awkward concept and desired to retreat from it.⁷⁹ Thiselton takes note that the later Heidegger has not abandoned the quest for the “Being of beings” but he no longer searches in the area of metaphysics.⁸⁰ In his initial search, i.e. in *Being and Time*, Heidegger notes that, in the search for the answer to the question of being, there is “*a priori* an enigma.”⁸¹ The enigma is that life is conducted with at least a rudimentary understanding of Being, and yet it is still “veiled in darkness.”⁸² So for Heidegger the question of Being not only lacks a clear answer but the question itself is obscure and lacking direction.⁸³ Therefore, it would seem that Heidegger’s search ended the way it started in pursuing the question of the Being of beings.

The biblical account suggests that being exists within time, as Heidegger observed, and so can to a degree be understood within time; it was noted above that Heidegger saw time as the horizon of *Dasein*. However, the biblical account also implies that pursuit of the question of being will not be successfully addressed without consideration of the fact that being is conferred from outside time and this universe, i.e. it is a metaphysical, or

⁷⁶ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976), 145.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 108.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸¹ Heidegger, 23. (*Italics original*)

⁸² *Ibid.* Heidegger notes that every inquiry, as a seeking, “gets guided beforehand by what is sought,” implying a form of *a priori* knowledge, 24.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24.

transcendent, issue, and further that it is conferred by a Supreme Being, as the 'Being of beings'. Without this concept of being as transcendent no answer will be found to the question of the Being of beings, which agrees with the later Heidegger's observation. Heidegger discovered what the biblical text predicted, but the difference is that Heidegger, rather than turning to what metaphysics pointed to, i.e. a Supreme Being, as an answer to the question, turned instead from metaphysics to a concept of language he himself was ambivalent about.

Thiselton notes that Heidegger shares Derrida's belief that "metaphysics has reached the end of the road."⁸⁴ However, Derrida has realized that the door on metaphysics can't be shut until the absence of God is pronounced, i.e. God is put under erasure, and hence the metaphysics proposed is one of absence. If the concept of the Supreme Being, i.e. God, is removed from the Genesis account what is left is that 'matter' exists, with the probable implication that it always has. This 'matter' spontaneously converts to energy, or light, which without a divine guiding hand becomes an explosion. Structure appears inorganically, implying that disorder leads to order, and then eventually information arises and organic matter, some manner of life, develops spontaneously. There exists some internal driving mechanism, unidentified and unidentifiable, causing life, which through trial and error develops into ever improving states of being in the direction of the eventual appearance of humanity.

Whilst such a description in a metaphysics of absence would have some identification with modern theories of evolution, even the most liberal interpretation of scriptural authorship could not suggest Genesis is an attempt to adapt the concept of modern evolution to a Supreme Being. The most extreme and liberal views of the authorship of Genesis still predate modern evolutionary concepts by millennia. Yet the same path is followed, except for the guiding hand of the Divine, and it is this exteriority that allows the unfolding of structure and order. Gadamer, who does not subscribe to a concept of spiritual metaphysics, cautions science in its terminology in this area, as he notes that a concept such as adaptation

⁸⁴ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 106.

presupposes that the natural situation is one of a lack of adaptation.⁸⁵ Being should, in this scenario, be endemic, which it is not, as is agreed by philosophers, and information must arise spontaneously, which it can't. So the only option in pursuing the concepts of hermeneutics, in the absence of a Supreme Being and the concept of metaphysical existence, is a concept of language as somehow pre-existing so that being and information can come into existence. However, the end of the road for such a concept is that the logos precedes being, and being itself becomes derivative. The hermeneutical implications of such a view are enormous, in essence the only recourse to meaning would be epistemology and ontology would be a derivative of epistemology.

What Heidegger implied and suggested with ambivalence Gadamer proposed without the same ambivalence. Gadamer saw classical metaphysics' concept of truth rested upon theological foundations, so that what is insoluble for the finite mind is resolved in the infinite mind of God.⁸⁶ Modern science developed a metaphysical idea of the "knowing subject being adequate to the object of knowledge," which Gadamer believes to be without justification.⁸⁷ His own view is that philosophy cannot any longer pursue a theological basis of metaphysics, as in Hegel, nor the secularized versions of metaphysics, as found in science, due to the flaw of pursuing the dialectic of finite and infinite, which Hegel also pointed out as noted above.⁸⁸ Yet nor can it dismiss the transcendental nature of metaphysical philosophy, the lack of which, is interpreted by Gadamer, to have resulted in a decline of philosophical knowledge following Hegel's death.⁸⁹ Therefore, for Gadamer, the task of metaphysics continues but it cannot be solved as classical metaphysics.⁹⁰ He asks if there is an answer "that does not venture to affirm the infinity of the divine mind and yet is able to do justice to the infinite correspondence of soul and being?"⁹¹ His alternate proposition to metaphysics as metaphysics is the way of language as fulfilling the task of metaphysics.⁹²

⁸⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 417.

⁸⁶ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 74/5.

⁸⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 417.

⁸⁸ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 75.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

Thus, for Gadamer, neither the metaphysics of presence nor the metaphysics of absence, which denies transcendence as a dimension, is tenable, but rather the metaphysical task is pursued in language. Then for Gadamer “language is the central point where ‘I’ and the world meet, or rather, manifest their original unity.”⁹³ Consequently, Gadamer replaces the metaphysical subject of Wittgenstein with a metaphysical impact of language that relates ‘I’ and the world viewed. Although Gadamer himself does not state it, his view is essentially to drop the term *logos* and replace it with language, i.e. language is ‘*logos*’ without the metaphysical baggage. Consequently, what happens in his concept of language is a non-theological, or non-spiritual, format of ‘*logos*’ whilst retaining its metaphysical potential. His proposal is essentially pseudo-metaphysics, i.e. in his view it will perform the same task without the baggage inherent in metaphysics. This will still retain the essence of metaphysics and effectively becomes the same thing in terms of perception. It is a metaphysics that eliminates the Supreme Being, yet seeks to retain the domain of the Supreme Being as a pseudo-presence, i.e. it will retain the domain of reference that is significant to hermeneutics. However, like the concept of absence it is a statement about presence. As a result, what Gadamer highlights is that metaphysical perception cannot be dismissed or dispensed with, whether or not the view is presence or absence or even pseudo-presence.

It is acknowledged that neither Ricoeur nor Gadamer would be likely to perceive themselves as developing their hermeneutical theories in the metaphysics of presence. However, both acknowledge metaphysical aspects, Gadamer directly and Ricoeur in the admission of reference. Therefore, their theories fall within the domain of the metaphysics of presence, without any implication on their understanding within that domain of its *pistological* implications. In the metaphysics of absence even pseudo-metaphysics of reference is denied, since transcendence itself is denied, hence all exterior reference is denied. Therefore, the argument for the autonomy of the text occurs primarily within the province of the metaphysics of presence, in that of absence there is no argument to resolve, as the reader is the autonomous entity.

⁹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 431.

The argument for the autonomy of the text, within the metaphysics of presence, is an issue of temporality, i.e. the author has metaphysical presence but is temporally absent. This disjunction, or detachment from the text, separates the metaphysical presence of the author, from the text. The concern relates to the avail-ability and know-ability of authorial intent in the hermeneutical task. Alternately, the argument for autonomy, within the metaphysics of absence, is based on the collapsing of the metaphysical as an empty domain, and, as a result authorial intent is the same as authorial meaning, consequently relating to the writing not the reading. Therefore, the author is not only absent temporally but also has no metaphysical presence, only absence. The fallacy of this view lies in the presupposition that the collapsing of the metaphysical domain somehow results in an either an un-metaphysical or non-metaphysical approach to the task, the fallacy of which is considered above.

The presupposition of either 'God is present' or 'God is absent,' without any definition of what is meant by the term 'God,' is a metaphysical decision independent of rational reason and is a matter of *pistological* reasoning, i.e. the domain of metaphysics. The term 'God' is used here in almost a generic sense in recognition that what is being considered is a *pistological* viewpoint, a theological viewpoint would be a particular defining, and thereby identifying, of the term and is a decision within *pistology*. The inherent assumption, in the metaphysics of absence, is that the collapsing of the *non-rational* domain of knowledge leaves only the *rational* and *arational* domains as the real. However, the *pistology* of absence held by an author or reader impacts and shapes their view of the other domains of knowledge, i.e. it is acting metaphysically in determining reality impacting as an absence of presence. It is in reality a view within the domain of presence, i.e. absence only has meaning in the light of an understanding of presence, or, to use Derrida's term, erasure assumes the existence of something that was erased. An analogy can be seen in the issue of light and darkness. Darkness is a state of the absence of light, and is consequently a statement about light. Similarly absence is a statement about presence and inherently involves a discussion of presence, hence metaphysics.

A Biblical Excursus

The following considers the concept of autonomy from within a *pistology* of presence, and within this domain, from a theology of the Judeo-Christian use of the term 'God.' As has been previously noted the adoption of a worldview does not preclude an individual from engaging in valid description. It also does not disqualify the individual, as previously noted, from making inferences based on their descriptions. Therefore, it is a particular viewpoint of the question that is used to highlight some important considerations.

It has been noted previously that in the opening of the Gospel of John, Jn. 1:1-3, there is a Johannine echoing of Gen. 1:1. The use of parenthesis can help reveal what can be seen as a form of paraphrase, or clarification, in the Gospel of John of the Genesis text: "In the beginning [was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with] God. All things were made [through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made]." The first parenthesis paraphrases the word 'God.' The second parenthesis is a clarification of 'made,' showing intimate involvement by connecting 'made' and 'God' in the person of Jesus, highlighting God's immanence, or real presence, not disinterested transcendence, being some form of deistic absence. If the parentheses are collapsed the statement takes the form: "In the beginning God, *by* whom all things were made *directly*," which is the essence of Gen. 1:1.⁹⁴

The identification of the possible authorial intent of the Gospel of John has been considered previously. The intent of the author relates to the revealing of the person of Jesus in his unique identification as the Messiah and Son of God, Jn. 20:30-31, and consequently the author's approach is not an attempt to write a paraphrase of Genesis. However, nor is his reasoning simply to use the Genesis account as an illustration for launching his gospel account. The manner of his phrasing actually starts the account of Jesus at the beginning, i.e. locates itself and the person of Jesus in the Genesis account. The point of departure is Jn. 1:4 when the author relates the life manifest in Jesus to the concept of light. In the Genesis account of Gen. 1:3, having established that matter has been made and the being of God is present in the Spirit of God, the author of Genesis states the divine decree bringing

⁹⁴ The words "by" and "directly" are added to indicate agency.

into being the presence of light, so that the act of creation can proceed. This is the departure point for the writer of the Gospel, the light that, for him is the basis of life, is the object of his Gospel. The act of paraphrase is not purely illustrative and is intentionally located in the actual Genesis.

The resultant Johannine paraphrase of the word 'God' brings an important aspect into sharp focus by the startling revelation of Jn. 1:14-15 that the logos became incarnate and was manifest among humanity, who beheld Him as actual humanity in and through the person of Jesus. The Johannine use, in Jn. 1:1&14, of the term *ὁ λόγος* indicates the transcendent and immanent identity of Jesus, since in the incarnation as immanence within the world He remains *ὁ λόγος*. Gadamer noted that this concept of the incarnation, with its mystical union, offered a distinct contribution of Christianity to the field of hermeneutics.⁹⁵

Greek metaphysics, in its consideration of the Being-of-beings, saw fulfillment in thought, as thought of nous, as essentially the transcendent.⁹⁶ The verbalization of the logos is the presence of being.⁹⁷ Whilst logos can appear in human form, it is only appearance, and is a facility of its ability to be embodied and disembodied, with disembodiment being the pure and therefore preferred form.⁹⁸ Gadamer viewed this concept in Christian thought, of the incarnation, as having the following contribution to hermeneutics: "If the Word became flesh and the reality of the spirit was perfected only in this incarnation, then the logos is freed from its spirituality, which means, at the same time, from its cosmic potential."⁹⁹ In this thought the phenomenon of language disengages from "its immersion in the ideality of meaning, and offers it to philosophical reflection."¹⁰⁰ In his continuing discussion it is the mystical union of logos and flesh that is important in hermeneutics.¹⁰¹ His usage is as illustration to the connection between *langue* and language as spoken, which can take various finite forms. However, in this finitude is infinitude of meaning that can be developed and interpreted.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 379.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 414.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 378.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 379.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 59. Gadamer notes that in Greek thought logos became rendered as reason or thought. However, the primary meaning of logos is language.

¹⁰² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 416.

Hence, Gadamer's view seems to be that language is at the same time transcendent and immanent, and he has developed this concept on the illustration of the Christian concept of the incarnation. Understanding as an event occurs through the application of what is universal to the particular individuals' situation, i.e. the union, or fusion, of what is transcendent and what is immanent, results in understanding.¹⁰³ Language has a universal nature in that it is not bound to a realm of the speakable as opposed to realm of the unspeakable, since there is nothing that is known that cannot be said.¹⁰⁴ He thus observes: "Our capacity for saying keeps pace untiringly with the universality of reason."¹⁰⁵ Therefore, language has an aspect that acts transcendentally as it is always available for an individual to supply meaning. This view maintains, for him, the concept that hermeneutics can retain the task of metaphysics, without the spiritual or logical reasoning associated with either the theological or limitations of the scientific streams of thought. His concern is to move on from theological concepts in metaphysics, and consequently it is the illustration he desires to use not the theology, i.e. as a philosopher he is employing the description without the worldview, which is a legitimate aim, i.e. using a description within a differing worldview.

However, Gadamer resorts to spiritual language at times in his description. He asserts that language has a spiritual reality, which is "*Pneuma*, the spirit, which unifies I and Thou."¹⁰⁶ He contends that in every occasion of dialogue "a spirit rules" that facilitates the event of communication.¹⁰⁷ This represents what appears to be an almost Hegelian approach to the subject of language. The introduction of the concept of transcendence brings the discussion into the realm of metaphysics. This shows that the language of metaphysics is inherent, and, as a result, the treatment required occurs within the domain of the metaphysics of presence.

The illustration Gadamer used from the Christian understanding of this domain had other implications for hermeneutics that he did not explore. These implications indicate that semantic autonomy may be an inference based on prior presuppositions, not a fact due to the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 278.

¹⁰⁴ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 67. Gadamer also notes that knowledge that cannot be applied, therefore articulated, remains meaningless, *Truth and Method*, 279.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 66.

circumstance of detachment. The Johannine treatment of Genesis, placing the person of Jesus as *the logos* at the beginning, shows that the logos that issues forth at the creation is never viewed as impersonal, or abstract, but always comes forth as meaning relating to the intent of a person. Ricoeur also agrees that in the case of the event of speaking meaning is the authors' meaning. In the Genesis account it was noted that being and logos are contingent, the Spirit is present before logos is articulated in creation. The Johannine account highlights not just contingency but that logos has its cause in being, i.e. logos can be viewed as thought or reason (as in Greek thought), or as simply meaning language (as Gadamer suggests), but it does not transcend being and without being it does not itself find being, i.e. it has no inherent meaning until employed by being.

Gadamer observes that the naturalness of language, i.e. it is always there, makes inquiry about the origin of language an impossibility, and the conception of a situation where humanity was without language is *inconceivable*.¹⁰⁸ As a result the question of the origin of language, for humanity, is excluded as it can only be addressed within language.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, Gadamer makes what is considered a fundamental assertion, which is that humanity is composed of individuals, who as beings possess language.¹¹⁰ Consequently, as a philosopher who will not consider the metaphysical inference from what is a metaphysical observation, he does not follow the direction of the reasoning to that which is exterior, and consequently notes only the appearance of pre-existence not its implications. The consideration of any implications of such an observation will lead the inquiry outside the text, i.e. outside the immanence of human finitude, or to phrase it in Gadamer's thinking, language is the mark of human finitude, i.e. the evidence of human finitude, and is always itself beyond humanity.¹¹¹ Again it is notable that Gadamer wishes to stay within the benefits of the metaphysics of presence but not its implications.

It is interesting in the biblical account of the creation that the faculty of language appears as almost an aspect of being,¹¹² i.e. God speaks to humanity as recorded in Gen.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 60-1. (Italics added)

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 64.

¹¹² Ibid., 67. Gadamer suggests language as a medium of being, which simply defers the question of pre-existence in regard to *Dasein*.

1:28-30 and Gen. 2:16-17 and is evidently understood, which is the direction that Gadamer approaches. The Johannine account places logos with the being of the person of Jesus, which also suggests language is a faculty of being. Humanity inherently engaged in language at this point and as Gadamer notes it is ludicrous to pursue the issue by, for example, isolating a child to discover the original language of creation.¹¹³ The confounding of languages in Genesis 11 concerns the spoken language at that time, it is not the faculty of language that is confounded; people continue to communicate. The metaphysics of presence also suggests what Gadamer has offered as description, with the added advantage of following the implications.

Scripture asserts that the incarnation of the logos and the advent of Christ were foreordained from the foundation of the world, i.e. from the Genesis account under consideration, 1 Pet. 1:20. Paul declares that the incarnation occurred at precisely the right moment in history, Gal. 4:4, and that the unfolding of the world, geographically and historically, since the creation was in accordance with the logos of God, Acts 17:24-28. Therefore, neither the text of the creation itself, referred to in the discussion of Rom. 1:19-20, nor the historical record in historical documents, i.e. the historicity of humanity in the Scripture, has become autonomous from the author. The documents and the creation to a degree are detached from the author, hence they are available to any reader to make of them what they will, but they are not considered autonomous with respect to the authorial intent. This is further confirmed in the Book of Hebrews. The opening verses proclaim that: "God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*," (Italics original); God's word is related to His being and He remains attached to all logos that issues forth from Him. The logos was with God, in the creation, the logos retains identity and direction towards the incarnation, and the concept of eschatology itself suggests the authorial intent remains definitive, although the texts are detached.

It was noted above that the Scripture is not handed to humanity from outside time, the source is transcendent but the medium is mediated through human authors and is therefore

¹¹³ Ibid., 63.

immanent. The concept was also noted that, like Socrates, God is the one speaking but is He who does not directly write, although it is His discourse. The act of writing not only relates a discourse into a world of readers, but an important aspect in the writing is that it establishes a context, or world, that the discourse occurs within. The reader enters that world, i.e. the world that is the creation of the author. The first verses of Genesis 1 establish the context for the saying of God. Composition not only relates discourse but also supplies the context that determines how the discourse is to be interpreted and understood, i.e. composition vitally concerns the authorial intent.

Gadamer does not see the creation account as being a real process; his interest is "the processual element in the word."¹¹⁴ In following this line of reasoning he highlights the illustration used by Thomas Aquinas of the concept of a mirror, which Gadamer confirms as a brilliant illustration.¹¹⁵ The mind searches for the word to express a thought and when it is chosen the object is present in it, the word then becomes a mirror in which this object is seen.¹¹⁶ The concept is that the mirror nowhere extends beyond the image and only mirrors the one thing, i.e. it reproduces only its image.¹¹⁷ However, this concept is artificially narrow in that a mirror not only reproduces the image of an object but the context of the object is mirrored. Hence, if the mirror is extended the context is revealed and this relates the object to its world. As Hegel has observed, the subject is universal and in one sense meaningless without predication, i.e. with out some context giving it immanence.¹¹⁸

The above discussion, as was noted at the outset, is conducted from within the metaphysics of presence, although the departure points of the metaphysics of absence were noted. Furthermore, it is conducted within a particular understanding of this domain, i.e. the presupposition of Christianity, and concerned a particular text, i.e. the scriptural text. The subject matter of the text is theological and the presence, or Supreme Being, is presupposed to be God. However, the question arises is this view one which requires a special

¹¹⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 384.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Hegel, "Phenomenology," 95.

hermeneutic? Alternately, is the view simply the application of a special use of hermeneutics of what is true of all texts? It is suggested that the latter is the case.

Chapter 8

Authorial Intent as the Metaphysical Subject and Presence

Introduction

Wittgenstein identified the metaphysical subject as the 'I' who writes in describing world, and hence for any text the author is that metaphysical subject describing the world by means of the text.¹ In the instance of the biblical text the divine is assumed to be the speaking subject, hence sourced from transcendent meaning, but the divine is speaking through the human author and the human writer gives present meaning, hence immanence. As a result, even in the case of the biblical text, the view of the world, and hence reality, is that from the perspective of the human author. This understanding means that the subjective aspect, or element, of the message is developed in the context of a metaphysical understanding. Metaphysics thus brings the author into prominence and shows how the *Sache* is to be viewed in relation to reality. Pannenberg noted that in the previous two centuries the prevalent view was that metaphysical discussion, as impacting philosophical endeavor, had come to an end.² It is interesting that over the same time frame there has been a corresponding loss of interest in the authorial intent and its impact on the meaning of the text.

The author, by means of composition, creates a world that is designed to present the *Sache*, i.e. subject matter of the text, and hence to place it within a reality that is the author's perception, and it is this understanding that is available for the reader of this *Sache*. This understanding is not reality as it is, but reality as perceived by the author. Consequently, the author as the metaphysical subject becomes the point of origin for the view of reality related to the text. The author uses their creation of a written text, which is composed so as to communicate context as integral to the discourse, as a communication for the reader not present in the writing. As has been previously noted the author communicates not just *rational* knowledge, or content, but also *arational* and *non-rational* knowledge. The authorial intent, in involving each domain of knowledge, being that which the author wishes to

¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, sect. 5.641.

² Pannenberg, *Metaphysics*, 3.

communicate, is transcendent in that it is capable of interpretation into different languages, within the universal concept of language as the medium of communication.

In essence the author invites readers to place themselves in the position of the metaphysical subject to see what the author saw of the subject matter. The object is not to think the author's thoughts, therefore to stand in a foreign psyche, as Ricoeur correctly observes.³ The referencing of the text does not coincide with "the inner life of another ego, but the disclosure of a possible way of looking at things, which is the genuine referential power of the text."⁴ Ricoeur understood that the view of an author is forward, i.e. they are creating a world through language. Therefore, to perceive the authorial intent correctly is to allow it to disclose this world in a way that can be understood, i.e. it functions for the reader to look forward into the world created by the author.

Hence, for both Gadamer and Ricoeur, the object is the making of the authorial intention the reader's own in terms of understanding. This objective of interpretation is not the understanding of the author's thinking but understanding their perception of the subject matter, although consideration of a wide variety of texts by an author will grant a reader some insight, and therefore understanding, into an author's thinking. However, this is still not the inner life of the author's ego. The issues of *context* and the *various categories of knowledge* highlighted are sufficient basis for achieving this task, i.e. not an impartation of the inner mind of the author but a relevant understanding of the author's mind, or their perception, on the *Sache*. The text, and hence authorial meaning, is an immanent expression of that transcendental authorial intent, i.e. it is the meaning of the author to a particular audience (the *where* of the text) at a particular time (the *when* of the text). However, the referent of the text is that authorial intent that led to the authorial meaning, which is the transcendent meaning of the language of the author.

1. Transformation of Authorial Intent: A Radicalization from Psyche to Attribute

That semantic autonomy of the text frees it from the authorial intent, thus leading to textual sense interpretation, is a presupposition of Ricoeur's. However, it was suggested that in this concept Ricoeur has ignored the *Aufhebung* that occurs of the authorial intent in the

³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*

event of *parole*. In this event the authorial intent undergoes transformation from an aspect of the author's psyche into a form suitable for communication. The *Aufhebung* involving the authorial intent means that the author remains within the text as presence, yet not as the personality of the author, since the authorial intent has undergone transformation from the psyche of the author. As such authorial intent in theory remains detectable within the communication although having undergone aspects of both sublation and subsumption.

Ricoeur's basis for the dissociation is an inference based initially on his observation concerning the temporal detachment of the text from the author after the event of writing, such detachment being a reasonable observation. If, as in Ricoeur's thinking, the authorial intent is purely an aspect of the psyche of the author that remains within the psyche of the author, then there is some force to the observation of the resultant semantic autonomy of the text. Conversely, if the authorial intent has undergone an *Aufhebung* in the act of *parole*, transforming it into an aspect of the communication, then detachment from the psyche of the author does not result in an autonomous text.

The assumption of semantic autonomy of the text following this supposed dissociation is the essential authorizing principle that allows the reader to ignore the "what it meant" of a text and proceed directly to "what it means." The reader is authorized to ignore both authorial intent and intended meaning for a particular audience. Essentially the concept of a particular audience remains linked to the authorial intent, which is now detached and hence non-functioning in Ricoeur's understanding. However, the validity of this assumption, i.e. that dissociation of the authorial intent from the verbal meaning is either equivalent to detachment or the necessary result of detachment, is questionable when the *Aufhebung* of authorial intent is recognized in the event of *parole*.

(a) Monologue Not Dialogue: Base Modeling for Written Text

Ricoeur's launching pad is the change that occurs both between and within in the speaking-hearing and writing-reading dynamics of discourse.⁵ Ricoeur does acknowledge that writing is not simply a degeneration or supplement of speech, as in Derrida,⁶ but that it is

⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁶ Derrida, *Positions*, 24/25. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 26. Ricoeur suggests that in this view Derrida has missed the grounding of both modes of communication in the same nature of discourse.

a unique and different means of communication, taking his basis from what he views as the explosion of the dialogical situation.⁷ As has been discussed above his resultant view appears to be a form of serendipity, an accident of the change in nature from dialogue that simply ended up being fortuitous. However, also as noted above, this ignores the fact that writing is created directly as monologue in the format of a composition and is not developed from a dialogue. Dialogue by nature involves speaker and hearer in immediate direct relationship, whereas monologue involves speaker and hearer in a detached indirect relationship with different dynamics. Neither is present nor is personal presence necessary in the event involving the other.

Whilst communicative discourse always involves the concept of a sender-receiver, the dialogical model is only one model not the base model. Dialogue involves an active involvement, or presence, where both parties are actively engaged in transmitting information in an exchange of information. Yet even in this situation each communication is, in one sense, separately a monologue. An important aspect in dialogue is that the exchange is two-way and meaning is under negotiation. This is not the situation in monologue where in the dialogue meaning is not under negotiation. Monologue is nevertheless also a form of communication, e.g. this thesis, a journal article, a book or even a teaching session (live, recorded or written). All of these forms can involve a “dialogical model” internally (such as commenting on other authors), or can be affected by dialogue (as in feedback) that can even lead to revision. However, they are monologues in format not dialogues. In a monological style any dialogue occurs only in the imagination of the author, but this dialogical modeling in this case is a form of monologue where the author anticipates a potential dialogue.

(b) A Dialogical Model Within Monologue

Malpas asserts that Gadamer is known for his use of the “‘dialogical’ character” in his method and writing.⁸ The very use of grammatical highlighting shows that there is a distinction between this usage and dialogue itself, i.e. it is used as model or illustration. He

⁷ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 29. It has been previously suggested that contra Ricoeur’s suggestion, writing other than transcription does not begin as a development of or from a dialogical event, however, as Ricoeur acknowledges, the common root of both is they concern the communication of a message, 26, which affords commonalities.

⁸ Jeff Malpas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/gadamer/>.

further notes that dialogue is Gadamer's style in his thinking and writing.⁹ However, it has been well established above that neither Ricoeur nor Gadamer hold to the concept of authorial intent as real presence within a text, yet it was also noted that both have seemed to assume presence in their style. Thus it is important to recognize that a "dialogical model" is not dialogue (especially in Gadamer and Ricoeur, both of whom deny real presence of authorial intent in written text); it is simply a style of writing a monologue. Therefore, it has the model of dialogue in the format of monologue.

Even in the situation where real presence, and in particular authorial intent, is the metaphysical view of an author, e.g. in this thesis or in the works of Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Fee, it is the 'speaking voice' of another author that is engaged by an author concerning the Sache, or matter. They (i.e. the author referenced) speak on, when engaging other authors in their texts. It is not the personality of another author that is engaged but the presence of their 'speaking voice.' Therefore, it is a 'dialogical model' used in responding to the 'speaking voice,' it is not an actual dialogue with the 'speaking voice' or with the psyche of the referenced author. It is an engagement with their thinking on a subject by means of accessing their thinking via their 'speaking voice,' hence authorial intent, not an engagement with their thinking as personality.

In the same way that a 'dialogical model' does not imply a presence of interacting psyches within the text, so also the concept of a 'speaking voice', or authorial intent within a text, does not imply a presence of a foreign psyche within the text, which is the implication that Ricoeur objected to. It has been pointed out that both Ricoeur and Gadamer seek to engage the thinking of other authors, hence the 'speaking voice' of other authors, however, it suits their theories to deny authorial intent so they don't call it that, they just access it.

The question that arises is: how does the 'dialogical model' work both within a text and in interpretation? The following is a suggested explanation of a modeling for the 'dialogical model' of interpretation. Gadamer, as noted above, in studying Plato, noted that apart from a deliberate application of dialectic by an author there is an almost hidden dialectic of the *One* and the *Many*. This also corresponds to Ricoeur's use of the two *naïveté's* in

⁹ Ibid.

explanation and understanding. Essentially what happens is the one personality, i.e. the author/interpreter, moves between two poles and at each point takes on the view of that pole in the light of the 'voice' to which they have just been listening. Thus, employing the concept of Performance Interpretation suggested by Wolterstorff¹⁰ working together with this concept of dialectic.

The 'dialogical model,' in the case of interpretation of another author, occurs when the individual 'imagines' a performance by the other author of their 'speaking voice.' This is done in the light of what they have just been considering from their own view of reality, or point of origin, and the matter they are considering. Therefore, creating an almost pseudo-dialogue by being the 'voice' of the author not present in their reading. This is accomplished by moving between these poles of their own 'voice' and the 'speaking voice' of the other author. As also noted above, if a variety of material by the other author has 'mentored' their thinking they will gain an appreciation of how the mindset of the other author views issues, from the other author's own point of origin.

The subsequent result will be an ability not to 'think the author's thoughts after them' but rather to, in a manner of speaking, 'think the author's thoughts before them,' i.e. to project forward into the world in front of the text, a concept which concept leads to the very aim Ricoeur expressed in dealing with the text of another author.¹¹ This use of the structure of dialectic as a basis for a 'dialogical model' recognizes that each author represents a metaphysical 'self' that observes the world from a particular point of origin.

(c) The Speaking Subject as a Metaphysical Construct

The very concept of the aim for a composition is to be self-sufficient in the author's communication. In essence Ricoeur's view on interpretation is along the same lines as Derrida's in the sense that it involves a degeneration of the dialogical situation. In Ricoeur this simply ended up as being fortuitous. However, the erasure of the presence of the author, as the speaking subject, erases the dimension of the text that is metaphysically described and impacted. Gadamer has recognized this, who as previously noted, argues for the re-

¹⁰ Wolterstorff, 171. This concept suggested by Wolterstorff is considered in later sections for its applications.

¹¹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 93.

inclusion of the metaphysical task despite maintaining the absence of the authorial presence. However, the issue of the referential nature of the text will again raise the issues of authorial discourse in the reaching out to metaphysical concepts. It is the work of Derrida that has highlighted this connection most forcefully.

In Derrida's thought the use of the principle of signifier and signified dominates language, encompassing the writer, who is taken by surprise.¹² His implication, as the discourse unfolds, is that the very act of writing becomes captive, despite any desire an author may have had to not be entrapped in metaphysics. It is an atmosphere that surrounds language due to the logocentrism of the epoch, considered above, in which the language and the very concept of written text has arisen. This is indicated where he notes, "the person writing is inscribed in a determined textual system."¹³ If this is an accurate translation, and not an editorial gloss by the translator, then the implication of not stating it as "each person writing inscribes in" or "each person writing has their inscription in," has an important implication. In stating that the writer is actually inscribed in, is to therefore postulate that the writer is caught in an atmosphere simply in using language and exists trapped within metaphysics so that what they write will of necessity reflect that. The reader who desires to deconstruct the text needs to be aware of and compensate for this situation.¹⁴ For Derrida the "entire history of texts, and within it the history of literary forms in the West, should be studied from this point of view."¹⁵ No writer or text is exempted, including Derrida himself.

Derrida notes that the issue of the supplement is not "merely psychoanalytical" but also he himself, as reader, works within the same language system.¹⁶ Derrida was critical of what he saw as Saussure's handing over of understanding of semiology to psychologists. However, Saussure was simply noting that language is a system of signs expressing ideas, which must involve discussion of the psyche, and that linguistics is a branch of the general science of semiology.¹⁷ Derrida, whilst recognizing that he himself lives within the history of psychoanalysis, is mindful of the fact that psychoanalysis itself has developed under the

¹² Derrida, *Grammatology*, 159-60.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19&160.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Derrida had previously criticized Saussure's deference to psychology, 40.

¹⁷ Saussure, 16.

history of metaphysics and needs itself to take account of this.¹⁸ As always the enemy to whom he seeks to deny any foothold is metaphysics.

How should Derrida go about this task of reading to deal with this issue? Since this sort of question itself comes from within the system there is no satisfactory response, as a result Derrida will give himself the privilege of being *exorbitant*.¹⁹ This is a beginning point towards his deconstruction of this completely pervasive problem of metaphysics. What follows plays on the word orb, or sphere. He moves to the word orbit, as the circular-like track inscribed by a planet, and notes that to “*exceed* the metaphysical orb is an attempt get out of the orbit.” Thus introducing the justification of the choice of ex-orbitant, i.e. to get out of orbit, which has commonly become used to mean extravagant and excessively over priced.²⁰ The play on the word exorbitant itself is self-evident, i.e. between its derivation and usage. The aim is to exit this extravagant sphere of metaphysics and its domination of the text.

Derrida does not use the term dialectic, yet like Hegel, as noted above, Derrida recognizes that the structure promotes circularity that traps the writer or reader. Gadamer suggests that this aspect of text, and therefore written language, is an authorial device, in the absence of an author’s presence, to purposefully contain the reader within the limits of the author’s discourse. Hence Derrida’s need to insist firstly that the text cannot reference and secondly that there is no Book, or authorial presence. Derrida, like Gadamer, recognizes this aspect of written text within the history of metaphysics, however, for Derrida this is a negative situation from which one must escape. This is the orbit within the sphere of metaphysics he wishes to exit. Derrida notes that the nature of the movement of “supplementarity” is to behave dialectically, although he doesn’t use the word dialectic in this context.²¹

The point of departure from the orbit of metaphysics, the exorbitant, is to begin wherever the reader is in the text.²² Although his argument is wordy and convoluted the basic thrust is to ignore the concept of the book when handling texts by an author, and this produces a form of randomness in approach that defies the dictates of metaphysics, since

¹⁸ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 161.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (Italics original)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 162. (Italics original)

²¹ *Ibid.*, 268.

²² *Ibid.*, 162.

metaphysics implies the idea of anterior meaning. The reader then moves from sign to sign in the textual chain and gives no place to representation, i.e. the signified, since the desire for presence inherent in the signified is born from the abyss of representation.²³

Derrida's passion for exiting the metaphysical sphere, to remove its influence over the text is reminiscent of Bultmann's desire, in theology, to demythologize the biblical text.²⁴ Bultmann's attack was not on the concept of the metaphysical, like Derrida, but upon the representation of supernatural events in Scripture, which he saw as incompatible with modern science and hence untenable.²⁵ Like Derrida on metaphysics, Bultmann asserted that this element of myth was introduced to speak of transcendent powers and is not reality or a necessity in understanding the text.²⁶

Thiselton notes that Bultmann saw that belief in myth (i.e. the supernatural realm of spirits, miracles etc.) was inconsistent with reality and hence to demythologize was not a rejection of Scripture but its worldview.²⁷ However, the original concept of myth was not a fictional story to convey metaphysical truth but a true story that conveyed metaphysical truth.²⁸ Partenie points out that Plato constructed fictional myth as a teaching tool and therefore it is an author, not something demanded by the concept, which introduces the idea of the fictional nature into the idea of myth.²⁹ For Bultmann myth must be treated as fictional and in order to be a text for modern humanity the mythical world of the text needed the myth collapsed and hence removed.

Consequently, Bultmann's inherent assumption is that the biblical writers constructed myth to explain metaphysical knowledge rather than employing what they had received and believed to be a "true story, a story that unveils the true origin of the world and human beings."³⁰ Hence Bultmann has relegated to the imagination of the writer the representation of the metaphysical, which is a similar conclusion to Derrida's. In rejecting a worldview

²³ Ibid., 163.

²⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, "The New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1953), 3. As the name suggests this is the subject matter of the article.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 10-11.

²⁷ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 259.

²⁸ Catalin Partenie, "Plato's Myths", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/plato-myths/>>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. Partenie is not discussing the biblical text or Bultmann but simply the originary concept of myth.

Bultmann rejected the metaphysical lens of the eye through which an author views the world, as has Derrida. Both intentionally disregard a possible intention an author had in his writing.

The point of departure is a total disregard, or absence, of signatory and a refusal to allow any place to representation, i.e. referent. Wolterstorff considers not the metaphysics of absence that underlies Derrida's description of method, but looks at the method itself. On the basis of his considerations he proposes a form of interpretation that opens an understanding of what believers have done over the millennia. His suggestion is a concept of "performance interpretation," which is an innovative approach.³¹ The believer can use the facility of the imagination to "hear" the text as spoken, hence performed, by God.

Derrida's metaphysics of absence has highlighted a very important aspect in understanding; metaphysics directly involves the speaking subject, i.e. the author and authorial intent. In order to escape the metaphysical orbit it is first necessary to erase the author, which will effectively allow an assertion of denial of reference and anterior meaning. This becomes the starting point for "*pure absence*," which is the emptiness that is the starting point of true literature.³² This absence is not an erasure of something that was present, but the recognition that there never was any presence.³³ Consequently there is nothing that can be referred to and any idea of reference is actually a projection forward through an auto-affectation of the imagination of the author and reader. It is not an anterior meaning simply a supplement one grants oneself. If there is a pure absence then any concept of meaning in the world, due to an "absolute subject" giving meaning as anterior is "shattered."³⁴ Meaning comes into existence and finds its fulfillment in saying or writing, thus for Derrida writing is "inaugural" and launches forward not knowing fully where it is going and meaning is its future.³⁵

In the same way that the physical world, when it is viewed as developing in the absence of the divine, i.e. fortuitous random accidents resulting in increased order and development with the resultant increase in the gene pool that then unfolds new meaning,

³¹ Wolterstorff, 171.

³² Derrida, *Writing*, 8. (Italics original)

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 10.

³⁵ Ibid., 11.

each new text is meaningless in a transcendent sense. It didn't arise from meaning, but is meaningful in an immanent sense, in that it imparts, or projects, meaning. In such a situation reference can only point forward and not detect anterior meaning as a basis for understanding reality. At the point of origin there is nothing but a 'black hole' that consumes anterior reference and no light emanates forth from this origin in the metaphysics of absence. The idea that there ever was any 'light' of meaning flowing from the point of origin is simply a prejudice induced by logocentrism for Derrida.³⁶

2. The Possibility that God Speaks in Authorial Discourse

If the concept of the possibility of a divine voice co-existent with the authorial voice is to be considered, without resorting to a special hermeneutic, the first issue that must be considered is the opportunity within textuality for its occurrence, i.e. the possibility of a voice other than the author's to be heard. Wolterstorff has presented well reasoned and non-theological arguments indicating that this is in fact a quite natural feature of discourse as used and practiced within the context of all humanity.³⁷ He considers the concept of "double agency discourse," where one person can compose a text for another person who then lends their authority to the text so that it becomes the second person's discourse.³⁸

In developing this concept he considers such diverse things as a secretary composing a letter for an executive, who then signs the letter making it effectively the executive's discourse, and, the concept of the employment by someone of a "ghost writer" to write their story, who writes in their own words the ideas of another so that the "ghost writer" discourses as the other person.³⁹ He also examines, within the chapter, concepts such as "deputized discourse,"⁴⁰ e.g. the concept of an ambassador, and "appropriated discourse,"⁴¹ where one person can take the discourse of another, either simply as text or even the whole intent of the discourse, and assert an agreement such that they have appropriated the text, or even the discourse, as their own. The concept of "appropriated discourse" would also apply

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Wolterstorff, 37-57. This is a chapter entitled "Many Modes of Discourse" in which he begins by discussing common and extensively used modes of discourse that involve one person speaking through another to varying degrees. Whilst he does consider the extension into theological concepts of biblical text it is an extension of the idea not the genesis of the idea.

³⁸ Ibid., 38.

³⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁴¹ Ibid., 51.

to works such as this thesis, where the voice of another author is used in addressing subject matter. All of these examples have obvious potential to allow that, in the biblical author's texts, the 'voice' of God can be heard without resorting to a special hermeneutic; it is simply a special use of an operational hermeneutic, i.e. it is a theologically applied hermeneutic.

A further example that can be suggested, having particular application to the concept of a divine voice within the text, is that of an authorized biographer. A person can employ a biographer, or a publisher can even require a biographer, to tell the story of another. However, the biographer is authorized to tell the story of another not their own. The object of biographers is not to inject themselves into the story but simply to tell the story, such that it is the narrative of the one about whom they write. The narrative is not released as discourse until the person written about agrees that the narrative is indeed their story told how they recollect and understand their own story.

Consequently, the subject of the discourse, i.e. the view of reality or point of origin from which the discourse proceeds, is not that of the authorial voice. The discourse is the ideas and observations of one person expressed in the discourse of another, but the act of *parole* is one performed by the biographer as author, not the one who is the subject of the narrative. The act of *parole* may be monitored and influenced by the one who is the subject of the discourse in such a way that there is almost an intermingling of intentions, nevertheless the fact remains that the resultant act of *parole*, even if including an impact of another voice, is that of the author. The one about whom the text is written primarily authorizes that the ideas have been successfully transmitted in the text of the biographer according to the subjects' own understanding. Therefore, within an authorized biography, there are two distinct voices that can be heard, but the purpose of one of the voices is to essentially cause their own voice to undergo an *Aufhebung* so that the primary voice that is heard is that of the subject of the biography. Nevertheless the biographer takes the place of author in telling the story and the work is recognized as the biographer's discourse.

A biographer may write on the whole of a life or any part or event thereof, e.g. within the Christian world a minister may authorize a narrative of their ministry life, or, alternately an event or series of events during that time. It is quite conceivable that a person may authorize

a biography of their history before assuming a prominent position, as a way of indicating their roots and the pathway to the time of their moving into a position of prominence. A biographer may also have become part of the story and be selected specifically because they themselves are part of the story.

The indications from the beginning of both Luke and Acts offer an illustration of this situation. The opening stanzas suggest common authorship and that the author is not himself part of the origins, covered in the Gospel of Luke, but has researched from witnesses an understanding of the story from its origin, Lk 1:1-4 & Acts 1:1. It is noticeable that in the author's narrative, during the course of the period of time represented in the Book of Acts, that he himself has become part of the narrative by references such as in Acts 16:10-13: "...concluding that the Lord had called *us* to preach the gospel...sailing from Troas, *we* ran a straight course...*we* were staying in that city...on the Sabbath day *we* went out of the city...*we* sat down and spoke..."⁴² This inclusive form of reference, i.e. the movement to the first person, does not occur until chapter 16 of Acts, which leads to a reasonable inference that this is the time the author himself became part of the story. The indication is that where a biographer becomes part of the story they can at times make direct assertions in the discourse, yet maintain the overall perspective of narrator of the story of others.

At this point in the discussion there is an important aspect revealed in the model used that, although having a particular theological application, is a special use of what is a general principle. Within Christian thought, using the Genesis text, the element that is both transcendent and immanent is spirit, Gen. 1:2, where the Spirit is present, hence immanent, yet is divine and transcendent. Therefore, in Christian metaphysics it is the working of the Holy Spirit that is seen as a special use of this principle. The Spirit is contemporary with *the logos*,⁴³ the mention of Spirit is prior to that of the proceeding of *logos*, as essentially providing a context for articulation of *logos*, so that the *logos* is able to fulfill itself. It is the Spirit that allows the maintenance of the relationship between transcendent meaning and immanent meaning. Within the model used of the metaphysics of presence, in particular in a

⁴² The emphasis is added to highlight the first person reference.

⁴³ The Johannine text therefore carries a strong allusion to the trinity, i.e. the placing of the person of Jesus as the *logos* (being Himself co-equal with God, Philip. 2:6) into a contemporary setting with God and the Spirit of God in the beginning of the scriptural account of creation.

Christian understanding, this relationship begun in Genesis moves to real presence of the Person of the Spirit in the New Testament texts.

Jesus, though being *ὁ λόγος* incarnate, is led by the Spirit, Lk. 4:1 and commands His disciples at the direction of the Spirit, Acts 1:3. All the gospel accounts agree that Jesus' articulation of logos, as message and proclamation, does not occur until the Spirit comes upon Him, Matt. 3:13-17 and then proclamation 4:17; see also Mrk. 1:9-11 & 1:14-15; see also Lk. 3:21-22 with vs23 marking the beginning of ministry & then proclamation 4:16-20. The Johannine handling of the event is retrospective and His ministry has begun with it, Jn. 1:29-34. The disciples will in turn be led by the Spirit and Spirit guided into "all truth," i.e. through perception of reality as seen by the Spirit, through the Spirit's capacity to relate the transcendent to the immanent, Jn. 16:13. Paul asserts that the believer led by the Spirit is capable of applying transcendent truth into everyday application, Gal. 5:16-25. The Spirit is able to position the believer to perceive the 'God's-eye-viewpoint' in their own particularity, not as being, as it were, in God's shoes, but by perception of what God would see if he was in their shoes, 1 Cor. 2:6-16. The Spirit performs an interpretive function not only by direct speech, as exteriority, but also as a mentoring influence, implied in impact on perception of such concepts as guide and lead. The Spirit thereby works out into the life of the believer, incarnating itself in the life of the believer, e.g. walking in the Spirit and producing the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:16-25. This sort of understanding may have been Hegel's inspiration for the development of his concept of Spirit.

3. Metaphysics: Authorial Intent as a Dimension of the Text

An important conclusion reachable in the above discussion concerning absence or presence of the authorial intent is that it is inseparably linked to metaphysics, i.e. the argument for or against authorial intent is a metaphysical argument. The purpose is to specifically focus on the issue of authorial intent in any discussion of metaphysics, rather than pursue an in depth general discussion of metaphysics.

In this thesis an argument has been put forward that authorial intent undergoes transformation from being an aspect of the psyche of the author to that of being an aspect of the communication, i.e. the text is a composition of the authors' message intended by the

author. In the act of *parole*, being a willful act, the authorial intent (the concept of 'intent' as purpose suggests 'will' in action) undergoes *Aufhebung* through both semiotic and semantic application, leading to the authorial intent (the willfulness of the author relating to the subject matter) undergoing a transformation from the psyche of the author to becoming an aspect of the communication. It was further proposed that the resultant situation meant that, in relation to a text, the transformed authorial intent relates not to the personality, or psyche, of the author, but rather relates to the point of origin, or 'being' of the text, i.e. the view of reality taken by the author that forms both the basis of understanding and the point from which their text is to be viewed. The authorial intent is the metaphysical 'I' that Wittgenstein noted viewed the world when an author writes. This brings the central issue to be one of metaphysics, since it concerns the being of the text and its relationship to reality as perceived by the author.

The composition has 'being' due to the authorial intent without proposing attachment to the authorial psyche. The simplest illustration that can be used is that of a work of art, often used in discussing the issue of interpretation, e.g. in Gadamer's concept of 'aesthetic consciousness.' It is the work of art, especially poetry, which is used in Wimsatt and Beardsley's discussion of the 'Intentional Fallacy.' In the discussion of the 'Intentional Fallacy' it was noted that the appeal by the author in their work of art is probably primarily to the *a-rational* dimension, or aesthetic consciousness, of human being. A work of art appeals to a person or it does not, hence the interestedness of the observer and any subsequent interpretive process is joined due to this dimension of disclosure of its 'being,' i.e. this determines the direction of the interpretive process. In their discussion Wimsatt and Beardsley contended that a poem should not mean, but simply 'be,' further this *being* can only 'be' through its meaning (since the medium is words).⁴⁴ They go on to note, regarding the poem, that though the medium is words "yet it *is*, simply *is*, in the sense that we have no excuse for inquiring what part is intended or meant."⁴⁵ In this they grant that the creation does not occur by accident but is the result of an intention, it is just that intention is not the

⁴⁴ Wimsatt Jr., 3. (Italics added for emphasis)

⁴⁵ Ibid. (Italics original)

standard by which the work is judged in their view.⁴⁶ Hence, they grant that authorial intent gives the work 'being' and seek to distinguish it from the psyche of the author, i.e. that which was in the author's thinking in the creation, thereby as in Ricoeur granting autonomy to the work.

However, the intentional fallacy of Wimsatt and Beardsley is really of the form: "All cars live in a garage, if you live in a garage you must be a car." That is to say the fallacy is the phrasing of the proposition. The concept they work on is essentially that if the poet did not succeed in their intention how do you find that out? Where do you go to find out what the poet intended to do to measure this against what the poet did do? If the poet succeeded the poem itself is evidence and no question needed, conversely if they did not succeed then the poem is not sufficient evidence and the inquiry must go outside the poem for the evidence of an intention that did not succeed.⁴⁷ The proposition they propose is considered from the perspective of the author, since only the author will know if they 'succeeded' in their intention.

However, for the interpreter the issue is the manifestation of the authorial intent, i.e. the piece of work they have, which is agreed is the result of authorial intent. The object is understanding the authorial intent as it is presented not as opposed to any absolute the author may have had of what they intended in comparison to what they did. It seems likely that most authors of works of art generally would be the severest critics of what they produce and can see what they could have changed or done better, etc. Nevertheless, the work of art is (as Wimsatt and Beardsley note) what it 'is' and exists as a manifestation of an authorial intention that is absolute, in the sense that once it has being it stands as extant. Even if an author was to re-visit their work and re-do it this would become a second work of art, once the first work of art has been released into the world of receptors, it does not replace the first one except in the mind of the author. The issue is not the authorial intent from the author's perspective but reception of that which is the result of authorial intent, which is the authorial intent that will be examined, not a supposed intent still resident within the author that may or may not differ from the expressed authorial intent.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

This reasoning extends naturally to literary texts in general, since an author may revise and re-submit their work, but this does not change the existence of the original work and interpreters often do comparisons by considering the merits of each, i.e. the original and the revision. Although revision presents a new and fresh perspective on the subject matter, the previous vision may be considered by the observer to offer better vision than the re-vision of the subject matter, e.g. authors will comment on issues such as the contrasts between the earlier and later Heidegger and Wittgenstein. A text, or work of art, once it is extant has being, and that being is a function of the authorial intent at the time of creation, which Wimsatt and Beardsley also concede.

The contention that the work of art has being other than the simple materials of which it is composed, whether words, paint and canvas or rock, plaster or any material suitable for sculpting, is illustrated by consideration of the work as a created work. If a person was to change some aspect or part of a sculpture or painting the result is considered defacement of the author's work. Imagine a scenario where a person decided that the 'Mona Lisa' could be improved to more correctly exemplify the author's intent. If they tried to act upon that impulse with the extant 'Mona Lisa' they would be arrested not congratulated. If they succeeded then the Louvre would immediately begin a restoration process to remove that which takes the work of art from being the original creation and restore it to the original authorial state of being. Conversely should such a person decided to re-paint the 'Mona Lisa' as they believe the author intended the result is no longer the author's work, i.e. it is not the 'Mona Lisa.' The authorial intent has being in the work of art and the being of the work of art is the application of an authorial intent to the materials. It is that authorial intent that makes the work a unique creation and no longer just materials brought together. The subsequent value of the work of art is in the authorial intent not the materials.

In a work of art, uniqueness is due to the originary work of its creator. It is the creator of the work that gives it being as a work of art, i.e. it is the hand of the sculptor on the rock, or the brush in the hand of the painter, that transforms the materials into a work of art. The monetary value of the work of art resides in the original work of art itself created by the author. However, the aesthetic value of the authorial intent can be copied and reproduced in

other formats and settings. A person can acquire a copy of a sculpture or painting (in the case of a painting this is the concept of a print or even the reprint, which itself is a copy of the print, hence twice removed from the original work of art). Although the copy is not composed of the original materials, that which the work of art represents, the authorial intent, can be appreciated and seen, other than its original state.

The being of the authorial intent can be referenced, evaluated and transformed into materials other than the original. This is true also of all literary texts, and as Gadamer and others have noted discussed previously, the issue of translation as opposed to transcription highlights the need to transfer thought forms into the second language, further indicating the fact that the being, or authorial intent, is the antecedent of the text. The text as a message directly references the authorial intent. It also indicates that this is not an authorial intent residing within the psyche of the author, but rather that this being of the text or work of art is the communicated authorial intent. The authorial intent is a dimension of the created work, not just the authorial meaning of the text. It is this reality, within the concept of presence, which highlights the nature of the authorial intent as one of being, and this is subsequently what makes it inseparable from metaphysical discussion.

(a) Abandoning Metaphysics Abandons the Authorial Intent

Pannenberg has observed that in the last two centuries there has been a movement in philosophical thinking, including theology, to consider philosophy as moving into a post-metaphysical era.⁴⁸ When metaphysics is removed from the agenda of discussion it is reasonably simple to predict that this will effectively lead to a decay and eventual disuse of the idea of authorial intent. This has in fact occurred and authorial intent has become considered as irrelevant in postmodern philosophy, as in Ricoeur and Gadamer, and eventually becoming erased in the thinking of in deconstruction, as in Derrida. However, in recent times there has also been a renewed call for the re-inclusion of the discussion of metaphysics.⁴⁹ The recognition that authorial intent gives the dimension of being to the message of a text, which a metaphysical one, and lends impetus to this call.

⁴⁸ Pannenberg, *Metaphysics*, 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

In the thinking of Kant metaphysics was the science to reveal issues such as the concepts of God and the Absolute.⁵⁰ However, in attempting to deal with the identity of this Supreme Being and the absolute he concluded, “the argument has failed to give us the least concept of the properties of a necessary being, and indeed is utterly ineffective.”⁵¹ This knowledge, for Kant, is not really knowable within the bounds of empirical knowledge, gained through the processes of rational reason, and the identity of the Supreme Being is consequently unknowable. It is not really a large step to infer, within this line of thinking, the arrival at the concept that metaphysics is effectively beyond discussion. As has been previously noted, this is contrasted with the thinking of Pascal, for whom God is also unknowable by rational reason, i.e. empirical knowledge, but is knowable through the agency of belief, which is the metaphysical dimension of humanity.⁵² Consequently, through the agency of the metaphysical dimension of humanity knowledge can be acquired regarding the divine, the absolute and therefore the concept of authorship. The subject of authorship raises the issue of authorial intent with its impartation as being to a created work.

Derrida makes a similar observation to that of Pannenberg regarding the decline in consideration of metaphysics. Derrida views an important moment of the “great rationalisms of the seventeenth century” was “the determination of absolute presence is constituted as self-presence, as subjectivity.”⁵³ This is seen as a dawning, as it were, of the realization that the concept of absolute presence is a phantasm, something made up in the imagination of authors and interpreters and is not actual presence, or being. The work of Derrida, speaking from the metaphysics of absence not presence, has highlighted the interconnectedness of all these issues, i.e. the divine, the absolute and the concept of authorial intent. Derrida views them as clinging to the “metaphysico-theological roots” of what he designates as the “appurtenance” of the difference between signifier and signified.⁵⁴ The idea of an “appurtenance” is that of an accessory that attaches to a way of doing things, or lifestyle. In the thinking of Derrida everything stems from this accessory belonging to the metaphysics of

⁵⁰ Kant, 46.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 498.

⁵² Pascal, sect. 233.

⁵³ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

presence that implies an exteriority in the understanding of signifier and signified.⁵⁵

Consequently, the idea of reference as exteriority can be dispensed with as having been just an accessory of 'logocentrism,' which is the lifestyle, or 'spirit' to use Hegel's idea, of the text. Dispensing with the appurtenance dispenses with the author.

(b) Authorial Intent as Anterior to the Text

Derrida also highlights an astute and important observation, one that is not only important to his theories of deconstruction but also to all hermeneutics when dealing with a literary text. All exteriority of reference has its generation from within the concept of the book, i.e. the hermeneut must start within the text of the book and is referred from that text.⁵⁶ In the thinking of Derrida this referencing is simply a phantasm, "The idea of the book is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier; this totality of the signifier cannot be a totality, unless a totality constituted by the signified preexists it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality."⁵⁷

However, his reasoning indicates the hinge of his argument is that meaning is not anterior, i.e. that which the signifier signifies cannot preexist it. It seems that Derrida's argument is that it doesn't exist without the text where the signifier is signified. Thereby he implies that it exists only in the mind of the author or interpreter, hence becoming an accessory. Nonetheless, if it does preexist then he has correctly identified why metaphysics is essential to understanding the anterior meaning, i.e. the meant of the author that gives the book its totality. This quote from Derrida could be rephrased, from the perspective of the metaphysics of presence, in a way that evidences the nature of the anterior meaning predetermined by the authorial intent. *The book of the author is the totality (i.e. the view of reality and being), finite or infinite, of the signifier; this totality of the signifier must be a totality, because a totality constituted by the signified (as predetermined by the author) preexists it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality.*⁵⁸ The issue of anterior meaning is one of the referencing of the text, which is a hermeneutical issue, which

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁶ Derrida, *Writing*, 76.

⁵⁷ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 18.

⁵⁸ This rephrasing is not an adaptation or use of the text of Derrida but it highlights that the same rationality can be viewed from different points of origin, i.e. presence or absence, so that meaning is based on the matter of perspective not hermeneutics. Hermeneutics allows the matter to be viewed from the perspective of the one doing hermeneutics. The adaptation is of Derrida's insight.

then interacts with the metaphysics of the interpreter, which is not an epistemological hermeneutical issue of the text.

The work of Derrida has unintentionally highlighted an important aspect within the metaphysics of presence, which is that the hermeneut must begin with the text for an understanding of any meaning that is the referent of the text. Consequently, the being of the text as message is referenced by or from the text, but is exterior to the text. The hermeneut, working within the metaphysics of presence, cannot begin from the anterior reference, i.e. the hermeneut cannot begin from the perspective of the authorial intent as something located within the personality or psyche of the author.

(c) Authorial Intent: Seeing what the Author Saw

Therefore, Derrida has brought into perspective that if the anterior meaning is believed to exist, which is pure auto-affection within the metaphysics of absence (i.e. Derrida's position) but perceived as an extant reality in the metaphysics of presence, then the psyche of the author represents the author's perspective, or authorial intent, as mindset of the author, from which the author views the *Sache*. Conversely, the transformation of the authorial intent into being as a referent of the text creates the potentiality of a mindset for an interpreter, from which perspective that interpreter can view the *Sache* and see what the author saw. It is this concept of the authorial intent that is the anterior meaning that is the antecedent of the text. In the process of interpretation this 'being' undergoes a reverse transformation from that which was previously considered in the authorial act of *parole* to become an aspect of the psyche, or consciousness, of the interpreter. As a result of these two acts of transformation that which transforms a stretch of language into a composition and message, i.e. the authorial intent, becomes available in the world of the interpreter, in the same fashion as that which transforms materials into a work of art giving it unique shape and perspective. Hence the same *Sache*, having been understood from the perspective of the author by the interpreter, is subsequently viewed from the world of the interpreter.

This fulfills the specified aim of Ricoeur, in that the world horizon of the reader is fused with the world horizon of the writer. An aspect of Ricoeur's conclusions is his

suggestion that “the ideality of the text is the mediating link in this process of horizon fusing.”⁵⁹ However, in this thesis it is suggested that the true ideality of the text is the authorial intent as antecedent of the text and this is the anterior meaning referenced as being of the text, not as Ricoeur suggests in his work as the ‘sense’ of the text. It is also contended in this thesis that, in this manner described, the concept of true hermeneutical reflective consciousness asserted by Gadamer is fulfilled. Gadamer asserts that the truth of this hermeneutical consciousness is translation, for when hermeneutics is conducted in the fashion of an act of translation what is foreign “becomes one’s own, not by destroying it critically or reproducing it uncritically, but by explicating it within one’s own horizons with one’s own concepts and thus giving it new validity.”⁶⁰

(d) Authorial Intent: Giving Being to Composition

The contention of both Ricoeur and Gadamer of the autonomy of the text, making the text a stretch of language (having no supervising anterior meaning conferring its ‘being’ due to authorial intent) ignores the composition of the text, or that which makes it a message and not just a stretch of language. Both of these philosophers do consider it to be a message and do consider the concept of exterior reference, unlike Derrida. Nevertheless, both these philosophers deny any access or reference to authorial intent, which is that which confers the ‘being,’ or status, as composition and message. This is not a denial of the originary work of an author, but it is a denial of any reference to the authorial intent of that author. In both Ricoeur and Gadamer the concept of the message and its ability to reference is now the province of language not that of anterior meaning. Hence, both avoid metaphysics of presence impacting interpretation.

The recognition in this thesis of these transformations of the authorial intent that retain its impact on the ‘being’ of the text and hence the texts’ ability to reference anterior meaning, means that the composition as the creation of an author is not lost sight of in what is proposed during interpretation, so that what is interpreted is the message of the author in the world of the interpreter. It is the authorial intent that transforms a block of marble into a sculpture as a creative work, it is the authorial intent that transforms paints and canvas into a

⁵⁹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 93.

⁶⁰ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 94.

picture as a creative work and it is similarly the authorial intent that transforms language into a composition as a creative work.

When this authorial intent is ignored then the receptor/interpreter becomes the de facto creator of the sculpture, painting or literary text, as a work of art if not as object. The suggestion that a text lacks meaning until given meaning by an interpreter is to suggest that a work of art is not a work of art until declared so by an interpreter. Though its monetary value, and hence prominence, as a work of art will be determined by the interpreter/receptor, its existence, or 'being,' as a work of art is due to the anterior work of a creator, who applied authorial intent to the materials that resulted in what is presented to the interpreter.

Ricoeur's treatment of his theory of interpretation bears out the observation of Pannenberg that philosophy has largely viewed itself in the postmodern era being post-metaphysical. Ricoeur does not consider this aspect at all and it doesn't figure in his discussions, even his observation concerning the view of Derrida considers mechanism not philosophy.⁶¹ Ricoeur's departure from metaphysical discussion is not avoidance as such and consequently is not announced as a departure, but he departs specifically from the authorial intent and this results in a departure from any consideration of metaphysics.

In the theory of Ricoeur what happens in the instance of the written text is "the full manifestation of something that is in a virtual state, something nascent and inchoate, in living speech, namely the detachment of meaning from the event."⁶² This detachment does not occur in the case of dialogue where "the subjective intention of the speaker and the discourse's meaning overlap each other in such a way that it is the same thing to understand what the speaker means and what his discourse means."⁶³ This possibility of detachment lies dormant but filled with potential for expression when discourse becomes written. Essentially his view is that the case of speaking-hearing circumvents its expression and it is the subjective that limits the universality of the objective. Then with written discourse "the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide" and hence the semantic

⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 26.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 29.

autonomy of the text is manifest.⁶⁴ At this point, despite any importance placed by Ricoeur on the composition as the work of art, the composition is lost as composition and what remains is *langue*.

(e) Dialogue to Monologue: Re-instituting Composition as Work of Art

It is important at this stage to take into account what Ricoeur is referring to in his view of both spoken and written discourse. As has been previously noted Ricoeur does not consider written discourse to simply be a case of dialogue, in fact he specifically notes its individuality, as does Ong as previously mentioned.⁶⁵ However, he shows how his thinking leans when declaring that with writing the “dialogical situation has been exploded”⁶⁶ and then later when he observes that: “Hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends.”⁶⁷ This indicates a basic presupposition in the work of Ricoeur is that dialogue acts as the base model of the situation speaking-hearing.

However, as has also been noted above, this is an incorrect assumption as speaking-hearing can be a situation of either monologue or dialogue, but monologue is uniquely the model for the case of writing-hearing, since, as Ricoeur agrees, it cannot be viewed as a case of dialogue. Consequently, the base model that must be used for written text as communication is monologue. As has been noted previously a dialogical model can be a means employed in the development of a monologue. However, this model is in reality a dialectical approach where the author or interpreter moves themselves between two poles, i.e. in the case of the writing, the dialogical model involves an imagined interaction of the author with the reader, and, in the case of reading, the reader conducts an imagined interaction with the author. The same person undertakes both voices and moves between them, hence the reality is a form of dialectic but the concept is one of a dialogical model. Ricoeur’s views are consequently based on a model containing an inherently flawed presupposition. This distinction is not a minor or insignificant distinction since a monologue is not constructed in the same way as dialogue. Aspects of the dialogical situation must consciously be included in a monologue that are inherent in the nature of dialogue, e.g.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Other examples of this differentiation have been noted in his other works, e.g. *Text to Action* (1991).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 32.

issues such as the *arational* and *non-rational* dimensions of communication. Further meaning is always anterior as authorial intent, not contemporary, as is the case of dialogue as opposed to monologue.

Ricoeur's view of the detachment of anterior meaning, as authorial intent, only works if dialogue is the base model, since in dialogue anterior meaning, as authorial intent, and verbal meaning are contemporaneous. However, in the case of monologue as written discourse, authorial intent becomes anterior, as the supervising perspective of the development of the monologue, and it is then subsequently the antecedent of the verbal meaning of the text, which references this anterior meaning. This is the situation in both instances of communication, i.e. speaking-hearing and writing-reading. In the situation of dialogue, the impact of metaphysics in being and meaning occurs in the person of the speaker, the speaker is there, "in the genuine sense of being-there, of *Da-sein*."⁶⁸ Hence, there is no need for the speaker to consciously address this dimension, it happens in the course of the dialogue.

This is not the case with monologue; in the situation of monologue the impact of metaphysics, relating to 'being' and 'meaning,' is first transformed into a referential aspect of the language of the text. As has been shown above the authorial intent cannot function anteriorly, in the sense of relating to the psyche, or consciousness, of the author to give meaning to the text, but is the authorial intent accessed from the text as anterior meaning transformed in the act of *parole* as 'being' referenced from the text. The consequence of this flawed assumption in Ricoeur of attachment to the psyche of the author is that the assertion of the autonomy of the text is not sustainable on the basis of the argument provided. The proposed disjunction between the authorial intent and the objective meaning, supposedly occurring in the temporal detachment of the text from the author, cannot be regarded as authoritative conferring autonomy upon the semantic meaning of the text.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

Chapter 9

The 'Who?' Question: Is there a Speaking Voice of the Text?

Introduction

The last chapter revealed that the argument *against* the existence of authorial intent in relationship to a text is a metaphysical argument. The view of metaphysics of absence, as developed in Derrida, argues for the exclusion of authorial intent. However, Thiselton notes with interest that Julia Kristeva, who is in many respects close to the thinking of Derrida, has re-instated the speaking subject of the text.¹ Thiselton observes that this is not a return to “traditional notions of the author behind a text,” it is rather a recognition that texts have a writing or speaking subject.² For Thiselton this reflects concerns “about relations between language and the human body,” in the discussion of textuality.³ The concept of a *who*⁴ of a text is not so easily dismissed. Once the issue of existence, in whatever form, is accepted, this then leads to the concept of a need to evaluate the impact, if any, in interpretation. In the thinking of Ricoeur and Gadamer, as representing the postmodern situation considered previously, authorial intent is inaccessible and irrelevant, hence having no impact. However, as noted by Thiselton, the author creeps back into focus even in deconstruction and this must be evaluated.

The realization that any argument about authorship enters the domain of metaphysical discussion infers an ontic nature to the concept of authorial intent. Therefore, the discussion of the authorial intent will sit more comfortably in the area of ontology rather than epistemology. Epistemology by nature involves a descriptive task and therefore cannot establish the ‘being’ in the description, since description involves *what is* not the establishing of *who is*. Thiselton notes that the descriptive task does little more than refer to the events.⁵ However, the recognition of speech-act theory has focused on the recognition that there can be a doing in the saying.⁶

¹ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 128.

² *Ibid.*, 129.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The questions Who? Why? What? When? and Where? are important in the unfolding of this chapter.

Consequently, when reference to these questions is in view with regard to the hermeneutical task italics will be used for emphasis.

⁵ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 274.

⁶ *Ibid.* This concept is also significant in the work of Vanhoozer, as has been noted previously.

It was noted in a previous section that the language of *non-rational* knowledge is that of assent, assertion and inference; where inference is a conclusion drawn on the implicit premise of what is asserted. In the stating of the language of assent, assertion and inference, one actually gives being, i.e. brings things into existence, rather than describes. The assertion “I believe Jesus died, was buried and rose again,” gives the assertion operational being in the “I” of the statement as well as communicating *that* one believes. It does not establish the ‘being’ of the event within the horizon of temporal history, as other than the speaker, but establishes its ‘being’ within the temporal life of the speaker. Hence, the Pauline declaration of what will make salvation operational in a life is seen in Rom. 10:9 “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” The Pauline assertion when assented to by the hearer brings about an actual state of being in a person’s life, i.e. salvation. The assent involves internalization and externalization resulting in a new state of being. This also seems consistent with the Johannine recording of the assertion of Jesus regarding a new state of being in Jn. 3:1-15, where Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus is recorded. Without being ‘born again’ operational life within the faith does not occur. It is important to consider the ontic nature and affect of *non-rational* knowledge. The ontic nature of authorial intent indicates that the language and effect that should be examined to reveal the authorial intent is that of *non-rational* knowledge, i.e. assent, assertion and inference. Though this concept does not exhaust the concept of authorial intent or represent the scope of ontology it does disclose a significant aspect.

1. Authorial Intent and Being of the Text

In taking a broad view of the consideration of the hermeneutics of texts the scope of the interpretive quest could be condensed to the following five questions: 1. *Who?* 2. *Why?* 3. *What?* 4. *When?* 5. *Where?* These questions elicit disclosure in the primary categories that have been examined, to differing degrees, concerning issues of authorship (the *who*), motivation (the *why*), content (the *what*), historical context (the *when*) and cultural context of

the intended audience, or specific locale within the general historical context (the *where*).⁷ In the postmodern situation questions 1, 4 and 5 have been specifically discarded.⁸ Yet it would seem logical that any interpreter involved in an examination of *why* when dealing with a text should raise the issue both of *who* and *where*. When the hearer/reader constitutes the intended audience⁹ the questions *when* and *where* do not occur. The unintended audience, be that a more contemporary reader distanced in time or a different cultural setting within the same historical era, should result in the question of *why* capturing *when* and *where*.¹⁰ The fact that this seemingly doesn't occur in semantics is not insignificant in the general consideration of the *who*, or speaking subject, of a text.

(a) *When and Where: Establishing the Semantic Range*

The specific aim of this chapter is to examine the *who* of a discourse, therefore of the text, which will involve reference to the *why* and *what* of the text. The questions of *when* and *where* operate together to inform interpreters about the context in which the communication occurred. The issues of the historical situation and the intended audience have been considered in other sections of the work. However, as this section will make reference to the issue of semantics in referencing the *why* and *what* of the text it is important to note their significance in the pursuit of semantics, remembering that the deliberate, or willful, act of *parole* is in many ways the semantic moment of the text. The text as composition and a creation of the author comes into being as an entity in the act of *parole*. Therefore, the instant of creation depends on the semantic range available to the author to express the *what*, or content, of the communication.

⁷ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 58. Ricoeur's journey into the hermeneutics of the self will be referred to in the development of this chapter. He notes, in this work, a similar set of questions but is not using them in the first instance as referred to here. Ricoeur, having discussed speech-act theory in a section on a pragmatic approach, notes the relationship between the subject and the doing of the action and puts forth a similar set of questions (he includes *how?* in his list) that could function together in elucidating an understanding of an action. His object is the integrated network of questions that disclose action. Consequently, he is dealing with the hermeneutics of an action not the meaning of a text. Hence Ricoeur's work is not relating these questions to the areas indicated in this work, yet it is of note that these are questions that disclose and they do relate to and disclose these areas. Ricoeur does not use or intend these questions as set out here. Yet the advent of a text is an action and the meaning of the text is integral to that action as an action, i.e. its reason for being, hence the overlap.

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans., John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 165. The position of Gadamer and Ricoeur on authorial intent and the original receptors has been considered in a previous section. However, here Ricoeur, in his assertion of autonomy of the text, specifically shows the exclusion of these three areas.

⁹ The term intended audience is used as being more inclusive and less based in a moment of history than the term 'original hearers.'

¹⁰ The rationale for this will be addressed in the unfolding situation.

The phenomenal world¹¹ of the author as the experiential domain of temporal existence clearly has a significant impact on the semantic range available to the author. The phenomenal world is impacted by issues such as the situatedness within history, the nature and scope of language, the political and religious milieu, etc. This should be evident enough as to be considered idiomatic. Certainly the tradition and community of an author, as entities within the phenomenal world in which an author stands, have a dramatic impact on the semantic range.¹²

However, the noumenal world has at least an equal impact on the semantic range available to the author. The very issue of the metaphysics of absence or presence, i.e. whether or not it is perceived to even exist, impacts the semantic range of the author. Whether this world is seen in a purely Kantian way,¹³ or as the spirit realm, also impacts this issue. Lara notes in commenting on Kant's view of the noumenal world that not only is it outside time (hence offering a perception of the existence of the eternal, which itself greatly impacts the understanding of the author), it is also not available for cognition, in the same sense as the phenomenal world. An Object, or entity, in this world maybe postulated but not apprehended through rational means, but it is suggested in this work that such entities are apprehended as knowledge through *non-rational* means.¹⁴ They are presented to a person through the agency of assent, assertion or inference and are accepted, therefore becoming part of the noumenal world, or rejected and therefore excluded from it. The acceptance or rejection of *non-rational* knowledge significantly impacts the semantic range available for use by the author. Finally both the Kantian view and that of a spirit realm both assert that the noumenal world is impacting and operating as a form of foundation to the phenomenal world, thereby providing a context for the knowledge obtained as *rational* knowledge. This must be regarded as significantly impacting the semantic range of an author in the creation of texts.

Consequently, it would seem that to ignore the questions of *when* and *where*, purely from the point of view of the information they supply on the semantic range available to the

¹¹ Denis Lara, "Kant and Hume on Morality", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/kant-hume-morality/>. See the 3rd feature in the "Brief Overview of Kant's Ethics."

¹² Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 702. Thiselton discusses this issue at length in this chapter of his book concerning the concept of corporate memory.

¹³ Lara. See the 3rd feature in the "Brief Overview of Kant's Ethics."

¹⁴ The concept of *non-rational* knowledge is discussed in Chapter 3.

author in the act of parole, disregards that which has a significant impact on interpretation and consequently meaning of a text. It would therefore seem that the postmodern view of discarding these questions is itself questionable purely on this basis. If these questions are discarded in the pursuit of semantics the only semantics available to the reader/interpreter are those of the interpreter, or as in Fish the interpretive community. Reader-response hermeneutics in this situation is implicit and the only avenue of recourse is to the interpreter.

Ricoeur's aversion to the romanticist notion of authorial intent as integral to his interpretation theory has been previously noted and discussed at length. His concern is the issue of the inclusion of a foreign psyche that is caught up in the issue of authorial intent.¹⁵ However, as a philosopher who focuses on semantics his aversion to authorial intent and any subsequent recognition of the intended audience, together with his relegation of history and tradition (of the author) to a secondary role, has dismissed a significant source of the semantics involved in the text. It is hardly surprising that his interpretive theory sees a far greater range of potential meaning associated with the text in the absence of the author, or to use his phrasing when the text "escapes the finite horizon lived by its author," essentially escaping any semantic constraint and explanation inherent in the act of *parole*.¹⁶ His focus on language must draw some of this back into the fold of his semantics, since it is impossible to translate a language and ideas without regard to their place in history. Nevertheless, his theory represents a significant loss in the message of the author and hence does not give due recognition to the 'otherness' of the author.

(b) Constraint or Opportunity

Thiselton recognizes in the work of Ricoeur a "fundamental principle of hermeneutics including biblical interpretation" in the development of the hermeneutics of suspicion.¹⁷ This suspicion is necessary to expose and remove any tendency to iconoclasm. Hence the disguises and masks are "stripped away."¹⁸ Thiselton notes Ricoeur's investigation of Marx,

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 92.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 347.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 348.

Nietzsche and Freud as the “masters of suspicion,” noting also Ricoeur’s positive direction taken in considering suspicion.¹⁹ It creates openness to genuine interpretation.

However, Ricoeur also shows another side to the operation of suspicion, also associated with the “masters of suspicion.” This is the problem of manipulation due to authoritarian influences such as the “magisterium as the rule of orthodoxy.”²⁰ In other words the concept of constraining, such as by consideration of authorial intent and the semantic range available, becomes objectionable due to the possibility of constraint and manipulation. Thiselton also believes that this potential problem, highlighted by these authors and others, needs to be taken seriously.²¹ However, not all Christian claims should be interpreted in this fashion as attempts to legitimize particular uses of power.²² Misunderstanding doesn’t constitute an attempt to manipulate or legitimize a power structure. In fact Scripture offers a safe guard in the attitude towards ‘the other’ in the declaration of Rom. 13:10 that “Love does no harm to a neighbor.” A genuine person mindful of the impact on others in what they assert may be misguided, but will not do harm when remaining within the context of the faith.

In the case of the deliberate manipulation of texts the issue is the user not the text. Wittgenstein noted that the world is neither good nor evil and evil enters through a person, the subject.²³ Good and evil are not properties in the world; they belong to the predication of the subject, i.e. the person.²⁴ Nuclear power can be used to light up a city or blow up a city; the issue is the user not the nuclear power. The concern that something could be used to manipulate others can itself become manipulation of texts, if the meaning is stripped from texts in general to prevent meaning being assigned incorrectly in particular texts, such as religious texts.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 74. Ricoeur’s language is significant in displaying an intensity of feeling in this area by asserting that it is this tendency “that I deplore and am seeking to combat.”

²¹ Thiselton, *Interpreting God*, ix.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks, 1914-1916*, ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe, trans., G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 79e.

²⁴ Ibid.

(c) Communication by Language

It has previously been observed that in the reflective thinking of Gadamer language ascends to fulfilling the role of metaphysics.²⁵ Language for Gadamer provides the opportunity for the mediation of the finite and infinite appropriate to humanity.²⁶ Wittgenstein makes the observation that humanity's ability to communicate does not exist because of language; it is a means of influencing others and of furthering human achievement.²⁷ He notes, "without the use of speech and writing people could not communicate."²⁸ Language is developed for use but is a tool used in communicating; it is not responsible for communication.

Ricoeur does not go so far as Gadamer and acknowledges that the view that language is everything, leads to a closed mentality in interpretation.²⁹ Yet he does see within language the ability to express being,³⁰ and consequently within language is the capability to express metaphysics without seeing language as assuming the status of metaphysics. Hence language is the means of expression and communication of being from within the thinking of a person. An author uses language to express thoughts and although semantic choices are constrained by that which is available to them, i.e. within language and the *when* and *where* associated with the text, this limits the facility of communication not the imagination. It is not the limit of the thought but that of its expression. The text is a creation of an author expressed and communicated in language, not a creation of language, as discussed in the last chapter. Hence, the limitation is not to the meaning but the expression of that meaning.

The human imagination is capable of thinking in the impossible, e.g. in reading a novel the human mind can enter the world of and cope with that which defines rationality, such as fantasy and science fiction. Therefore, it is capable of moving outside that which normally constrains, in its musings. Further, the inflation of language and proliferation of languages indicates that language does not constrain the imagination but is adaptable by the

²⁵ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 75.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁷ Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, 137e (491).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 301.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

imagination for the continuing development to suit the need to communicate. This is seen in the development of subcultures and changes in community such as technological changes, e.g. the proliferation of the computers and the Internet and the development of words specific to its environment such as email, etc. The constraint of language does not constrain the ability to imagine and think, just the ability to express it. In expressing world in a text language limits the world,³¹ however, this should not be seen as a limit on the world imagined.

What is said in discourse can be re-stated using different words or even translated into other languages, which indicates it is a vehicle of a propositional content.³² The very act of translation requires transference of thought forms and presuppositions expressed in the text into the new situation.³³ Language is employed to express thought not contain or restrict it. However, this expression of language is not simply a description of an entity or the relaying of information. It is a world that is literally set before the interpreter/reader. Kevin Vanhoozer in a tribute to Paul Ricoeur noted a central insight that Ricoeur had contributed is that an interpreter situates themselves in front of the text, which then opens a new world in front of the text.³⁴ Ricoeur states that the text "speaks of a possible world and of a possible way of orienting oneself within it."³⁵ The Pentecostal writer Randolph Tate similarly proposed the idea of the world of the text.³⁶ However, unlike Ricoeur, Tate noted the importance of the world of the author and that of the reader as being of equal importance in the interpretation of texts. This world is a world conveyed in and through language but not constrained by it, it is the expression that is constrained. The purpose of language is to present the world for the perception of the reader, it is not the purpose of the world of the text to present language to the reader.

If the constraint is that of language, not that of thought, then it is conceivable to suggest that with a different 'when' and 'where,' i.e. a different semantic range made available, that meaning can then undergo apparent change, i.e. adaptation into a new semantic range. This would be simply due to a differing or perhaps even greater capacity to

³¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, sect.5.62.

³² Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 9.

³³ Caird, 2.

³⁴ Vanhoozer, "The Joy of Yes," 27.

³⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 88.

³⁶ Tate, xv-xxi.

express the thought. The impact on meaning of the unintended audience was also examined earlier and the resultant grounds for proposing that the process of interpretation opens up into new worlds, i.e. relevant meaning in the situation of the *when* and *where* of the receptor. It has been suggested that the unintended audience may be seen to result in what amounts to a revision of the author in the light of new understanding. Clearly this cannot refer to the person of the author. However, if authorial intent is detectable and evident as suggested in this work, then the interaction of the 'world of the receptor' and the 'world of the text' can indeed be seen to 'fuse,' as in Gadamer, Ricoeur and Thiselton, resulting in what has the appearance of a revision of the authorial intent and its application.

This would seem to be the place that Ricoeur suggests is the end point of his interpretation theory. Ricoeur views his theory as faithful to the original intention of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, as Ricoeur expresses it: "To understand an author better than he could understand himself is to display the power of disclosure implied in his discourse beyond the limited horizon of his own existential situation."³⁷ However, as has been noted on numerous occasions, his theory entails the dismissal of the authorial intent and the situation of the intended audience.

Yet if the authorial intent should be considered more as an ontological entity than a description within the world of the text, then it relates to the being of the world of the text. The content of the message, i.e. the '*what*' of the text, is then set in the context of this world of the text, whose ontology, or 'being,' is disclosed by the authorial intent. More importantly, since it is a world set before the reader/interpreter to view or perceive, the reader/interpreter can bring entities from within their own world into the world of the text and so describe new entities in the world of the text, the being of which is set by the authorial intent. This has important implications for the interaction of the believer with the biblical text and the paradox of the Scripture, i.e. how a text can be a vehicle for both the human and divine author at the same time.

Consequently, if there is a speaking voice associated with a text there are questions that should be pursued. Why in the postmodern situation does this voice pass undetected? If

³⁷ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 93.

there is a voice and it is not the person of the author how is that voice to be understood in both its being and what it says? If there is a voice associated with a text how does the reader/interpreter interact with this voice? The 'who' of the text as the speaking subject must be investigated.

2. Pursuing the 'Who?' of the Text

The question of *who* in Heidegger's thought is an ontological question.³⁸ Heidegger's work concerns the *who* of *Dasein*, hence selfhood, and Ricoeur's work follows a similar line.³⁹ This draws attention to the fact that the search for *who*, as a hermeneutical endeavor, whether concerning self or the author, has an ontological basis in its understanding. Ricoeur notes this in his work and further observes that in the pursuit of semantics the question of *who* moves to the periphery and the questions *why* and *what* become central.⁴⁰ Conversely, pragmatics⁴¹ is not concerned with "empirical description of acts of communication" and so rather than focusing on the statement it looks at the "act of speaking itself."⁴² In this investigation the "I" and the "you" of interlocution become central,⁴³ i.e. the "*who*" of speaking comes into view.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to infer that in the semantic approach, with its resultant effect of moving the question of *who* to the periphery due to its epistemological understanding, there is a resultant movement away from interaction with the ontology of the speaking voice of the text.⁴⁴ If this is indeed the case, this then in turn indicates that within the pursuit of epistemology there can occur description of being but no actual encounter with existence and hence otherness, i.e. the *who* becomes a *what*. This inference would seem confirmed by Ricoeur's observation on the weakness of Speech-Act theory with respect to the ontological question of *who*. He points out that the clue is that the focus of the theory is upon

³⁸ Heidegger, 64.

³⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 225-35. Ricoeur devotes a section of the work to this issue of the subject in the thought of Heidegger. Ricoeur's work *Oneself as Another* is a study of the issue of identifying self and he refers to Heidegger's concept of the question of 'who,' see 58-61.

⁴⁰ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 59.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 40. Ricoeur sets out the sense of his use of the term "pragmatics" in relation to language: "a theory of language as it is used in specific contexts of interlocution" hence the link with Speech-Act Theory.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 16. Semantic analysis on its own creates an illusion of language as an absolute and must be referred to existence. There is a need to integrate semantics with ontology. Hence at this earlier time Ricoeur realized the potentially hazardous movement away from ontology, which could create the illusion of an absolute of language.

the act not the agent.⁴⁵ He then observes: “At the price of this elision the transcendental conditions of communication can be entirely stripped of psychological import and held to be regulations of language (*langue*) and not of speech.”⁴⁶ This he notes is a “despsychologizing” of language.⁴⁷ Hence his next study in *Oneself As Another* concerns “The Agentless Semantics of Action.”⁴⁸

Semantics is referential, as opposed to the reflexive nature of pragmatics, in which the interlocution of persons comes into view.⁴⁹ The semantic approach to the action discloses an agentless action. The semantics of an action essentially fails to ‘see’ the agent of the action due to an opposing ontology to that of the person, which is the “ontology of autonomous events.”⁵⁰ Consequently, the referential task, so important to the interpretive theory of Ricoeur, offers in its approach some understanding of Ricoeur’s view of the autonomy of the text detached from the author. It is a necessary conclusion of the nature of semantics, thereby constituting a potential weakness in the semantic (or dare it be said epistemological) approach, i.e. a failure to come to grips with the agent.

Ricoeur does note that although the referential approach fails to encounter the agent, in the ontological sense of the question of *who*, it can refer to the agent conceptually by the use of personal pronouns.⁵¹ Ricoeur notes in passing that the arc of pronouns, i.e. I, you, he, she etc., moves the conceptual status of the person into the third person in grammatical status. This note in passing, within the context of the composition or narrative, encourages the reader that he is moving to an answer that is foreshadowed by a previous statement that at “the end of this study [i.e. the current study, or chapter, concerning “The Agentless Semantics of Action”] our problem will be to turn this challenge to our advantage, by making the investigation into the “what?-why?” of action the grand detour at the end of which the question “who?” returns in force,” i.e. the *who* remains in the background to be brought

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 47.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 56-87.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

forward.⁵² Indeed after following the “grand detour” the final chapter of the book proposes an ontology to address this question.⁵³

There is a concealment of the question *who* in the treatment of hermeneutics from the perspective of language treated on an epistemological basis.⁵⁴ This results in the proposed grand detour, so that the question that presents in the first instance, i.e. *who?*, becomes the final question addressed. Thus theory approached in such a way reverses the common sense concept of discourse, i.e. that someone says something to someone, and in becoming oneself had something said (to them) by someone. Furthermore, if the author and audience are disregarded then all that is left is something (that has been said), i.e. the *what* or content. The question *why* can move in no other direction than that of semantics, i.e. to capture and disclose the *what*. The question of *what* is terminal, since the *who*, or someone, has become a something, despite any conceptual appearance of personhood by the use of the third person.

Further, in Ricoeur’s theory the concept of any intended audience can have no impact on meaning, i.e. there is no traversing of “why?-what?” to *when* and *where*, hence the referential approach alights upon and remains upon “why?-what?”, i.e. *the process has become terminal*. It is easy to foresee in this circumstance the movement to language as an absolute. Since the very nature of the question *why* results in explanation it does not naturally move in the direction of *who*, as Ricoeur has so convincingly argued. As has been discussed previously Ricoeur does not deny the *fact* of the author, the opposite is true. What he disregards is the impact of authorial intent; hence he himself does not end in a postmodern deconstruction. Deconstruction has simply terminated the process at *what* having disregarded both the agent, or *who*, and the historical questions of *when-where*, and since the process is terminal there is no deferred question of *who* to be considered. Any ontological evaluation of existence is lost at both ends of the process.

Ricoeur’s “grand detour,” when taken, has the effect of circumventing the termination of the process at the question *what*. Ricoeur does not disregard the author; just the issue of

⁵² Ibid., 59. See also 16-17 where Ricoeur discusses this concept of the detour via “why?-what?” as the basic plan of the book.

⁵³ Ibid., 297-356. Titled “What Ontology in View.”

⁵⁴ Ibid., 59. This concept is referred to often in his work.

authorial intent, and this is probably best illustrated by his own comments in his conclusions of *Interpretation Theory*. His theory is faithful to the original intention of Schleiermacher in pursuit of the understanding of the author, further that his method results in the full disclosure of the potential within what an author said.⁵⁵ If, as seen above, the process of Ricoeur's approach in *Oneself as Another* gives insight on his assertion of autonomy of the text, then this similarly shows how he can consider that, in disregarding authorial intent, he has not disregarded the author, so as to end up with a semantic "agentless action" of an authorless text.

In the event of dialogue Ricoeur acknowledges that meaning is the speaker's, hence the author's.⁵⁶ Understanding the discourse meaning is the same thing as understanding the speaker's meaning.⁵⁷ Even the polysemic nature of words and phrases is screened, therefore limited by the event of the speaking author.⁵⁸ In other words there is a constraint on meaning that is not applicable to the "autonomous text." It would seem that it is this potential of constraint that concerns Ricoeur and by deferring the question of *who*, rather than beginning with it, he allows a full scope of potential meaning before coming back to an ontology of the *who*, i.e. the author. Furthermore, this concept of deferral allows a continuous realization of new or developed meaning of the "why?-what?" The occasion of each event of interpretation will result in this deferment and so allow the engagement of the world of the interpreter in exploring polysemy.

The concept that closure of the text should not necessarily result in closure of the interpretation of that text, and hence meaning, is one that Marshall has proposed in dealing with Scripture.⁵⁹ An authoritative meaning in one context may have a different authoritative meaning in a different context.⁶⁰ However, the closure of interpretation of that text assumes a static nature, not a dynamic nature, of the text. If the text is seen as a dynamic entity itself, there is then no need close the relative meaning of the text nor postulate ongoing attachment to the person of the author. This will address Ricoeur's concerns to allow the text to open a

⁵⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 93. This is referred to previously and quoted.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁹ Marshall, *Beyond the Bible*, 54. This issue has been discussed at length in Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

world before the reader, rather than lock the interpreter into a situation from which they are inherently distanced. It will also address the concern to retain that which seems the common sense approach, i.e. that the text has an author.⁶¹ Therefore, in a re-evaluation of authorial intent in the question of *who*, considered as an ontological question, and a recognition of the impact of the fusion of horizons allowing the content to essentially be seen from two worldviews, there is scope to proceed.

The 'Why?' Question: Ontological Capture of 'Who'

The question *why* would seem to naturally lead to explanation and therefore description; but it does not of necessity raise the question *who*.⁶² In the question "Why did the accident happen?" the answer can indicate both a *who*, as in "The driver lost control of the car." and it can indicate impersonal agency, as in "The brakes on the car failed." Consequently, it would seem reasonable to suggest that the question *why* has within it an implicit ability for capture of the question of agency. Consequently, it is the question that should provide the link between ontology and epistemology, i.e. between the agent and their action. Following the direction of the question *why* in its capture and disclosure of *what* assumes to some degree the implicit question of agency has been captured.

Ricoeur notes that pragmatics and semantics, in relationship to language, are irreducible with respect to one another, i.e. one cannot substitute for the other, and yet each draws from the other in its practice.⁶³ Hence neither are they mutually exclusive in the interpretation of texts. The question *why*, as noted above, discloses the *what* in a referential way in the investigation of semantics, i.e. the content as a communication. However, the question of motivation also provides the link between authorial intent and the issues concerning the question of *when* and *where*, i.e. the *why* should provide the link to be able to cover the scope of *who* said what and to whom. The question of *why* a text is written should automatically direct attention to the intended audience, since it discloses how the *what*, or the content, is to be related to reality, and hence the world, as projected by the author. The question *why* has an implicit aspect that captures the ontological aspect of *who* is addressed,

⁶¹ Valentine Cunningham, *Reading after Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2002), 54.

⁶² Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 63.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 40.

i.e. *why* captures the ontological aspects of the interlocution in the author's relating of the *what* to reality, but not within its semantic task. The term *Aufhebung* was referred to previously in the work of both Hegel and Ricoeur, to indicate that which appears, yet disappears although seeming to be retained. The question *why* has within it an implicit *Aufhebung* that instantaneously captures the ontology of the *who* of speaker/author and the *who* of the audience. Thus the question *why* should lead from the question of *who* to the questions of *when* and *where*. The issues related to content concern '*what*' is said and '*what*' it is said about,⁶⁴ but it is understood in the context of by whom and to whom it is said. Therefore, what is said can only be properly understood as meaning by dealing with the question '*who*?' and the questions '*when*?' and '*where*?' in the consideration of what is said.

Consequently, it would seem that the very concept of discourse, i.e. that someone says something to someone, also implies initially the order of questions that should be followed. In the case of dialogue the first issue faced is ontological, a *who* addresses a someone, however this is not the case in written text, where a text rather than a speaker confronts the interpreter. Ricoeur notes that the text has the effect of separating the acts of writing and reading so that there is no communicative connection between them.⁶⁵ Derrida raises the issue of entering a text with a disregard of the nature of the book, i.e. the connections proposed by the idea of anterior meaning, which is to disregard of *who* and authorial intention and hence, for Derrida, logocentrism.⁶⁶ Derrida is deliberately employing an idea of randomness, yet in reality, though it is not always random, a reader does not always enter a text either at the beginning or with advance understanding of the questions proposed for the task of interpretation. It can be an author that causes a reader to engage a text, it can be an issue that the reader pursues or it can even be casual interest, e.g. filling in time, picking up a novel for the first time. A reader can enter a text in pursuit of particular content without any real regard to world of the text or author. There is no compulsory mode or method by which reading *must* be undertaken, whatever the theoretical argument(s) for what *should* be done.

⁶⁴ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 19.

⁶⁵ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 103.

⁶⁶ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 162.

If the text is considered to be opening a world of perception before the reader this need not be considered a problem. A work of art maybe viewed as a whole or some aspect can catch the eye of the audience. In the same way that it is authorial intent that transforms paints and canvas into a work of art, or, the chiseling of a sculptor upon some block of material into a sculpture, so the authorial intent in the act of parole 'paints' and 'sculpts' a world in words. If the one perceiving is drawn into the world of the painting, the sculpture or the text, they will move within the world in an act of discovery taking note of all the entities within that world. In the case of the text, the composition, or work of art, is cast in the language employed. The text may never be verbally declared yet it is a spoken word, a *logos*, a composition or a narrative that projects, by creating, a world into which the reader enters.

If an ideal process was undertaken it would probably lead to a consideration of the questions in the order asked, with each disclosure contributing to the one that follows it. In this situation the question of the ontology is the primary question. The interpreter must consider the being of the text before pulling it apart in the investigation of *what* it is saying. The simplest illustration is that of anatomy and physiology: to perform anatomy, as a descriptive task, the body is first dead. Physiology requires examination of the interaction of functions in a living situation. Both are necessary but they are entirely different approaches that inform one another in pursuit of understanding the living person. It remains to consider how the being of the person of the author (the *who*) and the being of the text are related, since it is the author who gives being to the text, although the text is detached from the author, as highlighted by Ricoeur.

3. The 'Who?' Question: Taking a Different Route

Ricoeur anticipates the direct approach to the question of *who* as an ontological question. The Introductory chapter of *Oneself as Another*, in the search for selfhood, i.e. how the subject posits self, first considers the Cartesian "I" in a brief review of Descartes *cogito*.⁶⁷ He takes note of the fact that Descartes found that the addition of the question concerned

⁶⁷ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 4-11.

with “knowing *what* I am” led to “a more developed expression of the cogito.”⁶⁸ Hence, it would seem reasonable to suggest that this is the beginning for Ricoeur, in which he finds that the indication of the starting place to discover the *who* is to begin with the *what*. Thus, at an early stage in his thinking he indicates that the referential approach is the place to begin the search for *who*.

Although the questioning process begins with *who* this becomes immediately deferred and in many ways this would seem to present an understanding of his thinking in his theory. Ricoeur also takes note that in Descartes’ recognition of the divine there is a profound effect on the cogito and this occurs in the recognition of the “Other” that causes a representation of the divine self within the cogito.⁶⁹ Here is the other aspect that will determine the search: the true self is only found in otherness within the self.

Ricoeur then considers the thoughts of Nietzsche, which results in what Ricoeur styles as the “shattered cogito” in contrast to Descartes “exalted cogito.”⁷⁰ He then states: “Exalted subject, humiliated subject: it seems that it is always through a complete reversal of this sort that one approaches the subject; one could thus conclude that the “I” of the philosophies of the subject is *atopos*, without any assured place in discourse.”⁷¹ Hence in his reasoning the search for the subject can only proceed by following the line of reasoning that is open, i.e. the referential approach.

What Ricoeur mentioned in passing will now be taken note of and examined. In the referential task of semantics the speaker can use personal pronouns to represent, or portray, the concept of persons but the portrayal is in the grammatical third person, including the first and second person pronouns. Consequently, although the grammatical first or second person is used (more amenable to the reflexive task) the concept of the person is thrown into a third person status grammatically (more amenable to the referential task).⁷² It is here that the weakness of the epistemological approach, as a referential task, displays itself most

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7. (Italics original)

⁶⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11-16.

⁷¹ Ibid., 16. (Italics original)

⁷² Ibid., 46. Ricoeur presents a thorough argument showing that the reflexive approach privileges the first and second person and essentially excludes the third person. The third person is only a thing spoken about. Conversely, since the third person can indeed be a non-person it is more amenable to description as an entity within the text. Hence semantics privileges the third person in its approach.

forcefully. The referential task on its own can offer only a representation of person or psyche and cannot, as Ricoeur has so ably demonstrated in *Oneself as Another*, consider the being that animates an entity in being a person. There is no possibility of inferring consciousness from the semantic route. In this route taken by Ricoeur, if the person so indicated is a person, and persons are known to have a consciousness, it is possible to state that the person indicated in the third person has one, but no descriptive evaluation is possible of the 'being' of that particular person indicated. It also does not supply or reveal that which can re-animate, and consequently the text remains a thing to be described.⁷³ If epistemology is to continue to be the route followed to the agent as a person in the examination, then it is understandable why Ricoeur suggests it can only be done by a "grand detour." Before taking this observation as a point of departure to a different route there are some comments of interest that can be made.

(a) Appearance of the Author in the Text

As a result of this movement to the third person in the referential task, if the speaking subject wishes to come within the purview of the reader/interpreter as a describable entity within the world of the text, they must move self to this concept of projection of a person in the third person. In the concept of constatives there can be an aspect of the speech act that is unsaid.⁷⁴ The format of promises is such that, to use Ricoeur's analogy so as to focus on a particular point,⁷⁵ the statements "the cat is on the mat" and "I affirm that the cat is on the mat" both have the same truth value, but the former is purely referential and the latter has a reflexive element that draws attention to the maker of the statement.

However, apart from the semantic observations Ricoeur is making there is another aspect this analogy brings into view. Hegel highlighted that it is predication that gives the subject meaning, with the subject being meaningless without predication.⁷⁶ This forms an important aspect of Ricoeur's interpretive theory and it is the universal nature of the predicate

⁷³ This issue of the nature of the text has been considered in a Chapters 3 & 4. In the thinking of Ong the text is not even discourse unless engaged by a person. Ricoeur and Gadamer would not go so far but certainly treat the text as not having real entity until engaged by the interpreter. It's being is as language not message.

⁷⁴ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 43.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Hegel, "Phenomenology," 95.

that is one of the primary presuppositions of his discussion of discourse.⁷⁷ It is hardly surprising that his theory focuses on semantics and epistemology since the predicate is the *what* of the saying and that which is most amenable to the referential approach of semantics. In the concept of pursuing *what* is said and *what* it is said about, the subject has already moved to the third person to be subjected to description of an entity of the same rank as a non-person. All that is retained is only the concept of personhood.

Yet here there is a device that a writer can use, indeed a speaker can use, to place themselves within the world their discourse 'creates.' The statement "God is good" is such that the predicate available for referential analysis is "is good." The designation of God is non-specific and almost generic. However, in the statement "I affirm that God is good" the complete statement "God is good" has moved into the predicate. Now not only does referential analysis focus on a description of "is good" but now focuses on the description that "God is good." In this case God is now a particular person that is identified as the God of "I," i.e. the speaker.

Therefore, this can also be a device that is available for placing oneself into the predicate, which allows a description of self. This interaction of subject and predicate is what results in the predicate becoming actual knowledge.⁷⁸ In the second statement "I" is the subject but the actual knowledge of the predicate is that "God is good" and the statement "I affirm that God is good" gives this predicate actual being in the life of "I." More importantly if God is the speaker, such as a declaration "I am the God who is good" the movement of Himself into the predicate gives Him place within the world of the text as a person, whose description is that He is good. Now it is the prefixing with "I" as the subject that has moved God into the predicate, however, this device allows the speaker/author to appear within the world they create by speaking with the prefixing of "I" in ascribing to self.

This device is used in Scripture. The prophet speaking in the first person on behalf of the divine can move to third person whilst still be speaking in the first person. Consider Is. 43:1-18 where the prophet is proclaiming in the first person the speaking of the divine. In v.1

⁷⁷ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 10. Hegel noted the fact that without the subject the predicate takes on a universal nature, Hegel, "Phenomenology," 96.

⁷⁸ Hegel, "Phenomenology," 96.

there is the assertion of Israel's existence as a people due to His (i.e. the Lord's since the prophet speaks for God in using the first person "I") creative work. In this vein God then moves in succeeding verses to a discussion of His redemption of them in various situations. The exhortation is that people should trust Him due to this powerfully demonstrated activity, e.g. vss.10-13. However, in v.14 there is a perceptible change: "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, your King." In this situation "your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, your King" can now be substituted for "I," i.e. the one speaking. These appellations have been made rich in descriptive language in the preceding verses. This description places the "I" within the story and part of the description of the text, the "I" is all these things and all these things are now gathered up into the subject, the "I." This could be stated as "Your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, your King says..." or "I." In this fashion God becomes a player within the drama of the world He created.

The concept of the prophet is that of the one who speaks for another as the other. This allows the divine influence upon the prophet to place God into the place where, as well as being the speaking subject in the prophet, there is a movement to the concept of a person within the predicate through the prophet, and hence God become describable as an agent within the world He creates, in inspiring the prophet. Before assuming that this requires some form of special dispensation, or hermeneutic, that allows the 'person' of God, consider the concept of an authorized biography. In the biography as opposed to the autobiography the biographer employed by the one who is spoken about is able to portray that person within the world as part of the world. The speaking voice of the biographer can do what the one who is the true author cannot do, the one about whom the text is written. By using the biographer the true subject appears within the predicate of the world, i.e. a describable entity.

The work of Wittgenstein along the lines of this subject has been considered in a previous chapter. He notes that in the analogy of 'seeing' an important aspect is noted, i.e. the eye that sees does not see itself in the looking.⁷⁹ Essentially, in his contention, this explanation illustrates the problem of the metaphysical "I," who in describing the world as they see it, cannot see himself or herself within that world. Therefore, as an author who is bringing

⁷⁹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sect.5.633.

the world into existence through the creative medium of word, the author does not see himself within that world. The use of the biographer overcomes this problem. Not only is the true author now visible but also they interact with the world. Hence the significance, which is that to be seen as an agent *within* as well as agent *of* this world He created, God employed biographers, people He inspired to write. Whatever one believes about Scripture, the existence of God or the concept of inspiration, the concept of the device is sound.

One other point that can be made before concluding this digression concerns the very concept that the eye/"I" that sees does not see itself. If the author is interacting within the world, such as the one whose life a biography is about, it is his or her world. However, another thing they cannot do, as an autobiographer, is that of seeing themselves through the eyes of others. This becomes possible in the biography, i.e. the eye/"I" that sees a world and wishes to create it can then themselves become seen through the eyes of another, i.e. the biographer, and thereby become describable within the world. Hence, even Jesus 'employed' those to write so that He is seen within the world through the eyes of others. These issues are not small issues in consideration of the biblical text, developed in the area that semantics does open up, with the result that the being of God is seen in His interaction within the world and is describable, therefore now subjecting Himself to epistemological investigation.

The following is suggested as a maxim in returning to the pick up a different route to the concept of authorial intent: "*the task of epistemology assumes a prior ontology, or, the thing to be known must have its being as it is to be known for it to be known.*" Ontology is the first task and not just the last, and as a result, it should be the prior activity that undergirds epistemology. However, it must also be noted that either without the other leads to no actual knowledge; as Hegel has noted the actual knowledge is in the predicated subject, not just the subject or predicate alone.

(b) The Problematic of the Person of 'Who?': The Priority of Ontology

The observation by Wittgenstein that the "I" that sees does not see itself, should alert the interpreter to a realization that semantic analysis will not observe, within the description, the author other than via the sorts of devices available as mentioned above. As such it will not be as a person other than a character within the narrative, therefore simply the concept of

a person stripped of being, and hence consciousness, as a person. Essentially there is description without being. The rejection of authorial intent, because of its suspected ties to a foreign psyche (i.e. that of the author as foreign to the interpreter), would seem to begin here, i.e. in the pursuit of *who* via semantics.

Ricoeur observes that he has considered the assessment just made regarding the referential approach. In considering the “concealment of the question “who?”” he contends that it is insufficient to appeal to the nature of the semantic approach that *does*⁸⁰ tend to make the *who* a something.⁸¹ Although there is a “capture” of the *who* by a something (i.e. in attempting to pursue the *who* the journey to agency is caught up as it were in impersonal discussion as a thing under consideration), there is nothing within the practice and principles of semantics that prevents an autonomy of the question of *who* from the something.⁸² The question *who* can be answered by use of proper names, demonstrative pronouns and definite description, and also the agent has an ability, through the use of words such as personal pronouns, to designate themselves (noted above).⁸³ Ricoeur contends therefore it is not the referential approach, as such, which is responsible for the concealment.⁸⁴

Yet, as noted above, Ricoeur also notes that the use of such devices by the agent does not supply an answer to the concealment, for he observes (also noted above) that this action by the agent results in the concept of a person, not the being of a person or the actuality of personhood. Therefore, although the approach can describe that which has being and is presented within the text, that being itself is not available to be evaluated, consequently, the being is an inherent assumption in the description employing the concept of a person. Hence even in this defense of semantics it would seem rather to confirm what is suggested as a maxim: “*the task of epistemology assumes a prior ontology, or, the thing to be known must have its being as it is to be known, for it to be known.*”

⁸⁰ Italics are added for emphasis not as indication of Ricoeur’s work.

⁸¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 59.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

(c) The Priority of Listening: Recognizing Authorial Being in Intent

However, following the lead of Ricoeur, it is important to note that the tasks of semantics (epistemological description) and pragmatics (ontological description) are irreducible but interdependent, i.e. each avails itself of that acquired by the other.⁸⁵ It is further suggested that they are also not mutually exclusive, i.e. to do one is not to exclude the other, since through the process of reasoning there is a free exchange of what is acquired. They have different agendas in the process of understanding, but as has been stated, and bears repeating, both are essential in the process of hermeneutics for understanding to occur. What *is* suggested is that there is a distinction in priority, since epistemological description assumes what it requires as a presupposition, i.e. ontological attribution as the starting point.

Both studies involve the discovery, acquisition and assimilation of knowledge. In ontology knowledge is posited to the self, i.e. what is discovered, acquired and assimilated is assumed as fact by the person to whom it is posited. Hence, in many ways this is a passive task, i.e. a listening *to* 'voice,' although not in its initiation as a task, since all discovery, acquisition and assimilation occurs through the question⁸⁶ (we noted the 5 questions that guide – or should guide – the hermeneutical process), but it is, or should be, based in otherness.

Conversely, in epistemology (involving acquisition of belief as justified and justifiable – hence working from the self) knowledge is posited by the self, i.e. self establishes the belief in the knowledge to assume and present it as fact, without an awareness of the other as being, only in description, (yet even here it should be noted that if the author has not used self reference, as indicated by Ricoeur above, then no description is possible). Consequently, knowledge is established as fact from the perspective of self and justified to others, not just posited to others. Hence, epistemology is an active task, i.e. a speaking *of* 'voice,' and is based in projection of the self.

Consequently, it is suggested that as a broad understanding, or big picture, ontology occurs within community and subsequently establishes self within community. Alternatively,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. This is how the hermeneutical task is engaged.

epistemology occurs in the projection of self from community and subsequently establishes the individual within the world. This leads to a general observation that epistemology is the process whereby there is individualization or particularization of that which is 'other' in its application to the self. Since the individual operates from community this projection should result in the broadening of the community, i.e. expand the horizons of both. Philosophies at different times have operated at these extremes and at different points in between.

Scripture exalts both the community and the self and humiliates neither.⁸⁷ Humility is displayed as an action that operates from the self or community in exalting the one who is 'other.' This is well set out in Philip. 2:1-11 where humility is extolled, with Jesus being the example to be *mimicked*. In the scriptural account it is sin (which focuses exclusively on the self, Is. 53:6) that causes the action of humiliation (of community or self) as opposed to the act of humility. Humility is an attitude towards others, it is also an event one undertakes and not an event that happens to self, in the passive sense of being humiliated; it is not an attitude toward self but others in the scriptural idea.

Consequently, from the viewpoint of Scripture it can be seen that humility requires a willingness to listen to that whose being is other, which is significant in the general hermeneutical task. In the same way that self should exalt that which is other (the community), the other (or community) should value and exalt the value of the individual within that community. Exaltation is an action undertaken by the one who is other than the self. The Philippians passage noted shows both humility and exaltation. Consequently, if this scriptural principle is carried into general hermeneutics both manipulation and self-determinism are equally avoided, with neither self nor community subsumed, either by the other. The pursuit of ontology involves perception of the being of that whose being is other than self, and hence

⁸⁷ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 318. Ricoeur also contends that the process he has traversed avoids the positions of exaltation and humiliation of the Cogito. In the positing of the Cogito the search for certainty moves through a process of elevation of the "I" of the "I think," 4. In the humiliation of the Cogito, the Cogito is "reduced to sheer illusion following the Nietzschean critique," 299. Ricoeur believes that in his proposal of the dialectic of selfhood and otherness there is a resolution that "keeps self from occupying the place of foundation" and this prohibition prevents exaltation or humiliation occurring, 318. The aim is to avoid either humiliation or exaltation but Ricoeur's view is removal of the ability of the self to do either, which is an attempt to reach the same place as the scriptural viewpoint. However, the scriptural 'route,' rather than being that of passivity (which Ricoeur acknowledges and extols, 318), involves an active participation of the self, so that humility as a substantive refers to that which has been achieved in the action of the self, rather than humiliation as a substantive referring to that which has happened to the self in the action of another. Whilst both avoid humiliation, in contrast the scriptural route ends in exaltation of the self by the other without it being due to ambition and hence self-effort. This is exaltation of the self without the positing of the self as exalted.

inherently must involve willingness to listen. The practice of epistemology (in the pursuit of belief that is justified and justifiable) involves the referential, or descriptive, process, and hence by its nature of questioning involves speaking and projection from the self.

The concept of the question *who?* at this point has strange properties, for it would appear logical that this involves first speaking, i.e. to even ask the question *who?* Essentially Ricoeur's journey in *Oneself as Another* follows this line of logical approach. The desire to ask the question *who?* ends in a deferral of the question through the realization that questioning throws the process in a seemingly opposite direction, and in his book the very process of questioning is the "capture" (to use his phrase) and concealment of the *who?* in the pair "why?-what?" The concept of an ontology of events plays a significant role in this causing an opaqueness that denies the traversing of it to the *who*, and as a result an ontology is sought that is "more consonant with the search for the self, the genuine place of linkage between the action and its agent."⁸⁸ The journey ends in an alternate ontology in the final chapter of the book.⁸⁹

It could be proposed that a simplification of this could be to state that at the end of speaking is listening. Although this would definitely be an over-simplification of what Thiselton calls a "crowning work" on the subject matter of understanding the hermeneutics of self and a "masterly" work by Ricoeur,⁹⁰ it is suggested as a valid brief overview of the journey. The concept of listening as a conclusion to the process of questioning in fact is logical, for the renewal of questioning implies listening has occurred, whether for clarification or further exploration or some other reasoning. The Scripture in Prov. 18:13 also bears witness to this as a basic principle: "He who answers a matter before he hears *it*, It is folly and shame to him," or in the pithy manner of Eugene Peterson "Answering before listening is both stupid and rude." (The Message).

Consequently, there is an apparent paradox introduced by this recognition. The concept of the *who* implies a questioning, yet the process of questioning only leads to the *who* by deferring it through the initiation of a semantic then pragmatic approach to potentially re-

⁸⁸ Ibid., 74. This concept of a different ontology is further explained to show its need to link the elements uncovered, 86.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 297. This chapter is aptly titled "What Ontology in View."

⁹⁰ Thiselton, *Interpreting God*, 73 & 117.

appear as a question at the conclusion. It is no wonder that the thinking of hermeneutics, and philosophy in general, has moved away from concepts such as God, the Absolute, the author and indeed any concept of anterior meaning [as Derrida suggests], all of which involve some concept of consciousness, or person as other than self, at the initiation of the process. The referential, hence epistemological, route begins with speaking not listening; undoubtedly because, as Gadamer has astutely observed, the “hermeneutical task becomes automatically a questioning of things and is always in part determined by this...(thereby placing)...the hermeneutical work on a firm basis.”⁹¹ The pursuit of understanding occurs due to an attitude of questioning.

Yet the nature of what has occurred should alert the inquirer by lingering at the consideration of where it started. *Someone* (a communicator or author) has said *something* (content) to *someone* (a receptor or reader); hence the process of understanding should start with *someone* (the receptor) listening, with this then resulting in pursuit of understanding of the *something* that *someone* (the communicator), has said. Hermeneutical theory initially began at the beginning of the statement of the basic idea, with a consideration from the perspective of the communicator, rather than the receptor, i.e. the author-centered approach, but has moved now to an exclusion of the author in a reader-centered approach, having abandoned the first step in communication of listening to the author. Whilst the event of discourse begins with the communicator the event of understanding begins with the receptor, but the pursuit of understanding includes the inherent assumption that something has been listened to. The someone who speaks is acknowledged first in the basic idea, hence the author-centered approach has the appearance of being reasonable, when it is considered that the reader/interpreter begins with what has already been said by the author no longer present to be listened to as a someone.

Consequently some form of listening (or its equivalent in the process of reading) must occur *or* the reader/interpreter is not in receipt of a message of which to inquire.⁹² It is interesting to note, as Thiselton has observed, that even in the field of deconstruction (the extreme side of reader approaches) there has been movement back to the realization that the

⁹¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 238.

⁹² Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 315.

hermeneutical process involves having listened to some form of voice.⁹³ Consequently, the hermeneutical process begins and ends with listening, or at least it should do, which is reminiscent of the pithy saying used to emphasize the value of listening: “when God made us he gave us one mouth and two ears.”

The first step in the process towards interpretation begins with an interestedness in the material, or text, as Bultmann so astutely recognized; interpretation begins with a presupposition of vital interest in the subject matter of the text and as a result the interpreter investigates in a purposive manner.⁹⁴ Hence the interpreter comes to the task via an implicit question that has motivated their inquiry, i.e. one they have asked within the realm of self, and the hermeneutical process concerning a specific message has not yet begun. However, what has occurred is a decision to pursue a message and to then engage in hermeneutics. The reader/interpreter positions herself to ‘listen’ to the text, as composition or message, after which the process of hermeneutics will begin. Even where these two things seem almost coincidental, as in the entering of a text at a point of interest, they are logically different and both must occur. Hence, the hermeneutical quest for *who* does not begin with the question *who*, it begins with listening to a *who*. The ontological problem begins here in the concept of the act of listening, and the process by nature begins with otherness not self.

4. Hermeneutics: Posterior to What is Listened to

In the consideration of *non-rational* knowledge the issue of community knowledge was considered, in what Thiselton entitled “Corporate Memory.”⁹⁵ He noted that knowledge was generally considered to be that which the individuals had apprehended and tested for themselves.⁹⁶ Belief was considered to be that which the individual had ‘taken over’ from the community or learned from others, furthermore since what is passed on may be correct or incorrect it is not considered knowledge until the individual tests it for himself or herself.⁹⁷ Consequently, following the model of Cartesian doubt, questioning beliefs and traditions becomes the beginning of knowledge.⁹⁸ The role of the community, hence tradition, becomes

⁹³ Ibid., 128.

⁹⁴ Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," 119.

⁹⁵ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 701.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 702.

diminished and the role of the individual expands to subsume the community role.⁹⁹ The empiricist tradition develops where individuals receive input from outside as though they themselves were blank sheets of paper.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, the religious sphere and inherited traditions become “underrated.”¹⁰¹

Pannenberg takes note of the approach in Heidegger to consider that God is drawn into philosophy, yet as Pannenberg observes this involves a prior assumption that the divine idea is not already part of the reality philosophy seeks to describe.¹⁰² In the discussion of *non-rational* knowledge the realization that the concept of belief is part of human being-ness was explored. It was noted that belief is communicated by the language of assent, assertion and inference and is activated as knowledge in the life of a person when accepted from others. Thus *non-rational* knowledge is as much knowledge as the *rational* knowledge acquired in the development of the Cogito. This knowledge in beliefs, traditions and the culture of a person contribute, if not supply, the presuppositions with which the individual begins their quest for understanding of their world.

Thiselton contends that it is important to realize that an individual doesn’t begin their quest for knowledge *de novo* as isolated from history and community.¹⁰³ A “shared public world” pre-exists the individual and their thinking is done from this basis.¹⁰⁴ This world not only provides a presuppositional framework it also shapes “terms” on which the knowledge will be tested, conditioning what will be accepted as appropriate criteria for the evaluation of that knowledge.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* notes that the role of history in science parallels the concept of tradition, which then becomes the context for the analysis of new theory.¹⁰⁶ This history is developed in the practice of science and is a contributing factor of the basis of what becomes recounted in textbooks that expound the body of accepted theory.¹⁰⁷ The student joins “men who learned the basis of their field from

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Pannenberg, *Metaphysics*, 12.

¹⁰³ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 703.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Kuhn, 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 10.

some concrete models.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the student as a novice reads the textbooks and comes under the influence and impact of the ‘elders’ of the community. Presumably the student believes what they are taught and this becomes the basis from which they will launch to form their own self-identity.

It would seem reasonable to suggest that a baby learns by ontological means before epistemological means, e.g. it doesn’t learn the word mother to understand what a mother is, but rather it learns the word mother to describe the knowledge they have obtained by belief through experience of interaction, hence listening, to their mother. This seems to be the principle of the novice, as noted by Thiselton and Kuhn, from differing fields, i.e. that knowledge is first acquired by belief in listening and accepting and this provides the presuppositional framework for the launching of the self. Therefore, the hermeneutical journey should begin in similar fashion. The interpreter presents himself or herself to listen as a novice, but with presuppositions that will orient them in the process. However, the questioning and epistemological approach is secondary not primary and is based upon a received world, the world of the text.

Listening to the Text

The concept of ‘listening’ to a text presents a picture that is hard to visualize, yet Ong notes that in the reading of a text there is a form of verbalization even if it is just in the imagination of the reader.¹⁰⁹ This observation opens the way for the application of performance interpretation. Unlike the situation of the text, it seems reasonable to assume that a person would have no conceptual difficulty with ‘watching and listening’ to a DVD or ‘listening’ to a CD of a speaker, as an actual act of listening. Yet all three are monologues not dialogues and all three also involve an author not present; it is just that the DVD and CD create an illusion of proximity of the person of the speaker, who in reality is detached and removed in all three. Thirdly, all three involve the ‘speaking’ of an author; the text simply suffers from greater difficulty in imagining or conceiving a speaker.

The DVD and CD are the result of forms of digitalized information that is converted into sight and/or sound to represent the actual event. This is not a re-creation nor a

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 8.

restoration of the original event, since there is no author present. It is equally, with the text, a representation of the event. Therefore, there is no real difference other than perceptual. The perceptual difference occurs because of the loss of domains of knowledge in a movement from the DVD to the CD and then to the text.

In the movement from the DVD to the CD there is a loss of information of a particular form that will require the receptor to exercise their imagination to replace, i.e. the visual including non-verbal communication. The author must consciously include through the use of the medium they do have, such as tone of voice and words etc., if they are to compensate for the fact that this is not a DVD in the first place. In the movement from the CD to the text there is a further loss, i.e. the loss of tone of voice and resultant emphases and attitudes within the delivery of the message. Here in the case of the text there is the maximum stimulation of the imagination of the receptor. The author in this situation, beginning with the writing of a text, must consciously deal with both these limitations with the means they have, i.e. words formed into sentences, and this results in a composition or message. The author is seeking to stimulate the imagination of the reader to 'fill-in' these missing domains of knowledge.

As a result the transcript of the text of a CD or DVD is not a composition (although it is a text) for the reason it lacks these domains, i.e. the author has not composed the text to fulfill the visual and/or hearing acuity lost in the concept of the text.¹¹⁰ The transcript can and most probably will contain answers to each of the 5 questions used as a basis for a hermeneutical inquiry. The author can be designated, and usually is for copyright purposes, the *when* and *where* are usually included in a transcript and the text of the transcript can offer answers to *why* and *what*. Yet despite ticking all the boxes, as it were, it does not qualify as a complete message and hence will fail to represent the 'speaking' author in the same way as the DVD or CD. However, as suggested above, there is no real conceptual difference between the text (as composition), the CD and the DVD, and consequently if the DVD and CD have a 'speaking' author so does the text. When the composition is composed, as opposed to the situation of transcription, it is conceptually the same as the DVD and CD, i.e. the

¹¹⁰ This issue has been discussed at length previously in Chapters 3 & 4 concerning the issue of *rational*, *arational* and *non-rational* knowledge.

continuation of discourse by other means. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that conceptually the text, as a composition, has a 'speaking' voice to which the reader listens.

The presentation of a 'speaking' voice carries with it the assumption of an ability to hear the 'speaking' voice with understanding, i.e. a communicator assumes that the receptor will be able to understand the message.¹¹¹ This concept raises the issue of the 'intended audience' as one that the author believes will be in a position to 'listen' to the message communicated. Ricoeur is quite dismissive of this concept of intended audience, his argument is that it is irrelevant for whom the text was intended since it can be picked up and read by anyone, i.e. the audience is universal.¹¹² On the surface his claim seems to have a certain validity and forcefulness. However, this view is from the viewpoint of the reader not the author, who it can be agreed has no means of controlling who reads the text.

Yet in respect to meaning in relationship to a text, Ricoeur's observation can be at least brought into question through some simple illustrations. It is admitted that all these illustrations involve texts that are intentionally not released as universal, which can seem therefore to be a trivializing of Ricoeur's views or even a ruse. However, the concept of detachment of the text from the author, so important in the work of Ricoeur, has been considered at length and his view is not based on an intention of the author to have a universally intended audience. The truth is quite the opposite; Ricoeur is simply noting the release of the text creates a happenstance of universal release, whatever the intention of the author.¹¹³ The intention of the author as regards audience is immaterial, universal audience is simply what occurred. Consequently, it is proposed that the illustrations do highlight an important issue concerning intentionality.

In this modern cyber age of the Internet many people, if not most in some societies, have an email address to ensure an email can be uniquely sent to them as an intended audience. However, mistakes can and do happen causing emails to arrive at the wrong email address. As a result often emails will have a disclaimer on them that essentially states that if the recipient is not the intended recipient please delete the email. This is not necessarily an

¹¹¹ Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, 58. Schleiermacher asserts; "No text is intended in such a way that its hearers could not possibly understand."

¹¹² Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 92.

¹¹³ This concept has been discussed previously.

attempt to forbid or even stop the person from reading the email (particularly as the disclaimer is often at the conclusion of the email in terms of those from businesses or institutions), it is to alert them to the fact that it is not intended for them. In that circumstance either it will have no relevance to them, or they may not be in a position to really understand its contents.

Also when mail is received into the household mailbox or into a post office box, if it is not addressed to the resident or renter of the post office box, it has been placed in their box by mistake, it is not intended for them. Generally the mail is returned to the postal service unopened, and indeed in most countries it is considered illegal to open mail when a person is not the intended audience. The mail does not apply to that person(s) and they are an unintended recipient of the mail.

The same is true of the very concept of censorship, where there is an assumed responsibility to make sure that some things can only be placed in the hands of particular individuals and not allowed to reach an unintended audience, i.e. only allowed to a specific audience therefore becoming by default the intended audience. In this case the intended audience is determined not necessarily from the authorial side but the readers side, yet the principle is exactly the same. Finally, government censorship is often undertaken with a stated basis of purely being that the unintended recipient is not in command of sufficient information to understand the communication, especially to understand it in context. In the case of businesses and governments the author of a text can feel that the contents are personal so as to only be properly understood by the intended recipient.

These examples simply illustrate that the idea of an intended audience is not an anachronism, contra the comments of Ricoeur whose view of universal audience must also allow accidental reaching of an audience not intended by the author, as argued above. Furthermore they illustrate that there can be an intended audience for whom an author anticipates his or her message will be relevant and understandable, and even conversely that an unintended audience may not be in a position to understand. Just because a text is generally released, i.e. able to be availed by a universal audience, does not inherently imply that the author cannot have an intended audience, nor does it negate or exclude the author having an intended audience. The universal release can be an author's means of reaching

an unknown, yet intended audience, i.e. one that will identify with the world of the text. Therefore, universal release can simply be means and have no sense of indication of intention. Whatever the reasons for its universal release, the universal availability of a text cannot negate any intentionality. This issue of accessibility and validity in meaning is a separate issue to existence. The question of intentionality, as what is listened to, must be considered.

Chapter 10

Intentionality and Authorial Intention: The 'Speaking' Voice

Introduction

Thiselton notes that the “very idea” of authorial intention has been the recipient of “a series of heavy attacks” that make its discussion complex.¹ He further observes what has been discussed above, i.e. that the “traditional view has not been helped by the insistence of Gadamer and Ricoeur that once a text has been committed to writing, it no longer “belongs” to the horizon of the author.”² Hence, to even discuss it in the era of postmodern thought is considered *passé*. However, as noted in previous chapters, detachment is conceded and recognized, but autonomous, with respect to both author and intended audience, which is the critical distinction as highlighted in Ricoeur, is not conceded and in fact is tenuous and unable to be successfully demonstrated. It also assumes a particular view of authorial intent, which is that it is identified as an attribute indistinguishable from the psyche of the author.

There are two inherent questions that present themselves in the very term authorial intent. Firstly, how is the term authorial intent to be taken in that it involves two substantives that have become one term, which itself is used as substantive, i.e. one speaks of *the* authorial intent in the discussion? Secondly, how is this term to be viewed with respect to the very idea of intentionality?

I. The Term 'Authorial Intent'

It is important to firstly point out what is not intended to be covered in this section, since in the modern-postmodern setting it is evident that even the phrase authorial intent can conjure a variety of responses, and hence assumptions on what is being discussed. An assertion of Thiselton's was referred to in an earlier chapter concerning the nature of authorial intent, i.e. how it is to be perceived in the light of current (and past) theory. He observes that intent is best seen adverbially and “*to write with an intention is to write in a way that is directed towards a goal.*”³ His reasoning is that unequivocally “for Wittgenstein and for Searle, and implicitly for Schleiermacher, “to intend” a linguistic meaning is emphatically *not*

¹ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 38.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 560. (Italics original)

to perform some action or process separable from the linguistic act or process itself.”⁴ He then takes note of Wittgenstein’s dismissiveness of the idea of “intend to” as an imperative is a far-fetched idea (i.e. one assumes as a directive to the hearer).⁵ Hence, Thiselton and Vanhoozer,⁶ as prominent evangelical writers and theologians, especially on this topic, are faced with the terminus of the pursuit of the authorial intent at the *what*, i.e. as the work of Ricoeur has ably demonstrated it terminates in the descriptive semantic task of the linguistics. Therefore, it is a description of *what* the author has done in writing the text. This semantic task is a wrong direction.

In his examination of the nature of the text Vanhoozer defines a text as “a communicative act of a communicative agent fixed by writing.”⁷ A section of *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* concerns what Vanhoozer styles as “speech rehabilitation,” which is one of the recognition that speech, or discourse, has the nature of action.⁸ His object is to arrive at a place where he can pursue meaning, in relation to a text, as “a matter of communicative action,” concerning both the “doing” of the act and the resultant text, or “deed,” i.e. by implication what is done in the act.⁹ Hence a text is “communicative action fixed by writing” wherein is inscribed “propositional content” and “energy,” or “illocutionary force” and there is a momentum about texts such that allows the impact of the author in interpretation of that text.¹⁰ The implied parallel with the concepts developed in Speech-Act Theory, especially in the work of Austin and Searle (whom Vanhoozer likens as the Luther and Melancthon of speech act philosophy), as those of the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary is evident.¹¹

⁴ Ibid., 559. (Italics original)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 39. Vanhoozer states that language “is a kind of sacrament, a means of communicating meaning through verbal signs.” He views both author and reader as citizen’s of language and both bound to the observation and respect of its boundaries and operation, 204.

⁷ Ibid., 225. (Italics original)

⁸ Ibid., 207-18.

⁹ Ibid., 218. The implication of the text as the done of the action is based on his continuing discussion, 220, where he is distinguishing between action and event. The concept of a deliberate action done itself implies intentionality.

¹⁰ Ibid., 229.

¹¹ Ibid., 209. Vanhoozer discusses this in the lead up to his concepts. This emphasis on Speech-Acts is a strong feature of his analysis and proposals and is referred to a number of times in this book and other works by Vanhoozer.

Ricoeur, in his theory, discusses the contribution of the recognition of these speech acts.¹² In his discussion he sets the basis for his assertion that the locutionary act is the most easily inscribable of these acts, as it “exteriorizes itself in the sentence.” The illocutionary act, due to its ability to be misunderstood, presents more difficulties in inscription, but the perlocutionary act is the “least inscribable.”¹³ The perlocutionary act, or what is achieved in the speaking, e.g. fear, persuasion, seduction, joy etc., is such that the nonlinguistic has priority over the linguistic and it is less an intentional act on behalf of the author than it is a stimulus.¹⁴ The other acts relate to intentionality, but it is in terms of what is achieved, i.e. the adverbial sense of ‘intentionally,’ and not in terms of the psychological aspect of intention, which remains with the author in the detachment of the text from the author.¹⁵

Vanhoozer does note that the perlocutionary act can have a sense of intentionality, as is evidenced in the Gospel of John.¹⁶ However, largely one would have to agree with Ricoeur, for whatever perlocutionary act an author may intend, the perlocutionary act performed by the reader, i.e. the impact of the speaking, is more problematic in linkage with the intention of the author. The important aspect of the above discussion is that in Vanhoozer’s work the problem identified by Ricoeur, and discussed above, of the capture of the agent by the something that occurs, in emphasis upon the act, is not overcome. Certainly in Vanhoozer’s work the consideration of speech as act does raise the issue of the agent of the action, the *who* of the text, but in the manner of the ontology of impersonal event. In this ontological paradigm intentionality is adverbial and so authorial intent is that which is achieved in the text, not an aspect of reflection in the text identifying the agent. Furthermore, the discussion remains at the linguistic level and in semantics the opaqueness of the referential approach prevents the perception of the agent as a *who*. However, in reflection,

¹² Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 14-19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27-28. The possibility of misunderstanding with the illocutionary act is due to the fact that one illocutionary act can be mistaken for another, yet it is inscribable by various “linguistic marks,” 17. Further in “spoken discourse the illocutionary force depends on mimicry and gesture, and upon the nonarticulated aspects of discourse, which we call prosody,” 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* In this work Ricoeur does not refer to this concept of intentionality, i.e. as adverbial, but does discuss it at some length in *Oneself as Another*, which will be discussed concerning ‘Intention.’

¹⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 224. This concept in relationship to this text of John’s Gospel is considered earlier in this thesis, 59-60.

which does focus on the person, there is an opaqueness that obscures the *what* of the text, unless there is an ontological movement to that of impersonal event.

The term authorial intent, having become itself a substantive, hence a total concept, is composed of the substantives author and intent. In this there is a recognition of agent, a *who*, and intent, a mental directedness of attention resulting in an action. Vanhoozer has sought to maintain that balance between person and action that results in the text. His discussion of the four concepts of agency of the author and conceptual ways of dealing with the idea of presence of the author are innovative and well presented.¹⁷ Certainly his discussion of the possibility of being able to conceive of the presence of the author in relationship to the text offers ideas for understanding the 'speaking voice' that is listened to, as discussed above.¹⁸ As far as the basic concept of the author and their intent is concerned there can be large agreement and consent, subsequently this issue does not need recounting here.

Vanhoozer suggests, "Authorial intention is always located in a network of beliefs and practices that form the background for communicative action."¹⁹ Hence, his suggestion is similar to that suggested in this work, where it has been suggested that the way to view the authorial intent is as a referent of the text. He indicates that largely his view is similar to 'intent' in the work of Hirsch, i.e. the authorial intent and resultant meaning is fixed in the text and remains the standard against which interpretation occurs.²⁰ However, in acknowledging this as a standard he also acknowledges room for maneuverings concerning relevant meaning to readers and interpreters. This is similar to that which has been argued in this work; the authorial intent represents an absolute but the reader/interpreter is always dealing with a relative meaning of that absolute.

¹⁷ Ibid., 201-280. This chapter of his book "Resurrecting the Author: Meaning As Communicative Action" represents a very penetrating analysis and strong argument for the concept of authorial intent. As he states "I believe in the reality of the author's intention, for without it I cannot explain the emergence of meaning, that is to say, how meaning supervenes on written marks," 249.

¹⁸ Ibid., 237-240. As he notes his development uses literary and linguistic notions to mediate this presence, thus placing the ideas within the province of textual considerations, 238. However, his examples and argument are in particular using analogies from scriptural concepts and probably for this reason, and quite unjustly, would not be widely considered in general hermeneutics. Although as discussed in Gadamer's work, whose work is decidedly not from a religious perspective, Gadamer takes note of the importance of the contribution of the impact of the Christian concept of incarnation to the philosophical aspect of hermeneutics, see *Truth and Method*, 379.

¹⁹ Ibid., 249.

²⁰ Ibid., 259-63.

In this work the point of departure is not an issue with authorial intent as discussed above, but rather in taking note of the following issues in this discussion. The author remains a person only conceptually and undergoes the stripping of personhood to be discussed as a something. Also note is taken that the concept weaves in and around speech act concepts of the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, which are disclosed linguistically and remain in the domain of semantics, despite the inclusion of analogical note being taken of the linguistics, which nevertheless still remains descriptive. Consequently, although there is much to agree with the problematic remains that the *what* is not traversed to arrive at the *who*. Hence, for all the desire of recognition of the agent, and the implication of their presence as concept, the process terminates at the *what* of the text, which, as Ricoeur has explored, remains unsatisfactory in pursuit of answering the *who* question.

This situation leaves the interpreter with a passion for the agent, and their place in meaning of the texts they have written, but confronted with an inability to get around the problematic of the something and the subsequent dismissal of the person of the author to simply an effect on the text. What is needed is a way to traverse the “why?-what?” without either transgressing it or transcending it.

Transgression of this semantic approach would lose all the powerful and valuable work done in the descriptive referential understanding revealed in the epistemological semantic approach. This embraces the full breadth of genre, historicity of both author and audience, and their importance to semantics and, subsequently, the meaning exposed in the epistemological approach. In the work of Vanhoozer, all the questions receive due attention and respect towards an understanding of what the author intentionally means, and the resultant impact on meaning of this in the fusion with the horizon of the interpreter in dealing with the text. The adverbial form ‘intentionally’ is used with intention to distinguish it from the concepts to be developed beyond the descriptive task.

Equally, transcending this issue would call into play a special hermeneutic and place the argument outside the concepts of general hermeneutics. This renders the answer as religious and irrelevant in general discussion, thereby excluding the writer, operating from a Christian perspective, having voice in so called ‘secular’ discussions, e.g. those in science,

sociology and psychology. This is equally unsatisfactory, so what is needed is a traversing of this issue so that in the Christian setting one can propose a special use of a hermeneutical principle.

A possible illustration is that of aerodynamics. A plane flies not in a transgression of the law of gravity, nor in transcending it by some law/principle operating outside the temporal nature of gravity. Rather the principles of aerodynamics allow it to traverse the problem and the plane flies. Hence, as Ricoeur notes, the way forward is ontological not epistemological, but in a way that traverses not transcends. Consequently, the answer must involve linguistic marks, so as not to transgress (in the illustration aerodynamics actually makes use of gravity but brings other factors into operation).

However, it does involve an alternate ontological view to that of impersonal event. The title given to this section was “The Term Authorial Intent” and it has been noted that the two substantives, i.e. author and intent, have ontological and epistemological implications respectively. Consequently, the place to begin, so as to traverse rather than transgress or transcend, is the term that can allow the discussion to ‘take off’ and not be ‘earth bound’ in the descriptive or epistemological task, i.e. intent, since to begin with the ontological aspect risks a seeming transcendence.

Intention: Intentionality and ‘Intention to’

Vanhoozer notes that, despite Ricoeur’s apparent dismissal of authorial intention in interpretation, in his analysis he often makes reference to the author, showing an awareness of the author.²¹ Ricoeur is neither a denier nor despiser of the author, nor does he deny that there is an authorial intention, but for Ricoeur it is part of the fleeting event that perishes in the event of discourse.²² All three of the primary author’s considered in the work, i.e. Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Ricoeur, firmly reject linking the concept of authorial intent to the Romanticist idea of authorial intent, i.e. in the superintending concept of a foreign psyche. Yet, both Vanhoozer and Thiselton hold positive, though differing, views on authorial intent and its importance to hermeneutics. Conversely, Ricoeur regards it not only as inaccessible but unnecessary to interpretation, in fact in escaping this horizon of the author the text enters

²¹ Ibid., 214 & 16. Ricoeur’s understanding on this has been dealt with at length in previous chapters.

²² Ibid., 215.

whole new field of possibilities and it is here that, for Ricoeur, hermeneutics in dealing with texts really begins, i.e. the “autonomous text.”²³

Certainly a significant factor in this view adopted by Ricoeur is that of the relationship of the authorial intent to the person of the author, which meant looking for something hidden behind the text exerting a controlling influence over meaning and restricting the reader, then trying to relate that to the consciousness of the author.²⁴ However, on this aspect Vanhoozer and Thiselton would be in agreement, so it doesn't offer a complete picture of his rejection. As noted previously, in his study of the hermeneutics of the self in *Oneself as Another*, an important aspect was his realization that in pursuit of the hermeneutical task, the concept of the person of the author, i.e. *who?*, the question becomes deferred and the process of semantics leads to a capture of the person to a conceptual semantic reference.

Hence, in the descriptive task everything flows downhill to the *what*, and as suggested in this work, this becomes terminal. The person is never realized as being, but rather only as concept, i.e. a possible description of *what* the being is with no understanding of the *who* of being is as a consciousness. The arrival at this point causes an analysis of the concept of “An Agentless Semantics of Action,” arriving at an ontological category that by its very nature is exclusive of the category of selfhood, this is the ontology of the impersonal event.²⁵ Essentially this precludes the concept of a consciousness impacting meaning in the descriptive task; it would need to transcend or transgress to impact meaning.

It is through the discussion of intention, which begins in a consciousness, that the adverbial nature of intention is disclosed, in a seeking of the relationship between agent and action. Ricoeur notes that one would expect that “a conceptual analysis of intention would lead from the pair “what?-why?” to the question “who?” Is not intention, phenomenologically speaking, the aiming of a consciousness in the direction of something I am to do?”²⁶ The answer is that despite the seeming implied direction it does not follow this course. If one is concerned with public meaning, not private, there is a turning from this seemingly logical

²³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 29-30. One would almost imagine that had Ricoeur discovered that it was knowable and had impact, it would have been a source of disappointment to him.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 60-1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

direction phenomenologically speaking.²⁷ The public meaning, accessible in language, can only be related to accomplished intention, i.e. an act done intentionally.²⁸ The concept of “intention-to” is what is private and without declaration remains that way, so that no one can know what undeclared intentions a person may or may not have.²⁹ The concept of “intention-to” is a statement of future conditions and the only temporal aspect that can be given occurs if there is a declaration of it, hence giving it temporal embodiment.³⁰

Ricoeur shows that analysis of intention is possible if three basic understandings of intention are recognized. The action that has been done with intention, the action being undertaken with intention and the declaration of “intention-to.”³¹ The first two situations are qualifications of an action that has or is being observed and therefore results in the adverbial sense of intention.³² Thiselton’s observation concerning his own assessment that this sense is how authorial intent should be understood, i.e. the adverbial sense as noted above, may stem from this reasoning. He does not mention this aspect of Ricoeur’s work in this, so it seems an independent yet similar conclusion. As Ricoeur notes, this usage of intention is one “that exemplifies in the least explicit way the relation of interpretation to the agent.” The concept “intention-to” closely relates to that of the agent but qualifying the action as done intentionally can be examined independently to any consideration of the agent possessing the intention.³³ The consideration of intentional in this case, as a qualifier of the action, concerns the “what?” of the action, and is able to be disclosed by the question “why?” as an explanation of what was done, and as a result the analysis leads further away from the question of the agent.³⁴

In Ricoeur’s opinion the obliteration of the question who? by the emphasis on “what?-why?” occurs because of the “exclusive concern with the truth of the description” tending to overshadow interest in assigning action to the agent.³⁵ Ricoeur observes that, in his view, it is due to the “style of analytical philosophy and to its almost exclusive preoccupation with

²⁷ Ibid., 68.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 68 & 70.

³⁵ Ibid., 72.

description, as well as with truth claims appropriate to description, that it ignores problems pertaining to attestation.³⁶ The concept of attestation of the “intention-to” relates to truthfulness, rather than a description of truth as knowledge, relating therefore to the person and, hence in Ricoeur, to the phenomenological dimension rather than descriptive approach.³⁷ This discloses the form of the sense of intention that captures, or “privileges,” the agent, which does not occur in the adverbial sense. This creates a form of frustration in the desire to pursue authorial intent, as the intention of a person, for the interpreter in the task of interpretation of the text, when it is pursued as an action that intentionally results in the creation of the text.

The treatment of intention adverbially, therefore as qualifying the action, allows it to be subordinated to the descriptive task of the completed event.³⁸ Even with the use of the first person pronoun, e.g. “I intentionally struck the blow,” the past tense verb directs attention to the objective side of the intention, and hence the answer to the question why? privileges the action side not the agent, since it will focus on the blow struck, i.e. it requires an explanation that will focus on the descriptive side, which is that of the action.³⁹ The intention has occurred prior to the action but was not in the public arena. This also provides a natural division between the idea of action done intentionally and action done with the ‘intention-to,’ which is a forward looking.⁴⁰ It is this substantive use of the idea of intention that has direct reference to the agent, i.e. ‘intention-to,’ or intent.

Ricoeur considers the verb tenses used, which in the case of intentionally done action is basically always the past tense, but in the case of ‘intention-to’ becomes the future tense.⁴¹ Therefore, the difference that is the cause of the two senses, i.e. adverbial and substantive, is primarily one of temporality.⁴² Ricoeur therefore raises the issue that the concept of the adverbial usage, the intention with which something is done, is in reality a weak form of ‘intention-to,’ since the intention was logically formed before the action. It is purely a matter of temporal appearance of the event that is the difference between the two. He notes that

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 72-3.

³⁸ Ibid., 75.

³⁹ Ibid., 70.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 79.

⁴² Ibid. This is the basis of the discussion following in this paragraph.

where a null delay apparently occurs, i.e. between formation of intention and event, if a person is asked, after the event, whether or not something was done intentionally, their answer will be expressed in the form of an 'intention-to.' The reason for the action is an 'intention-to' in the sense that, had they deliberated, this is the intention with which the action would have been done.

The issue becomes: what device can be used to highlight the agent in this recognition? The concept of motivation in its relationship to intention brings up the issue of judgment, especially the idea of unconditional judgment as that which engages action in relationship to intention.⁴³ In this situation the agent whose intention it is comes into view. When this view is taken actions that take time unfold in a sense of anticipation, as in the example Ricoeur uses where the writer of a poem in writing each verse already intends the poem in its entirety, as he notes "the anticipated future transiting through the present in the direction of a completed past."⁴⁴ The concept of 'intention-to' is no longer a simple qualification of action and relates directly to the agent. The adverbial usage, privileged in the ontology of events, in this situation has called for an alternate ontological approach.⁴⁵ This ontology "would be that of being in the making, possessing de jure the problematic of selfhood."⁴⁶

2. Authorial Intent: The Ontological Route

There are two important observations that can be made that are each significant in the discussion of authorial intent and its relationship to hermeneutics. Firstly, in the case of the subject under discussion in this section, i.e. that of authorial intent, the discussion of 'intention' raises an important issue, which is that the concept of authorial intent that has examined what the author intentionally did has focused on the weaker side of the concept of intent, i.e. it has focused on the adverbial sense. The reason this has occurred is the inherent

⁴³ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 86. The concept of selfhood, in dealing with the subject of identity, is that of *ipse*-identity as opposed to *idem*-identity, which Ricoeur links to the ontology of events. These concepts of identity flow throughout the book as basic reference points. The initial distinction is that *idem* is sameness, the sense of permanence in time, this is contrasted with the idea of temporal *ipse* (selfhood), hence changing and variable, but still the same one, *idem*-identity. For example at any stage in a life, e.g. youth, middle age or old age there is a difference in selfhood, the person in time, but it is the same person at each stage. Hence, the concept of selfhood portrays an unfolding ontology, a developing being, yet each point in time is unique. The treatment of actions tends to portray them as the same entities descriptively.

assumption of the ontology of events imposed by the nature of the inquiry, i.e. the descriptive semantic task. It is therefore argued in this work that an ontological approach to authorial intent will be far more fruitful in connecting intention, as substantive and hence personal, and interpretation.

It has been acknowledged by each of the three main authors concerned that the interpretive process should not introduce the connection of the consciousness of the author as a direct implication. However, the author and the reader/interpreter both possess a consciousness, and whilst it is not reasonable to assume that the text connects the consciousness of one to the other, it is reasonable to believe that the author seeks some empathetic identification with the consciousness of the interpreter, and similarly for the interpreter with that of the author. As Vanhoozer notes the interpreter can seek to recover thoughts of the author “not by psychological intuition but by historical inference – by an analysis of the author’s *public* communicative action.”⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that Vanhoozer recognizes the importance of the consciousness of the author, and seeks to use the only means seemingly available, the semantic descriptive basis. However, what is also inherent in his observation is that the consciousness that he seeks to connect with is that of rational knowledge, i.e. what Gadamer recognized as historical consciousness. It will be suggested in this work that what should be recognized is that it is a basic aspect of being that humanity has an *ontic*-consciousness,⁴⁸ and it is with this consciousness that the connection should be sought for the purpose Vanhoozer seeks. Hence if this is to be related to the communicative action of the author what must be considered is what is the language of this consciousness.

The second inference that can be drawn, which is no less significant, especially in the Christian community in dealing with sacred text, if not any religious community, concerns the traversing of the *what* by moving to an alternate ontological framework. In examining the semantics of the text note was taken of the three acts, i.e. the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Ricoeur noted that there was a decreasing tendency to be inscribable,

⁴⁷ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 230.

⁴⁸ This term has been developed for this work.

with the perlocutionary act being difficult to inscribe. Hence, the semantic route terminates in the '*what*' of the text at the perlocutionary act.

Vanhoozer proposes what he terms a "fourth dimension" of speech act, the interlocutionary act.⁴⁹ Ricoeur, who relates it to the instance of dialogue, also covers this act, i.e. someone says something to someone.⁵⁰ It would seem in Vanhoozer's thinking this concept restores the concept of personhood to the process. However, with the written text there is no interlocutor, unless the text itself is considered the interlocutor, or middleman. Hence, despite Vanhoozer's attempt to restore personhood the process still terminates in the '*what*,' i.e. in the three acts noted above.

(a) Moving from *What* to *Who*

However, in consideration of the ontological nature of the authorial intent, there is the opportunity to traverse the '*what*' and connect with a '*who*.' In Ricoeur's final chapter of *Oneself as Another* he develops the concept of the *self* being able to perceive itself as *other than self*.⁵¹ Hence, the otherness in view is not another person; it is the same person but perceiving self as other than self.⁵² Ricoeur has his own agenda in this discussion in which his topic is the hermeneutics of the self. However, in the present discussion concerning the hermeneutics of texts, it is suggested that this *Other* that is recognized as *Other* is potentially the self having been impacted by the original author. This is not as fanciful as it may seem when Ricoeur's own analysis of the end point of his interpretive theory is considered.

Ricoeur's theory doesn't consider the concept of authorial intent as impacting meaning yet he does claim that the end result is closer to original intention of Schleiermacher's desire. This has been noted before but bears repeating in this context, that to "understand an author better than he could understand himself is to display the power of disclosure implied in his discourse beyond the limited horizon of his own existential

⁴⁹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 219.

⁵⁰ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 14.

⁵¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 317-9. (Italics added) Ricoeur's 'engine room,' as it were, that confers an ability to see self as other than self without some form of split personality is uncovered in a convoluted discussion in a section called "Selfhood and Ontology," 302-17. In essence what confers upon the individual this dialectic nature is what Ricoeur calls "*a ground at once actual and potentiality*," 315 (Italics original). The occurrence of these things at the same time is that which discloses a dialectic of self and otherness, yet being the same person who is also other, 317.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 318.

situation.⁵³ Ricoeur, without consideration of authorial intent, believes that the message he sees is what the author would have seen had he escaped his horizon. In other words he can see the *Other*, i.e. the original author, within himself, in the sense of what the author would have seen. Consequently, if the *what* is traversed through the ontological route the self sees itself as *Other* than self, i.e. as a self impacted by the original author. This is a primary aim of the scriptural text. The authorial intent, as an ontological entity, can be in a position to impart the being necessary to empower the reader towards a changed view of self.

One other aspect of Ricoeur's analysis that is relevant to this discussion is his non-recognition of the ontological beginning of the process. This is evidenced at the beginning of the fifth study, "Personal Identity and Narrative Identity."⁵⁴ The process begins as a descriptive task and it is through the application of narrative that there is a movement to the prescriptive task (i.e. assigning of action to an agent).⁵⁵ Narrative is that link that can affect the transition from the descriptive, the *what*, to the prescriptive, the *who*.⁵⁶ However, no consideration is given to the fact that a narrative is listened to so as to achieve the very ends he seeks. Ricoeur's process in the search for the understanding of the self begins essentially on a Cartesian basis, i.e. it begins with the being of 'I' as a given that will be explored.

Lundin points out that Descartes first establishes his own certainty, which then becomes the basis from which, beginning from his own self-consciousness, he will prove the existence of God and the external world.⁵⁷ Lundin notes, including himself in the postmodern era, that the postmodern person has developed the habit of defining self "over against the history from which we have emerged and against which we contend," as is evidenced by the penchant for the prefixing of post- to terms.⁵⁸ The theme of his text is that of the "fatherless" state humanity finds itself in after Descartes, with the result that life is outworked from self, or as an orphan.⁵⁹ Ricoeur's hermeneutics are that of the orphan,⁶⁰ whatever his belief system,

⁵³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 93.

⁵⁴ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 113-39.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Roger Lundin, "Interpreting Orphans: Hermeneutics in the Cartesian Tradition," in *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 12. It is interesting to note that in Ricoeur's book, *Oneself As Another*, it immediately moves to a discussion of the Cogito from the introduction setting out the basic direction of his study.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

and in this needs to be a caution in the understanding of his work, i.e. there is a dimension that is missing in the beginning of the process and this absence impacts by exerting a gravitational-like effect upon the work.

It would seem that it should be axiomatic that being comes from being, since existence as a self begins with the conferral of being by another, i.e. parents. Jesus, in explaining the concept of what would become Christianity, in existence as a Christian, did not employ a special hermeneutic from outside the world, but made special use of the illustration of being born from within the world, Jn. 3:1-15. It is noticeable that what Jesus told Nicodemus is not so much what he had to do as what had to happen to him, i.e. it begins in the otherness of God. Hence, ontological understanding comes not from a descriptive process, nor a prescriptive process as ascription from self, it comes from that which is other. Although, as has been covered previously, ascription, in the sense of confession allows the creation of being, or brings being into reality in a life, the act of ascription is based on what has been received from that which is other, not the ability of the Cartesian 'I' to acquire the knowledge through descriptive means. Simply stating the situation, one can experience the biblical dynamic of salvation, thus giving it being in the life, without a comprehensive understanding. This is not mystical, in the sense of outside this world, but an appropriation within the world of otherness, from a special use (which is mystical or spiritual) of the ontic nature that is part of human being.

Ricoeur in one sense recognizes this in saying, "hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others."⁶¹ Consequently, he is seemingly recognizing that the basis of understanding self is indeed seeing self in others; a basic tenet of Judeo-Christian thought is humanity is made in the image of God, Gen. 1:26-27. Yet, Ricoeur having said this notes a few lines later, as noted above, his thinking begins with the 'I' of Cartesian thought, which demonstrates that, although the resultant perception is of the other, that which is other is first object not person. This is critical as it begins not based

⁶⁰ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 17. Ricoeur acknowledges the Cartesian Cogito as a basis of his thought in the pursuit of the hermeneutics of self.

⁶¹ Ibid.

upon the ontology of a person, but on the ontology of impersonal events, and has to make an ontological 'switch' in the midst of the process to perceive the person.

In what should be the paradigm the process begins with the ontology of the person and moves to that of impersonal events for the descriptive phase, to return to the ontology of the person in the assimilation into being. In this paradigm, although the perception of otherness at the end is seen within the concept of selfhood, it is expressly of another person. Hence, in this paradigm of hermeneutics the impersonal nature of the author in the descriptive phase is rectified and reconciled in the final ontological phase. In this way the perception is not the author made in the image of self, but self perceived reflected in the image of the author.⁶² This statement requires some qualification since it does not involve 'the self' becoming the author, but rather the perception of the potential of self in the other, i.e. the author. The decision to assimilate that likeness is that of appropriation. In hermeneutical conception this involves having seen what the author is saying, what the author meant, within the perspective of self and not as an absolute. This makes the meaning of the author understandable to the self, which is then given meaning within the world of self. God having made man in His image begins the process on the ontology of the person and not as object, i.e. not in an impersonal ontology of events. However, this is not so that the interpreter is assimilated into His world, but rather so that His world is assimilated into the world of the interpreter. It is this critical nuance that Ricoeur's work has highlighted.

(b) A Biblical Indicator in Traversing the 'What'

The nature of the biblical conception of this process brings into view an important general principle for the hermeneutical process. The perception of the self in the divine first requires a divine condescension, whether that is the revelation of Himself through His speaking in the biblical text or the person of Jesus Christ, Heb. 1:1-3. Extending this beyond Judeo-Christian understanding, the Metaphysics of Presence means otherness as anterior, whether or not this otherness is conceptually a person or not. In the metaphysics of absence, as set out in the work of Derrida, the only person one looks back and sees is self as one was

⁶² It is the view of the author of this work that the former situation occurs in the paradigm suggested by Ricoeur, i.e. the author made in the image of self, not the latter suggested in this work, i.e. self seen in the image of the author. This is not meant in any way to be a pejorative remark, due to a tremendous respect for his work, merely an observational conclusion.

before the game of linguistics began. Beyond self there is a only “*pure absence* – not the absence of this or that, but the absence of everything in which all presence is announced.”⁶³ Consequently, the first movement is not that of an ‘I’ but that of otherness, whether that otherness is presence or absence (where the otherness is simply a total absence of anything or anyone), for in Derrida it is the absence that “can *inspire*, in other words, can *work*, and make one work.”⁶⁴

Consequently, although the text presents itself in an ontology of impersonal events, as highlighted in the work of Ricoeur, the Being of the being of this impersonal ontology of the event, is an assumption of a *non-rational* knowableness, which will be the basis of what is essentially a process of *a priori* reasoning in the hermeneutical process. This is true for both the author and the hermeneut. However, concerning the composition of the text, the author is the one attributing being and the hermeneut is dealing with a being that is attributed and presented to them.

Interestingly enough, it is Ricoeur’s thought that provides an initial understanding of how a person can be brought into an ontological event and how it is communicated; his proposal is the idea of the symbol.⁶⁵ Ricoeur uses narrative to act in this way between description and prescription in the above discussion; it operates between them allowing a form of communication that allows one to traverse to the other.⁶⁶ Ricoeur examines the concept of mimesis in the fictional narrative, using the word mimetic to demonstrate the conjunction “between fiction and the representation of the real.”⁶⁷ He notes the use in Aristotle as mimesis of human action in poetics; however, Ricoeur observes that this should not be understood as simply imitation, in the sense of copying an existing model.⁶⁸ Ricoeur proposes that what is in view is a “creative imitation” so that what mimesis imitates is not “the effectivity of events but their logical structure, their meaning.”⁶⁹ The idea is not reduplication of reality but the representation of humanity as better than in reality, and hence mimesis “is a

⁶³ Derrida, *Writing*, 8.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 16. This concept of Ricoeur’s and its development has been discussed in Chapter 4 of this work on the nature of authorial intent in the interpretive process.

⁶⁶ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 114. This is a theme of the chapter “Personal Identity and Narrative Identity,” 113-39.

⁶⁷ Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics*, 291.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

kind of metaphor of reality.”⁷⁰ Ricoeur does not allude to it, yet this seems to be the basic idea of the hero. This concept would seem to be often employed by authors who write fiction to sell books, but in the writing attempt to present life in a particular light, which may intended to be reflected into the life of the reader by the author or, alternatively can be intended by the reader in the light of what they have read.

There is a resonance with a scriptural principle in what Ricoeur articulates in the instance of fiction. In both James 1:22-25 and 2 Cor. 3:17-18 the concept is presented of a person looking into a mirror, where the mirror is the biblical text, and who sees there a better reality of what he or she can be, and is then encouraged that the potential they see is not only realizable but it is achievable within the horizon of their life. Therefore, as Ricoeur indicates above concerning mimesis, there is a creative imitation that results in an incorporation of a self as potential into a self as actual. The passage supports the view that there is a potentiality for a movement from the representation to the real, i.e. the world of the text is what is real and achievable, not an ideal beyond the person. The person is projected forward into the world of the text and understanding has moved from an epistemological basis to an ontological basis, i.e. what was represented has become being of the person.

This is Ricoeur’s view on what true interpretation should be about. The epistemological concerns of the hermeneutical task, which are genuine and must be examined, must also in turn be subordinated to ontological preoccupations “whereby *understanding* ceases to appear as a simple *mode of knowing* in order to become a *way of being* and a way of relating to beings and to being.”⁷¹ Consequently, it could be suggested that for the reader/interpreter epistemology is a means of achieving ontology. The text can be a creative presentation of what the real can be, which is capable of mimesis into the life of the person. Fictional narrative offers escape from reality; non-fictional narrative offers potentiality in achieving new reality, yet both operate in the same way. In both the object is to draw the

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 52. (Italics original) Thiselton also endorses this observation by Ricoeur in *New Horizons*, 358.

reader into the world of the text.⁷² Fiction offers an alternate reality and non-fiction a new view and possible potential of the reality that is, i.e. an new potential for being in the world.

The account in James presents the idea of an activity by the reader/hearer in effecting the change they perceive, i.e. the text presents the possibility of the formation of an 'intention-to' in deciding to be a doer not just a hearer. Hearing thereby traverses the *what* into a doing, i.e. that which was described has undergone assimilation into an ontology of self in the hearer. In James' presentation (i.e. the speaking voice of the text) what the person sees is the real person, and to be less than that person is discordant with reality. Hence, as Ricoeur suggested, within the self is an ability to deal with self as actual, yet see self as potential, hence other than self as actual, and be activated towards achievement of that potential. Yet all this is achieved through the authorial intent of the author of James, i.e. not only the semantic description as impacting the person's understanding but an ontological equipping to traverse this epistemological understanding into action.

The passage in 2 Corinthians is more remarkable, in that change happens to the person through looking, hence implying impartation of being through looking into the mirror. This implication is not an observation that should just be noticed in passing but is significant. In the James account there is an implication of understanding and volitional action on the part of the observer, i.e. the one looking into the mirror. Here in the 2 Corinthians passage there is the implication that, in their texts, authors may not only bring things into being in the saying, but also actually impart potentiality of being to the reader, i.e. empower the traversing not just present its possibility.⁷³ Here the *what*, the speech acts of locution, illocution and perlocution, as that which impacts the hearer in the saying, are traversed to that which empowers the hearer into the world as an active agent. The concept in Ricoeur, of the world of the text opening up before the reader, shows that this is a sound hermeneutical principle. There can be a temptation to move to a special hermeneutic, however, if alternatively there is recognition of an ontic-consciousness, i.e. a consciousness that is capable of perception and

⁷² See a previous discussion of the work of Limburg on this subject, 93.

⁷³ The Christian reader understands the activity of the Holy Spirit in this empowering, as indicated within the text, acting as the agent of this transformation. However, as a textual situation the aspect that is of interest is that there is a traversing of the *what* of the text, to establish actual being in the reader. Subsequently, the mimetic action of the person activates that being the author has intended in the text. The recognition of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is an employing, by the divine, of that which is at work in the being of a person, i.e. a special use of hermeneutics.

assimilation of *non-rational* knowledge, and also a recognition of the language associated with ontology, what can be suggested is special use made of that which is already operating within human being.

In this case the text is not fiction, yet there are some basic observations that can be made about fiction, as literature, that have parallel with the idea of the biblical text. The author of fiction assumes divine status. The world of the text is one of their creation. There is predetermination in terms of the plot and of the lives of the characters, yet it unfolds in accord with the understanding of the character and their potential within the story. The author employs a narrator, who is essentially their inspired prophet, who will tell their story without injection of the personality of the narrator replacing the author's personality (the narrator in the case of a text, as opposed to a DVD or CD, is generally perceived as genderless as well), yet the author will retain the right to direct and re-direct at will, i.e. the author remains sovereign in the whole process. Therefore, if Scripture is received as non-fiction, although employing the same concepts in consideration of divine authorship, then the concept of fiction concerns the intent of the author rather than the nature of the genre.⁷⁴ A failure to recognize this distinction may be why alternately there can be a relegation of Scripture to the status of fiction.

Hence the concept of mimesis presents a useful device to traverse the *what* of epistemology, to the ontology of the person. It neither transgresses nor transcends the *what* of epistemology, in that it appropriates what is described ontologically. Hence, in mimesis there is a genuine traversing of the *what* as the public expression is a vital component of the private appropriation.

3. Identifying the Ontological Nature of Authorial Intent

It should not be surprising that this ontological nature should be revealed within the concept of authorial intent. Previously it has been shown, and considered at length, that the argument against the concept of the author, and hence authorial intent, is essentially a metaphysical one. It was also noted above that the first movement in interpretation should be

⁷⁴ Wolterstorff, 243. Wolterstorff develops the concept that fiction or non-fiction, as a status of the text, is determined by the "illocutionary stance taken toward that content," i.e. the stance toward the doing in the saying of the author (this is illustrated in the ensuing examples he cites).

of an ontological nature, in the sense of listening to the author, which is followed by an epistemological movement. Now, finally, in following the direction illuminated in the work of Ricoeur concerning 'intention to' associated with the agent, or author, the ontological nature of the authorial intent is directly disclosed. Furthermore, as was indicated in following this line of thought, the adverbial sense, following the semantic route, is the weaker sense. The substantive nature, following the ontological route is the stronger sense and should therefore be the context in which the adverbial sense is itself understood. This implies that this sense should be the first considered by the interpreter, which is consistent with the discovery that the first movement in the hermeneutical task is ontological.

In the pursuit of *why?-what?* (as used by Ricoeur), which primarily concerns the content, (although as noted at the time there is good reason to believe that this should be extended to allow *why* to associate with *when?-where?* to impact the process), this capture of *who* by something in following the descriptive route is not a hindrance. This is properly the province of semantics in dealing with what is within the text, however, what also should be noted is that which is within the text, i.e. the composition, has being, since it can be known. The issues are twofold. Firstly how did it get its being, i.e. what or who is the Being of its being? Secondly, how is that being disclosed in the textual situation of the composition? The author has being as a person and the composition associated with the text has being, and the issue is the relationship between these entities.

Clearly it can be initially asserted with some confidence that if a text has being, then the author is the Being of that being. As Vanhoozer has observed the author is the reason "that it is" and the determiner of "what it is," i.e. with respect to the text the author stands as its creator.⁷⁵ The very concept of 'creator' inherently carries metaphysical implications, which in turn implies what has been observed, i.e. the argument against the existence of an authorial intention, as opposed to its know-ability, derives from a metaphysical base. Therefore, it is an inference in this work that *authorial intent imparts an ontological dimension to the text establishing the being of the text, which the author takes, as the Being of being of the text*, i.e. it is achieved in the creative act of the author.

⁷⁵ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 228.

This being is not simply an extension of the psyche of the author, nor is it a projection of the psyche of the author; it is the being the author gives to the world projected in the text, which then has its being in this attributed being. The being of the text is what it exists as and its relationship to reality, thereby supplying a context in which the perception of *why?-what?* is understood. This could be restated as: the ontological nature of the text is the context in which epistemology is conducted. The purpose here is not the replacement or transcending of the descriptive approach; it is rather a discussion of that task that should be undertaken prior to the descriptive approach. It is the interaction of ontological-epistemological-ontological that results in understanding the meaning of the author, as meaning in the life and world of the reader/interpreter.

(a) Tradition: Impact as Pre-Textual

The concept of tradition and its impact have been dealt with at some length in this work. It was noted that as in the case of a baby, so it is in the case of the novice in any field, i.e. that they begin by listening with a resultant acceptance of the posited knowledge. This is the basis of the impact of a tradition upon an individual, but it also results in an interpretation of that tradition into the being, or life, of the individual, being both informative and formative. The individual appropriates tradition within their life as a presuppositional basis of understanding.

Ricoeur has noted that tradition is critical in interpretation; his observation is that, in interpretation of a text, if the tradition of the text is not integral to the task of interpretation, the tradition is dead.⁷⁶ If the tradition is dead this then in turn greatly impacts the interpretation, which “does not spring from nowhere; rather, one interprets in order to make explicit, to extend, and so keep alive the tradition itself.”⁷⁷ Consequently, it seems reasonable to suggest that interpretation without the impact of the tradition behind the text is not an interpretation of that text, since that which is vital to its very being as a text has been lost. The matter of the text is describable when the tradition is lost, but there is no being as context in which description occurs to make what is itself describable and understandable.

⁷⁶ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 27.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Although Ricoeur's discussion and comment concern not the author but the text,⁷⁸ it is suggested in this work that since it is the author who gives being to the text, then the tradition in which the author stands *is* the tradition in which the text stands. The text is a creation of the author, in the same way a work of art is the creation of its author, and few would dispute the impact of tradition on the artist in the production of their work of art. The author, as a person within the world, has worked from an ontological base they have by "a *depositum*,"⁷⁹ engaging upon an epistemological search to understand the world in relation to their being, and it is from within this world that the author develops and communicates a message. Hence, tradition impacts their texts and consequently the form of this impact, and how it is communicated, must be considered, or the tradition dies in that interpreter and the interpretation loses the entity, hence being, of the composition, retaining only the being of the text.

It is this alteration in being that should catch the attention, since from one perspective the semantic route is still viable and can be undertaken. However, as it has been noted on several occasions, the author gives being to the text as a world, referred to as the 'world of the text.' The loss of the tradition, in which both the author and text are standing, causes an impact on the being of that world. It has been noted above that Ricoeur developed a concept of identity that recognized sameness and invariance: *idem* (identity and selfhood) and *ipse* (identity in which is recognized temporality and the possibility of change).⁸⁰ It was also noted that Ricoeur developed the concepts of actuality and potentiality as operating within the realm of selfhood (i.e. *ipse*-identity) like dialectic poles.⁸¹ This concept allowed the changing identity to undergo self-evaluation in terms of the actual situation and what potential there was for realization of the possibilities of *idem*-identity, representing that which is unchanging.⁸² It is tradition that gives the sense of being as unchanging, hence *idem*-identity.

⁷⁸ This is not surprising given Ricoeur's views on authorial intent. However, in some ways this has the effect of making this point more forcefully; if authorial intent was valued in interpretation, the tradition of the author is vital.

⁷⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 27. This is the term Ricoeur used, admittedly in a different context but with the same meaning descriptively, emphasis original.

⁸⁰ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 2-3, & 115-19. Ricoeur alludes to this on a number of occasions but these are the more descriptive passages.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 116-25.

Vanhooser noted that culture (of which, tradition both in religion and community is a vital aspect) sets the ultimate in belief and values; being where these are lived out, culture accomplishes the sharing of these things, and thus it is what confers historical particularity.⁸³ Consequently, culture, or tradition, is vital in the establishing of the mindset within which a person will understand self. If this is lost the community becomes cast adrift, as will a text in which the tradition in which the author stood is disregarded. By way of illustration, one could imagine the planet earth being plucked up from its current orbit and planted in some other foreign star system. It would be the same earth (*idem*-identity), but its new orbit will cause selfhood (*ipse*-identity, speaking anthropomorphically) to be completely altered. All reference to its *idem*-identity, that makes it unchanging, would also be lost. In this situation identity collapses and it is the same earth but no longer recognizes self. A new *idem*-identity must be first developed before any new *ipse*-identity is even possible. In the case of a text in which this occurs, it does in fact become loosed from the horizon of the author to become whatever the reader wants, since it has lost identity. Therefore, disregard of tradition is a first step that leads to the chaos of multiplicity of meaning, i.e. disregard for authorial intent at a primal level.

This is exactly the analogy Derrida uses to describe what he termed the “metaphysical orb,” which orbit he desired to escape from.⁸⁴ Derrida played on the word exorbitant (*ex-orbit*-ant) describing his method of approach as being exorbitant (extravagant in allowing self latitude) so that he can to jump into the text wherever he desired.⁸⁵ He can thus exit the orbit of the tradition of metaphysics himself, thereby essentially taking the text out of its orbit and placing it wherever he liked in the universe with total disregard for its anterior identity, which he denied as real but as an identity that is the result of metaphysics. In the analogy of the last paragraph Derrida not only loses the text from its orbit, or *idem*-identity, he leaves it as a projectile constantly out of orbit and hence *ipse*-identity is not only changing but totally random, having no *idem*-identity as its reference point.

Essentially Derrida acknowledges that tradition has a gravitational effect on the text, as the sun does on the earth, which keeps it in orbit. The tradition is much larger and more

⁸³ Vanhooser, *First Theology*, 310.

⁸⁴ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 162. See also, 262, in this work.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

extensive than deposited into any one member and therefore acts like the sun on a planet; it keeps it in an orbit that stabilizes its identity.⁸⁶ Tradition works in the same fashion upon those who are attached to it. This force is that which is unseen yet operational. This illustration of unseen yet operational indicates one other aspect of tradition that is important. It is an unseen affect and should act as mentor not master, i.e. in interpretation it is the impact of tradition not the establishing of traditionalism.

Consequently, although an author may not either acknowledge or allude to this, it is affecting the author and his or her creation of the text, and therefore the interpretation of the world of the text is out of orbit without it. When no tradition is evident within the text, since the author was a person in history, their historical particularity can expose the tradition having the gravitational effect on the text. This is the weakest attestation to tradition and should be used with care. The author may have moved self into a different sphere, e.g. Saul/Paul's change from Judaism to Christianity, and hence the tradition operating the gravitational effect *is* a new star system, in that Paul gained both a new *idem*- and resultant *ipse*- identity. Paul is the apostle who expounds the concept of becoming a 'new creation' in the event of salvation, where old things have passed away and all things have become new, 2 Cor. 5:17. Paul had not found a new God but God had created a new world in which life is to be conducted. The tradition of which he was now part had journeyed with the tradition of which he was formerly part, but was now translated into a new world. Paul remained within that same tradition but it was now interpreted from an entirely different perspective. If an interpreter was unaware of this, then Paul's New Testament texts could be misunderstood, e.g. if you read his New Testament texts as though he was a Jewish rabbi. If an interpreter is aware of this and yet disregards the tradition in which Paul stands, then the interpreter will not interpret his texts according to the being Paul has given them.

It was previously noted that Thiselton considered the issue of Reception History of a text.⁸⁷ Reception history can reveal the dual concept of how theology has shaped history and

⁸⁶ Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 707. This is not the analogy used by Thiselton but his point is the fact that tradition transcends the scope of immediate individual knowledge, providing the context for individual development.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

is shaped by history, i.e. “effective history” and “effected history.”⁸⁸ Scripture forms the foundation of Christian Theology and, in looking at the history of the reception of a text an interpreter can hear the “polyphonic” voices of past interpretations.⁸⁹ In this way, even issues such as editorialization and apparent emendations to the text increase the amount of information available to the interpreter on the tradition’s that impact the text. Thiselton observes that what is noticed, in reading the same passage in different situations, is that expectation is not uniform, as would be expected, but in this realization “openness to tradition” is promoted, which enhances the task of interpretation.⁹⁰ It was noted above that tradition interprets and is itself interpreted. Tradition therefore must be considered not only diachronically, as impacting through history, but also synchronically, as how it is interpreted and impacting in the temporal moment. This is where Reception History furthers the understanding of tradition. Hence, this can provide information on the tradition in which the text has stood and show the orbit in which it has moved.

Clearly the in-text references by the author are those that offer the securest understanding of the impact of the tradition on the author. For here the author is directly linking the tradition in which they stand, i.e. the *depositum* of which they are recipient, directly to the world of their creation in the text. The opening verse of Scripture itself establishes a tradition in which all that follows is to be understood, i.e. “In the beginning God created...” Gen. 1:1. This is not just a general recognition of the idea of God, but it is a tradition of a metaphysics of presence, and not only that, but within presence it is personal, and a particular person. Similarly the opening verse of the New Testament first locates its revelation within a tradition, i.e. “This is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” Matt. 1:1. Therefore, to correctly interpret the life of Jesus assumes His being in the tradition of David and Abraham, hence also remaining broadly through narrative connection within the tradition begun in Genesis. All the Pauline epistles are prefaced with an identification with a tradition located in the person of Jesus Christ, and hence located within the broader tradition indicated in Matt. 1:1. This gives being to the

⁸⁸ Ibid. (Emphasis original)

⁸⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 44.

writer's message and creates a context in which the descriptive task is to occur and therefore through which it is to be understood.

(b) Tradition: The Depositum

Ricoeur uses the word "*depositum*" in referring to textual tradition as a deposit, which the interpreter receives and subsequently impacts the interpretation, so that the tradition remains alive.⁹¹ Nevertheless the principle is the same for the author as it is for the interpreter, i.e. the author who writes that text must stand in that tradition in which it had been deposited. This knowledge is describable by the author, but is generally received by the author as ontological knowledge, i.e. the knowledge is posited to the author, becoming "*depositum*." The highlighted similarities between the words posit and de-posit-um is intentional to show the nature of the knowledge, i.e. the knowledge is stated as reality. The concept of a deposit being passive, in the sense of received, as opposed to obtained as active, in the sense of achieved, highlights the different methods of acquisition of knowledge via the ontological route, which begins in otherness. In contrast the epistemological route begins with the Cartesian 'I,' or similar.

Therefore, the ontic-language of tradition is that of assent, as covered previously in relationship to the work of Newman. The language of assent posits actuality of being and reality; it does not seek to prove it semantically. Such knowledge may be used semantically but it is not established or transmitted in a descriptive process. Semantics in this case is simply description of the knowledge not an analysis of its being as knowledge. Assent establishes the authoritative impact on the author. The tradition directly impacting the being of the author, who gives being to the text, is displayed in the declaration of assent, e.g. in Rom. 1:1-5, the authority to speak, as the 'speaking voice,' is based upon a commission that is underpinned by a tradition, to which the author gives assent. Whilst this passage may have theological implications in terms of the descriptive task, ontologically it establishes the being of the message, and this seems to be the more important issue to the speaker.

The assent identified directly impacts the material, e.g. in many ways Paul's introduction proceeds to vs15 before launching into full disclosure of content, vs16, which is to

⁹¹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 27.

expound the gospel, and the substance of the verses initially considered, Rom. 1:1-5 is the tradition from which the gospel develops. The interpreter may not accept and assent to that which the author does, this is not the object of the author in their assent, i.e. the issue is not a polemic one. Where polemic is based in that which is assented to, as in Galatians, there is a close association with what is assented to through the use of the first person by the author. That to which the author assents becomes the tradition in which his or her message is to be understood, regardless of agreement. Disregard of this is to not 'listen' to the author, and hence to not only have prejudices but to impose them upon the text.

This also offers insight into the communication of knowledge; ontological knowledge is posited to become deposit, but epistemological knowledge (that which is justified and justifiable) is described so as to be available for analysis and assimilation (as opposed to the idea of passive reception as deposit). Epistemological knowledge moves from that which is public to that which is private. Ontological knowledge goes from that which is private to that which is public and only the positing is public. In the positing of ontological knowledge only the surface grammar is available publically. The referential nature of knowledge, i.e. how it is interpreted to become and remain understandable within a person, is private and therefore not semantically available.

In the case of texts such as the book of Esther the gravitational effect of tradition is seen in the text. Unlike the texts just considered the narrator adopts a seemingly neutral stand and does not identify a position to assent to. The first indication of the impact of tradition is in Esther 2:5 with the identification of a key character Mordecai as culturally a Jew, giving his national heritage and genealogy. Esther, after whom the book is named, becomes linked to the same cultural tradition, 2:7. In 2:20 the concept of a tradition lying behind the story is given in that Esther is identified not only individually as a Jew but also as part of a cohesive community; noting that she had not revealed "her family and her people." At the end of the conflict that begins with the destruction of Haman, it is the people who are victorious, i.e. the Jews, 8:16-17. The story then becomes caught up in the tradition and a feast is established linking the story to religion, 9:26-32.

In this story it is not the divine intervention of God that is highlighted, it lays below the surface, implied as working in the tradition, and so God active is rather a presupposition, i.e. to have the tradition is to have God active. If the tradition is lost the activity of God is lost, but more importantly, if the tradition is lost the story loses its reason for being and the critical element to its identity as story. Whilst this example is but one book of Scripture, this one text within Scripture highlights what is at work in those books where the impact of tradition is understated. Tradition acts as mentor, behind the scenes as it were, not to be the story, as though it were the master, but exerting influence on shaping the story, so that it is a story of characters impacted by tradition. Hence, without the tradition the story can still be told, but its meaning and being, i.e. where it belongs in the universe of the human story would be lost. It becomes random and meaningless. Within the metaphysics of presence that is the Judeo-Christian sphere one could speculate that this could be the divine reason for inclusion.

(c) Tradition: Ontological Language

The discussion of tradition, which is the beginning of the ontology of the author, and hence the gravitational force impacting the text, highlights the nature of the language of ontology. Being is posited and, if accepted, becomes *depositum* in the recipient and if rejected there is no *depositum* and being is different. Ricoeur's definitions of identity are useful here; there is *idem*-identity as sameness, in the sense that both the acceptor and rejecter are human beings, but there is a significantly different *ipse*-identity, i.e. how one sees oneself within the orbit and world of human being. It then also changes how 'self' sees the world. The situation is not as though the acceptor has an ontology and the rejecter doesn't, each will develop a different selfhood in acceptance or rejection.

It was noted above that this deposit is not realized by rational but instead by *non-rational* means, it is posited and assented to, i.e. it is not discovered in the normal progress of rationalization within temporal existence, it is only realized in discourse through its disclosure by the agency of another person. It begins in otherness; its centre of gravity is outside the self. The scriptural passage concerning the beginnings of human being in Gen. 1:27-28 grounds self-identity in the otherness of God; humanity is made in the image of God. However, in this account this being arrives on the scene as a package, i.e. before this

statement there isn't a person and after it there is. The account of the creation of the human being in the account in Gen. 2:7 provides an important insight. God forms humanity from the dust of the ground, but the body so formed has existence as an entity but does not have living being. It is the breath of God into humanity that leads to the declaration "and man became a living being." Consequently, without the deposit from that which is other there is no living being; human being-ness is gratuitous, in the sense it is given and not earned, and is not a human achievement.

This view is anecdotally supported in the concept of how human life begins as a baby, as has been noted above. Life begins with a breath in and without the breath in there is no breath out, i.e. no respiration, and hence no temporal being. Furthermore, the baby is totally dependent on otherness, and even further still, an important aspect to formation of the relationship with that which is other, is human need. It seems reasonable to suggest that self-identity comes initially not as an act of self, but as impartation from that which is other. As noted above this is really the way of the novice in any field. The growth of the person, individuality, i.e. selfhood, is established as the self-identity is explored by the 'I' and the *depositum's* assimilation into selfhood will occur by questioning, testing and even challenging that which was deposited. Consequently, individuality is achieved by the assertion of the 'I' into the world. In this way the tradition, or that which is assented to, becomes assimilated into selfhood, as Ricoeur argues concerning the changeability of the *ipse*-identity. Yet what Ricoeur has not noted is that of which Thiselton takes note, i.e. human life does not unfold as though the self was a blank sheet of paper, there is a deposited identity with which one begins.⁹²

The deposit is assented to in being received, so tradition becomes the deposit the individual receives. However, as also noted above, that tradition is always far broader than the individual and the individual develops within the tradition. Consequently, although the tradition is accepted and assented to, it is untested and not personalized or individualized.

⁹² Thiselton, *On Hermeneutics*, 701-2. This is the theme of the chapter.

This individualization process is that of assertion by the self, of what was assented to, which process shapes, or adapts, what has been assented to into the individual.⁹³

This consideration of assent and assertion develops here along a line having a nuance of difference with the work of Newman, which was considered in the discussion of *non-rational* knowledge. In the work of Newman assent is the mental process of holding the proposition and assertion is the annunciation.⁹⁴ Hence, assent is equivalent to assertion. However, as recognized here, assent, though not a conditional term in the sense that one accepts at first the tradition that is *depositum*, is nevertheless a more general term. It is the testing of the tradition of the individual that interprets tradition into the life of a person. This is manifest in the assertion. The assertion marks the posited being as becoming an active part of individual being, as has been examined in the annunciation of ontological language, e.g. in the examples in James and 2 Corinthians. When it is recognized that assertion⁹⁵ carries the idea of belief and not simply repetition, there is the creation of being.

This offers an insight that has profound hermeneutical implications. That which comes as ontological *depositum*, has the potential within its positing for mimetic performance by the receptor of that deposit. In the assertion that occurs in the mimetic performance, *being* of the deposit becomes individualized and actualized as *being* of the receptor. Consequently, within the ontological understanding of authorial intent, it is that of not only intention-to on the part of the author, but the presentation, or positing, of that which, in its mimetic performance, brings *being* in the doing for the reader. Therefore, it can be suggested that the descriptive epistemological task investigates what the author did intentionally, making it available *for* viewing. However, it can also be suggested that the reflexive ontological task creates and makes available a deposit to the reader/interpreter, making it available *in* the doing. This is not a perlocutionary act, as in speech-act theory, since this is not an effect of the text upon the reader.

⁹³ This discussion to this point of tradition and its outworking is largely based on Thiselton's observations in *Thiselton on Hermeneutics*, 701-25, on corporate memory, and Vanhoozer's observations in *First Theology*, 309-18, in conjunction with the development of the concept of *non-rational* knowledge in this work. The impact of Ricoeur's work is has been referenced.

⁹⁴ Newman, 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 & 13.

The form of knowledge that is acquired, in its being posited, is that of belief, i.e. knowledge initially acquired through belief of knowledge received as *depositum* from that which is other. The ontological task discloses this form of knowledge and human consciousness is able subsequently to perceive it. Furthermore, human consciousness is also itself able to create that which will disclose this form of knowledge, e.g. the written text, which is the concern of this work. Moreover not only is it able to be perceived and disclosed, but also in its positing being is given actuality in the life of a person. The Scripture indicates this in passages such as Heb. 11:1 (in this passage in Hebrews the author asserts that faith, i.e. expressed belief held by a person, constitutes an attribution of *being* by that person of that which is believed) and Ro. 10:9 (in this Romans passage salvation becomes *being* with the acceptance and application to self of posited knowledge).

Pannenberg noted that in Heidegger's thought God is drawn into philosophy, however, Pannenberg suggests in responding to this that it involves a pre-supposition that the idea of the divine is not part of consciousness within the self.⁹⁶ The concept that there is an aspect of human consciousness that is able to recognize and understand ontological statements, not just descriptively, but in terms of the being disclosed, must be explored. It is this aspect that is able to 'hear' the speaking voice and 'understand' authorial intent. It is this aspect that 'sees' the work of art and understands the composition, as an entity related to the text. If it is an aspect of consciousness then it is not learned, but primordial in human beings, and, as a result operates hermeneutically even if not recognized. However, if it is not recognized then the task of hermeneutics is misrepresented and malformed.

(d) Tradition: An Important Distinction on Absolute and Relative

In the above discussion of tradition there are inferences that should be examined more closely. The first encounter that an individual has with tradition is as *depositum*, therefore as an absolute. The tradition is then assimilated by the assertion of the Cartesian "I" as the tradition is drawn into the life of the person, i.e. the tradition moves from being external to the person to becoming internalized and individualized within the life of the person. Consequently, this process is an interpretive process. Therefore, philosophically, as in all

⁹⁶ Pannenberg, *Metaphysics*, 12.

interpretive processes that result in meaning for the individual, this must lead to a relative value of the absolute of the tradition in which one stands.

Furthermore, the tradition in which an individual, or community, stands is itself a tradition that stands apart from other traditions, even where there may be common origins as in Judaism and Christianity. This concept is well anecdotally supported in the tendency to sub-culturation that occurs within a culture. In the metaphysics of absence each tradition exists as independent of all other traditions. However, for hermeneutic purposes each tradition functions itself as an absolute reference point. As a result the individual develops a relative meaning with respect to the absolute of that tradition. Hence, tradition cannot be ignored even in the metaphysics of absence when it comes to hermeneutical implications.

The metaphysics of presence assumes a common origin for tradition. The biblical account, within the metaphysics of presence, recognizes the development of differing traditions stemming from the original human situation, through the narrative of the account of the 'Tower of Babel' to the New Testament times, indicated in the sermon of Paul in Athens, recorded in Acts 17:22-31. Paul asserts that, based on his understanding from the tradition in which he stands, humanity has a common heritage that links all humanity, and further to this these cultural differences are not only developed from the common source but the traditions so formed are intentioned by God, i.e. they are capable of forming 'intention to' in the life of the individual. It is interesting that for Paul the same absolute tradition has resulted in being interpreted in two distinct individual traditions within his own life, i.e. Judaism and Christianity, both of which traditions are seen by their adherents as themselves absolute.

Hegel's observations, considered previously, essentially noted the problem of the eternal was that although it is encounterable, the dialectic of finite-infinite traps the individual in such a way that the perception of the eternal is always relative. Similarly here in tradition the same problem is encountered, i.e. the dialectic of the *ipse*-identity of the self, encountering the *idem*-identity of the external tradition, always results in a relative value of that which is absolute. The 'I' of selfhood, as *ipse*-identity and hence changeable, is the reason that meaning undergoes apparent change in the process of interpretation, when encountering the absolute, or unchangeable. Tradition functions in the same fashion as a text

and the *idem*-identity of the text, i.e. as unchangeable, encounters the *ipse*-identity of the self, as changeable. The resultant identity when developed from the dialectic action of the modes of identity is personalized in the individual.

The important issue is that the otherness of the text, i.e. tradition, must be considered. The author uses the language of ontology as a primary source of the tradition impacting the text and this is the author's individualization of the tradition in which they stand. Both of these aspects, i.e. the language of the author and historical understanding of their tradition can be known and evaluated by the interpreter in the dealing with the text of an author. Consequently, the absolute is not absolutely known from the human perspective; as Vanhoozer has noted no theologian enjoys the divine perspective of reality. However, the view the interpreter perceives is a relative view of the absolute, and that relative view impacts hermeneutically and consequently must be evaluated.

Chapter 11

Disclosing the Being of the Text: Re-Animation of the Objectified Text

Introduction

The work of Ricoeur has shown that when the interpreter begins with the written text, as opposed to seeking to interpret the discourse of a speaker who is present and with whom one is engaged in a dialogue, the text presents not with the ontology of a *who*, as personal, but rather with the ontology of an impersonal event.¹ The conceptualization of the 'who' of the written text, in Ricoeur's approach, is undertaken in what amounts to a self-projection, where 'otherness' is in essence a dimension of self.² Firstly, this highlights the impersonal nature of the text, which in Heidegger means that it equates with a "worldless" entity.³ Secondly, since the text is impersonal it is therefore without the consciousness that belongs to a being like *Dasein*.⁴ This in turn highlights that the process of interpretation, i.e. "I interpret," begins with "I" and, as the only consciousness involved, it is the basis of the postmodern emphasis on the reader/interpreter, the "I" who interprets. However, this implies that all interpretation occurs in the absence of 'otherness' and is always simply self-projection, or as Derrida concludes, mentioned previously, is auto-affectation. In this case Ricoeur's observation concerning the implications of Nietzsche's work that there are only interpretations and in essence no reality, just interpretations of it, would seem to be valid not only as an assessment of Nietzsche, but that Nietzsche was seeing things as they are in reality.⁵ The nature of the text is critical. It is objectification with a subjective impact and the *how* of this impact must be considered, or the objective and subjective remain at an impasse.

¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 56-87. This is the theme of the chapter entitled "An Agentless Semantics of Action" and has been under discussion in the preceding two chapters of this thesis.

² *Ibid.*, 112. Ricoeur identifies an understanding of the "ontology of the self" to be his goal at the conclusion of the chapter "From Action to Agent," which then finds its fullest description in the final chapter "What Ontology in View?" where he develops the theme of otherness as what amounts to a projection of self. This concept has been considered in the previous chapter.

³ Heidegger, 81.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 81-82. This is the theme developed. Heidegger points out that "worldless" entities cannot touch each other even if the space between them is reduced to zero. This occurs because for one entity to 'touch' another entity assumes that entities that are 'present-at-hand' are also "encounterable" by the entity 'present-at-hand' that is touched. Although *Dasein* can be just 'present-at-hand' it is never "worldless." The implication is that an entity such as *Dasein* is conscious of being 'touched.' This concept in Heidegger allows the concept developed by Ricoeur where the use of the third person has the concept of being personal but is treated as impersonal, i.e. a *what* and not a *who*. Consequently, within a text the reference to persons is conceptual as 'person' but with an ontology of impersonal event.

⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 15. This would seem to be the true foundations of the impasse that Ricoeur seeks to address in his concept of the hermeneutic problem, see *From Text to Action*, 51, which is further discussed below. This concept specifically precludes an ontology of that which is 'other' and in *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur seeks to pass the impasse in the hermeneutics of the self.

1. Traversing the Impasse: Epistemology to Ontology

Ricoeur notes what for him is the central problem in hermeneutics, which is the “opposition, disastrous in my view, between explanation and understanding.”⁶ This is the opposition of epistemological concerns (dealing with ‘explanation’) to ontological concerns (dealing with ‘understanding’), which in his view develops from the Romantic hermeneutical tendency to “dissociate” these issues.⁷ His object is to “search for a complementarity between these two attitudes.”⁸ The pursuit of this task does lead to an apparent aporia, and Ricoeur states that it is this “very aporia that has instigated my own research.”⁹ The aporia occurs in pursuing the movement from epistemology to ontology where an apparent paradoxical impasse occurs, so that the movement proceeds neither naturally nor easily, and yet is critical to the task of hermeneutics.¹⁰

Schleiermacher noted that the task of hermeneutics deals with the art of understanding, not with the presentation of what is understood.¹¹ The issue of meaning is not just understanding but application to the self, i.e. how what is understood is applied. The issue of hermeneutics is ‘understanding’ for the individual related to the self, i.e. the disclosure in understanding makes possible the connection between the self and the said of the text. However, for understanding to become meaning within selfhood requires the movement from epistemology to ontology, and the very movement that must occur has reached a philosophical impasse, and this is the aporia to which Ricoeur referred. The movement to ontology raises the issue of a consciousness and the temptation is to move to that of the author, and seek some form of inter-subjectivity. However, as the work of Gadamer and Ricoeur has brought into focus, this is fanciful at best. In dealing with the text the only consciousness is that of the interpreter, that of the author is not directly accessible. Understanding occurs but describing the ‘how’ becomes essentially paradoxical. Whatever takes place takes place in the consciousness of the interpreter.

⁶ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.* The impasse that occurs in seeking to develop ‘understanding’ and ‘explanation’ as modes of knowing is not resolved by the recognition of a subordination of epistemology to ontology; “...the aporia is not resolved but merely displaced elsewhere and thereby aggravated. It is no longer between two modalities of knowing within epistemology but between ontology and epistemology taken as a whole,” 67.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* This is a problem that must be traversed rather than transcended or dismissed.

¹¹ Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, 96.

In the interpretation theory of Ricoeur, the issues of explanation and understanding, rather than being opposing poles should be regarded as the two poles of a dialectic, the aim of which is meaning.¹² Hence the concept of understanding is to act dialectically in a way that results in meaning, therefore, representing the necessary movement from epistemology to ontology.¹³ The problematic occurs due to the recognition that the pursuit of epistemology not only fails to raise the ontological question but it actually directs the hermeneut in an opposite direction.¹⁴ In approaching this aporia Ricoeur places himself within the philosophical conceptions and presuppositions of phenomenology,¹⁵ and as such has been influenced not only by Husserl but also significantly by Heidegger and Gadamer.¹⁶ Consequently, the background to Ricoeur's conceptualization of 'understanding' as opening up the ontological question occurs within phenomenology, i.e. the text is handled within a particular understanding and the presuppositional implications must be evaluated.

Consequently, not only the nature of the text but also how it is handled are equally important. The nature of the text is pursued in this chapter. It is misleading to assume that the author is communicating his or her consciousness. It is equally misleading to assume that the consciousness of the author is irrelevant to the text produced. What the author desires to communicate is a meaning that is developed in his or her consciousness and is subsequently transformed by an act of *parole* into a composition, which therefore constitutes the being of the text. It is the communication of a matter, as Ricoeur and others have highlighted, and not the communication of a consciousness. However, the consciousness of the author remains its referent and despite any difficulties or impasse this must be considered in the process.

2. Traversing the Impasse: The Nature of the Text

In Chapter 3 of this work the concept of the nature of the text was considered in general terms. This examination was brief and primarily dealt with epistemological concerns, such as the concept of the text as a vehicle of communication and issues such as the worlds

¹² Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 71. This is a central theme of *Interpretation Theory*.

¹³ Heidegger, 193. The recognition that *meaning* is an act of persons not texts has been discussed at some length previously in this work. Consequently, this recognition moves *meaning* conceptually into the realm of ontology not epistemology. In this way *meaning* represents the impact on the being of a person of epistemology, i.e. epistemology particularized for the self.

¹⁴ This issue has been dealt with in the previous chapter.

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

of the author, text and reader. However, note was taken in that discussion that the concept of the text as handled in modernism had overlooked the ontology of the situation. Ricoeur especially noted that in dealing with a text the issue had become a mode of knowing, i.e. acquisition of knowledge, but Ricoeur's challenge was that knowledge is experienced in understanding and the correct concept is a mode of being. Certainly, Heidegger's development of the concept of ontological interpretation¹⁷ shows that the epistemological concerns should be properly developed in the light of the being of the text. It is strange that Ricoeur fastened upon the implications of the ontology but did not explore the ontology of the text. The purpose here is to dig beneath epistemological concerns to uncover this ontology.

There are some preliminary observations that can be made, which have passed unnoticed in the development of this issues discussed so far. The counterpart to the 'I interpret' of the interpreter is the 'I explain' of the author, i.e. someone says something to someone. In the composition an author seeks to make explicit, or public, a meaning that was private, i.e. the author explicates in written form an explanation, which is the public presentation of that which was private and developed in the consciousness of the author. Consequently, the 'explanation,' or written text, sits between 'I explain' of the author and 'I interpret' of the interpreter as the public face that represents a meaning relevant to the self of the interpreter. It is the authorial intention to disclose this, and it is composed in such a way that it can be re-animated in encounter with the consciousness of an interpreter to result in a meaning, i.e. understanding applied to self. This should be the 'explanation' to which reference is made.

In the hermeneutics of Ricoeur the dialectic of 'explanation' and 'understanding' is not that of dealing with the explanation of the author, it is that of the interpreter, i.e. the explanation that the interpreter gives to the text.¹⁸ It is a dialectic of reading as opposed to a dialectic of writing, not one which considers the text as an explanation of the author.¹⁹ Yet as noted above the text is first and foremost an explication, hence explanation, of the author. On the basis of Ricoeur's concept of the autonomous text, this becomes passed over without

¹⁷ This is developed below in "2. (a) Ontology of the Impersonal Event Applied to the Text."

¹⁸ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 71-2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

comment, since meaning and intent as related to the author are abolished in the text.²⁰

Consequently, this may be the reason that Ricoeur does not pursue the issue of the ontology, or the being and relationship to reality, of the text.

Ricoeur's reasoning that highlights the ontology of the impersonal event that is the text is a sound reasoning, since to recognize any personal ontology of the text would tie it to the personality, hence psyche, of the author, as in Romanticism. Meaning is personal and private, belonging to the person, for both the author and interpreter, but the text is public. Meaning is only made public in the explanation, and any ontology present-at-hand is that of the explanation. However, this ontology, or being, lies not in 'explanation' by the interpreter, but that of the author, i.e. the text as present-at-hand for the interpreter.

(a) Ontology of the Impersonal Event

Following the above reasoning, that which begins as a personal ontology of the self within the consciousness of the author is transformed into the ontology of the impersonal event, which is then re-converted to a personal ontology of the self within the interpreter. The intermediate stage of the ontology of the impersonal event, i.e. the text, is where all hermeneutics must begin, and, it is the work of Ricoeur that has recognized and brought into focus the impersonal nature of this ontology and its implications. However, what Ricoeur has not done is to consider the being disclosed in this ontology of the impersonal event. Heidegger noted that ontological investigation "is a possible kind of interpreting" which he describes as "the working-out and appropriation of an understanding."²¹ The following extended quote sets out how this "ontological interpretation" functions:

In Ontological Interpretation an entity is to be laid bare with regard to its own state of Being; such an Interpretation obliges us first to give a phenomenal characterization of the entity we have taken as our theme, and thus bring it into the scope of our fore-having, with which all subsequent steps of our analysis are to conform.²²

This should be the first step in dealing with the text so that the epistemological endeavor is developed within its proper ontological conditions and horizons.

It is proposed in this work that although the composition does not have the ontology of a person, it does have being and its being is both disclosed in the text and can be

²⁰ Ibid., 75.

²¹ Heidegger, 275.

²² Ibid.

perceived by the interpreter. Furthermore, its being is able to interact with the consciousness of the interpreter, or, if not, then the extreme of postmodernism is correct and meaning is not only a function of the reader in 'I interpret,' but also understanding is also reader dependent. This would occur since there is *only* relativism in meaning, and there is therefore no such thing as misunderstanding in dealing with the text. Hence although the composition does have attributes of the ontology of the impersonal event, in its being as a text, this is an inadequate qualification of its being as a composition, if any otherness that is not simply a projection of the self, as in theories of Ricoeur, is to be encountered in interpretation.

As mentioned above the text as composition is the explication of an explanation concerning the subject matter that the author seeks to communicate. If the act of *parole* were simply one of transcription from the consciousness of the author to that of written text, then the interest of the act of *parole*'s to the task of hermeneutics would simply be as an event within the process. However, what is concealed is the traversing of an impasse that corresponds directly to that investigated by Ricoeur. If the movement from epistemology to ontology represents an aporia then the movement from ontology to epistemology represents an equal and equally important aporia. This aporia precedes that discussed by Ricoeur. This is the route the author must traverse. In this process the author is the creator of the being of the impersonal ontology of an event, which the interpreter will use as the basis to develop a personal ontology of understanding related to 'self.' This 'being' so created by the author is critical in the re-animation to a personal ontology.

Ricoeur's suggestion to traverse the route from epistemology to a personal ontology is a hermeneutics of the self. It seems reasonable to suggest that the author traverses the route from personal ontology to that of impersonal event, the public face epistemologically available, also within the domain of a hermeneutics of self. If the interpreter engages in an appropriation of an understanding of that which is 'other' applied *to* 'self,' then the author must engage in an appropriation of the understanding belonging to 'self' applied to that which is 'other' than self. In considering traversing the aporia from epistemology to ontology, disclosed in Ricoeur, a number of issues and devices were considered, which are also available to the author in their traversing of the corresponding aporia. The use of tradition by

assent, assertion and inference establishes an orbit for the world of the being of the text. An author also uses genre, and they may also employ metaphor and even intend mimesis in this process in creating the text. The synthesis of this into a composition is the act of composing, i.e. the 'I explain' of the author becomes 'I compose in order to explain' and this results in the explanation that is the text. The creative nature of the act of *parole* in composing the text is the reason for the similarities, noted by most authors considered in this work, between the work of art and the text.

The object of the composition is to make evident, or to bring within the perceptibility of an interpreter, that which is concealed, i.e. the meaning of the author. It is here that an important observation must be made concerning the work of Ricoeur. In Ricoeur's understanding experience is non transferable, i.e. the transference from "one stream of consciousness" to "another stream of consciousness" cannot occur.²³ However, the meaning of that experience is transferable by becoming public in the text.²⁴ It is Ricoeur's concept of sense interpretation and the concept of Husserlian ideology that allows meaning to appear in the impersonal ontology of event.²⁵ Nevertheless, as has been previously established meaning is an act of persons, i.e. meaning relates to a personal ontology not an impersonal ontology. Meaning is essentially a cognitive act, i.e. a function of the *cogito*, and is therefore unique to each person, regardless of any similarity of meaning possible. Consequently, Ricoeur's concept in fact directly translates into the idea of transference from one stream of consciousness to another, which given his antithesis to Romantic Hermeneutics he would strenuously oppose. It would seem that what Ricoeur is, or should be, suggesting is that understanding of the experience is transferable. It is possible to 'see' the same thing as another, i.e. understand something, and yet develop difference of meaning.

Gadamer avoided the issue of the ontology of the impersonal event by avoiding method.²⁶ Ricoeur conversely faced the question head-on and in so doing uncovered the

²³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 16.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 23. This is developed throughout the chapter titled "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics."

²⁶ Ibid., 69. Ricoeur asks the question considering Gadamer's work *Truth AND Method*, whether or not it would be better titled *Truth OR Method*. (Capitalization of 'and' as well as 'or' is original in Ricoeur for emphasis). Thiselton observes in *New Horizons* what has been noted by others, that when it comes to implementation of Gadamer's principles into interpretation "Gadamer is painfully silent," 314.

issue of the impersonal ontology of the event, but since the author and audience are excluded from impacting meaning, then he is left with no recourse except to propose meaning must be available in the ontology of the impersonal event. Presupposition has decided the issue, and again it brings to the fore the impact and determining influence of phenomenology in Ricoeur's work. In Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur,²⁷ as indeed with Derrida,²⁸ phenomenology is primordial and the basic state of existence and as such is never really considered as a presupposition by those authors.

Heidegger notes that the term 'meaning' is used when entities 'within-the-world' are disclosed to *Dasein* "that is, when they have come to be understood."²⁹ However, in reality that understanding is not the meaning but the entity, i.e. its Being.³⁰ The articulation of this we call "meaning," but meaning "is an existiale of *Dasein*" and not "a property of entities."³¹ *Dasein* only has meaning and *Dasein* only "can be meaningful or meaningless."³² When 'meaning' is interpreted in this way "then all entities whose kind of Being is of a character other than *Dasein*'s must be conceived as unmeaning, essentially devoid of any meaning at all."³³ This is not a value judgment concerning such entities but recognition of ontological properties.³⁴ It was noted above that Heidegger considers such entities also as "worldless," hence incapable of 'feeling,' and as a result of these two recognitions it is therefore impossible for the text to either have meaning or impart something existential in communicating. Yet for any encounter with otherness the text must indeed 'touch' the interpreter, hence there is an issue of the being of the entity of the text that is yet concealed.

Therefore, despite the line of reasoning in Ricoeur's paradigm, the interpreter and not the text supplies "meaning", but this goes unnoticed. Ricoeur seeks to solve the problem by suggesting subjective and objective meaning. Ricoeur sees meaning as a property of the sentence, whilst admitting that meaning is something the speaker does as the subjective side

²⁷ Ibid., 23. Ricoeur notes the commonality of Gadamer and Heidegger in this position. Although Ricoeur uses the word presupposition in stating "*phenomenology remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics*" (italics original) his argument better suits the idea of prerequisite rather than presupposition.

²⁸ Derrida, *Writing*, 155. Derrida makes it clear that he regards this position as an essentially presuppositionless one freed from all metaphysical implication; "The phenomenologist ... is the "true positivist" who returns to the things themselves, and who is self-effacing before the originality and primordality of meanings."

²⁹ Heidegger, 192.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 193.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

of meaning.³⁵ The sentence's meaning is the "objective" side of meaning on which Ricoeur develops his concept of sense and reference.³⁶ The objective side is that which is public, i.e. it is the universal predication. Nevertheless, if Heidegger's thought is followed this concept of meaning is that which has the appearance of meaning in its articulation, but in itself is devoid of meaning in the existential sense of the word. Consequently, ontological interpretation suggests that in the articulation of the composition is a disclosure of the being of the text, but the issue of meaning is not resident within the text. Further, any association with meaning is due to a reference understood by the interpreter that results in meaning in its proper locus, i.e. personal ontology.

Within postmodern thought Derrida alone has realized the key nature of this issue of meaning and textuality, and, in his view, the idea of any anterior meaning preceding writing, and therefore acting in fashion as an absolute point of reference, must be discarded.³⁷ Whilst Ricoeur simply regards anterior meaning as inaccessible Derrida recognizes that its existence must be denied or it will haunt the process.³⁸ Whilst Ricoeur proposes a dialectic of the event of writing and the resultant meaning, which at least by his use of the word 'writing' implies the author, it seems in essence that Derrida proposes a dialectic of the event of reading and auto-affectation, the result of which is meaning. This removes the need to recognize the author, the text simply arrives and meaning is developed in the encounter. This would seem consistent with his phenomenology.

By limiting the issue to the impersonal ontology of the text what follows is the Heideggerian view, which results in a text devoid of meaning, with no recourse to a personal ontology. In Derrida any attempt to resort to exteriority is to drag up from the "abyss of reference" the idea of the signified.³⁹ Yet as has been examined and highlighted Derrida's view comes from the presupposition of a metaphysics of absence. Also, as noted above, his view of phenomenology as unprejudiced has caused an opaqueness for him, resulting in unrecognized prejudice as a formative part of his presuppositional world. He has fallen victim

³⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 19.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 19-23.

³⁷ Derrida, *Writing*, 10. In Derrida's view; "Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself," i.e. its existence is neither anterior nor posterior, 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 163.

to the very concept of prejudice he lays at the feet of those advocating a metaphysics of presence.⁴⁰ In the final analysis his arguments against presence and reference are rooted and developed in his presuppositional world, and are consequently not the result of some insight into textuality.

The concept of reference in the sense used by Ricoeur is inadequate in its inability to deal with meaning as defined in his own phenomenological viewpoint, as indicated above. The concept of its absence in Derrida is a presuppositional prejudice. It is here the true nature of the aporia is unveiled, for if one is able to show how reference can be used in moving from ontology to epistemology, then this opens the door to understanding of the corresponding aporia of moving from epistemology to ontology, i.e. it is achieved by retracing the steps, as it were, of the line of reasoning whereby reference is used by the author in creation, i.e. composition, of the text.

However, this cannot be the recreation of the personal ontology of the author, which is related to the consciousness of the author, and, which, as Gadamer, Ricoeur, Thiselton and others have noted, relates to a foreign psyche not accessible to the interpreter. Furthermore, not only is the personal ontology of the author related to that consciousness, it is also related to it at a particular point in time, i.e. a feature of the personal ontology of that which becomes text is that it exists temporally and therefore is historical. The author has moved on from that point and may well have an altered view, nevertheless, any alteration, such as revision, doesn't change what was meant at that point in time. Revision may supersede and replace, modify or clarify, but none of this changes the meant of the author, from which the text receives its being. The hermeneutical task related to a text is unaffected by changes in the author's thinking other than at the time of the text. As Gadamer has shown, the issue of distanciation, so prominent in Ricoeur's thinking, precludes such a leap to the consciousness of the author. Thus the ontological interpretation of the being of the text, which has been overlooked, must be considered to address this issue.

The indicators to a solution of the problem of this aporia lie in taking note of something highlighted in Heidegger and Ricoeur. In considering *Being and Time*, above, note

⁴⁰ Derrida, *Writing*, 11.

was taken that although the text, as a worldless entity, cannot have meaning it does have the *appearance* of meaning in its articulation. Ricoeur took note that the impersonal ontology of events can make reference to the *concept* of persons. As part of the text they lack actual personality but can be understood to possess personality; Heidegger notes that even when *Dasein* is treated as present-at-hand due to the situation in which it is considered, it is never worldless.⁴¹ Consequently, the concept of a person can be conceived as *Dasein* within the imagination, not simply something present-at-hand. Within the consciousness of the author it seems reasonable to suggest that an author can imagine a person, as a person, which they can in turn convey textually as the concept of a person. Similarly, it seems equally reasonable to suggest that the interpreter is capable of taking the concept of a person that is conveyed in the text and subsequently 'imagine' an actual person.

Clearly such devices as metaphor and mimesis, which have been considered from the perspective of the reader, can have application, which when included in the text can make reference to personal being, though within the text existing not as Being-in but as being-present-at-hand-in-the-world, i.e. as a worldless entity. There is nothing to preclude intentional use by an author. However, the success of their referencing lies in the ability of another *Dasein*, as an interpreter, to re-animate the referencing in the interpreter's personal ontology of the self. This is not an insignificant observation and is to be pursued.

(b) The Being of the Text

The concept of fixation of discourse in writing is where the thinking concerning the 'being' of the text has stopped. Ricoeur, in connection with the question "What is a Text?" makes a definitive statement in saying: "Let us say that a text is any discourse fixed by writing."⁴² This concept of writing as fixation is in this "definition...constitutive of the text itself."⁴³ This is a statement of 'being,' and, as a statement of what constitutes a text (since the 'Preface' of *From Text to Action* is written by Ricoeur himself) it can only be assumed that

⁴¹ Heidegger, 82.

⁴² Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 101.

⁴³ Ibid.

the translators' choice of a word that refers to a state of 'being' is deliberate and acceptable to Ricoeur.⁴⁴ The text is discourse by other means than speech.⁴⁵

Vanhoozer's concept, referred to previously, is that what is fixed is a "*communicative act*" of an author.⁴⁶ He states: "I now wish to define the text as *a communicative act of a communicative agent fixed by writing*."⁴⁷ This is similar to Ricoeur's concept of the 'being' of the text. Vanhoozer's proposal is that the "proper ground for textual meaning" is the "communicative activity, not the subjectivity of the author."⁴⁸ Vanhoozer's concept has the advantage of setting up his own argument for the consideration of speech-act theory he will employ in developing meaning, plus the added advantage of maintenance of an importance of authorial intent. In a sense Vanhoozer's position seems an interpretation of Ricoeur's view that maintains the recognition of detachment from the consciousness of the author, consequently meaning is an issue related to the text apart from the consciousness of the author, but yet his view retains authorial impact in meaning.⁴⁹ The use of this phrase "*communicative act*" for what is fixed appears to be so as to distinguish it from the issue of consciousness in the psychologizing, hence subjectivism, of the Romantic era, decried by Ricoeur.⁵⁰ By distancing this from consciousness he can assert that, as with other completed human actions, there can be "determinate meaning," i.e. meaning of the author is fixed in this communicative act and can be determined, at least theoretically.⁵¹

Ricoeur does not dispute the idea of determinate meaning in relationship to speech as discourse.⁵² The concept of speech involves that of a personal ontology, which is coherent with Ricoeur's own value of the consideration of submitting epistemology to a correct ontology. However, as Ricoeur has demonstrated the text does not have a personal ontology but an ontology of an impersonal event. The restriction of consciousness, consequently of

⁴⁴ Ibid., xii.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 102-4. Ricoeur develops the idea that the text takes the place of speech in discourse.

⁴⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 225. (Italics original)

⁴⁷ Ibid. (Italics original)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 106-8. Vanhoozer discusses Ricoeur's concept in his development of his work as prefatory to developing his "Resurrection of the Author," which is part of the title of the Section of the book, 201-80.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 225. Vanhoozer places emphasis on this expression as avoiding subjectivity by getting into a discussion about consciousness of the author, yet retaining direct link to the author. He does not mention either Ricoeur or Romanticism in this context but does discuss both extensively earlier in the work.

⁵¹ Ibid. He states that the text "is what it is independently of our theories about and interpretations of it."

⁵² Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 29. He notes; "it is the same thing to understand what the speaker means and what his discourse means."

meaning to the meaning of the speaker, that is constitutive in personal ontology is loosed. Vanhoozer's concept of an act does not escape the ontology of the impersonal event; it simply seeks to retain authorial meaning, through maintaining authorial relationship with the text, as integral to the act.

In order to develop the idea of relationship of an author to their text Vanhoozer considers the work of art. He prefaces this with a comment about the issue of the terms begotten or made that the church fathers considered in regards to how the Son's relationship to the Father was to be considered. The concept of 'begotten' connotes likeness and 'made' connotes unlike, i.e. that which is begotten is like the one who begets and treated as a person, and, that which is made is unlike, not deserving of the same respect.⁵³ He then argues that a text, like a work of art, "eludes" the distinction between 'begotten' or 'made,' since a work of art is not the same as its creator nor is it completely foreign; Vanhoozer asserts it partakes of both.⁵⁴ The text and the work of art can be considered as "done" by their creator, i.e. "neither *me* nor *made* by me."⁵⁵

Vanhoozer then goes on to develop the subsequent idea that the work of art or text, on the issue of identity (which initiates the development of an ontology), is best viewed in Ricoeur's concept of *ipse*-identity.⁵⁶ As a result there is not sameness with the author but there is a constancy of relationship, such that the work of art or text alludes to its creator. However, in doing this it would seem he has either not understood this concept as developed by Ricoeur, or has simply decided to adapt it to his own use. Ricoeur does not see the concepts of *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity as alternate ways of viewing identity in the form of a choice between them. In an examination of Heidegger's concept of conscience, he notes that this Heideggerian concept "confirms my working hypothesis that the distinction between selfhood and sameness does not simply concern two constellations of meaning but involves two modes of being."⁵⁷ They are viewed as modes of being of the same being, i.e. the identity of being has two modes that act dialectically in identity. One does not exist or operate

⁵³ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 225.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* (Italics original)

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 225-6.

⁵⁷ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 309.

in the absence of the other. Vanhoozer's use suggests contrast in that he separates *idem* as a person from *ipse* as the text.

There is a problem that is exposed in his view that is revealed when he notes: "books are created in the image of their reasonable creators just as rational creatures are in the image of God."⁵⁸ This shows a compounding of the problem of the issue of identity just noted above. Here he equates person and thing in the concept of entity, which the discussion of Heidegger above has elucidated is a failure to realize the nature of 'being' of the entities. Equation allows meaning to be a function of entities in general but meaning relates to human 'being' not non-human 'being.' Yet if meaning is to be developed as a function of the text, which is what he seeks, this equation in some form must be implied or the primary aporia of moving from impersonal to personal ontology returns in force. Consequently, the impasse is not traversed. However, in seeking to discuss the nature of the text he has recognized that the simple distinction between the being of *Dasein* and entities present-at-hand is inadequate. There is a link between creator and creation.

There is a further potential problem for Vanhoozer's concept if he wishes to maintain the idea of stability of meaning as the author's meaning. The very nature of *ipse*-identity, as developed by Ricoeur and considered in the previous two chapters of this work, is that of change and adaptability. Hence to liken the text and work of art to this identity is to also admit changeability in selfhood and subsequently in interpretive meaning. The concept of identity that transcends time, hence being unchangeable, is *idem*-identity. It would seem reasonable to suggest that the concept of *ipse*-identity best equates with the post-modern concept of changeability of meaning associated with dealing with texts.

Vanhoozer introduces potential confusion, not only in the equation of entities, but also in not establishing of which entity he speaks. Clearly in the sense of *idem* the author is not the same as the text and the text is not the same as its author. However, in selfhood this is also true, i.e. the selfhood of the author is not the selfhood of the text. In Ricoeur *idem* and *ipse* are modes of the same being. Consideration of the very idea of fixity, prominent in both Vanhoozer and Ricoeur, carries the implication that in identity of the text as text *idem*-identity

⁵⁸ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 226.

is more appropriate. The author's text does not change within time, it remains the same text, hence the concept of fixity.

The issue of change concerns the issue of meaning, and meaning is a function of persons, the author and interpreter individually, not a function of impersonal entities such as the text. The 'I create' of the author and the 'I interpret' of the interpreter are both unique in that both are prefaced with 'I' and these entities cannot be substituted for one another. Translation does not change the original text although it introduces possible changes of meaning due to the nature of translation; hence translation is best undertaken with texts as close to the original text of the author's as possible, within critical disciplines. It is important to also realize the direction of the flow of thought, i.e. the 'I interpret' of the interpreter is that of seeking an understanding of the 'I create' of the author. The issue of changing meaning is a function of the audience not the author, since the 'I create' of the author does not change as the 'I' of the author does not change, unlike that of the audience. The apparent change is due to differing 'I's engaging the text, i.e. the author remains the same but the audience changes. The apparent change in meaning is simply a relative understanding of the meaning the author had, i.e. it is an appropriation of the *idem*-identity of the text that occurs within the *ipse*-identity of the interpreter.

Vanhoozer's primary focus is that of speech acts, i.e. locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. Hence, his primary focus is the ontology of the impersonal event. He attempts to project beyond this to impact on the interpreter by implying that the momentum of the "illocutionary force" carries it through to impact on the interpreter.⁵⁹ This is an attempt to traverse the impasse of epistemology to ontology by brute force of the illocutionary act, but in the end a square peg does not fit a round hole. It has been noted previously that the impersonal ontology of the *what?* of the text is terminal in that it fails to pass to the ontology of the self of the interpreter, hence focus on the act as the means of understanding meaning results in having to resort to things such as the suggestion of force, or transcending, to pass the impasse. Ricoeur's modeling offers far more potential for understanding how otherness can be applied to the self. He has simply ignored or been blinded to the 'I create' of the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 229.

author, and, the resultant 'being' of the text that is the result of creation. The work of Vanhoozer has re-recognized the importance of the 'I create' and this must be pursued.

Ong challenges this concept of fixity of discourse calling it a "widespread and fundamental" error, which is that "to put an utterance in writing is to remove it from this state of oral discourse and thus to "fix" it."⁶⁰ Ong asserts that there is no way to fix discourse by writing; text separates the utterance and utterer "who, once he has written down his text, may as well be dead."⁶¹ The written text acts as an interruption of discourse, an effect that will "string it out indefinitely in time and space."⁶² The text exists as "a visual design" and only becomes utterance, hence the resumption of discourse, in "a living person's mind."⁶³ Meaning is the result of the act of resumption of discourse in the reader.⁶⁴ In this situation meaning is posterior and, logically in this situation, the result is the conclusion of Derrida; the text is simply signs referring to other signs, the meaning of which is wholly the province of the reader.⁶⁵

Ong has highlighted the logical conclusion that would arise in Heidegger's concept of ontology, i.e. the text is not a *Dasein* and is an entity present-at-hand that is given meaning by a *Dasein*. The being of this entity is that of a visual design, words on a piece of paper. The issues of language and meaning belong to an entity with the kind of being *Dasein* has. The text is portrayed as having *idem*-identity but only achieves *ipse*-identity, i.e. selfhood and expression, in the interaction with an entity such as *Dasein*. However, Vanhoozer has highlighted the inadequacy of such a view in dealing with the work of art, i.e. that which is composed by a creator, either art or literature. It seems that Heidegger's concept of the ontology of entities is either deficient or there is some other aspect that should be evaluated. Consequently, there is either another category of entity or modification within a category. There is also a need to investigate what it is within the consciousness of human being that can result in attribution of a dimension of being, which is itself unique to the kind of being *Dasein* has.

⁶⁰ Ong, "Interpretation," 8.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* The thinking of Ong results in the same conclusions of Derrida, as is revealed when Ong asserts meaning only emerges in an extra-textual situation, thus "All text is pretext."

Ricoeur highlights what he calls the 'the thing of the text' or 'world of the text.'⁶⁶ He states: "I can say that it is the central category, both for philosophical hermeneutics and for biblical hermeneutics."⁶⁷ This is the object of hermeneutics,⁶⁸ not the written marks but this world, thing or matter, of the text. As has been considered elsewhere in this dissertation, in Ricoeur's thought this world opens up before the interpreter. The problem is that in the Heideggerian ontology, which Ricoeur uses as his basis, the text as an entity present-at-hand is worldless, with the result that any 'world' is the projection of the interpreter and not the text.⁶⁹ As noted above the issue in this situation is one of self-projection not understanding of that which is other than self. Like the work of Vanhoozer considered above, Ricoeur has to move to what Ong has styled as the extra-textual to do justice to the work of art that is the text. This is in essence the topic that Thiselton surveys in his discussion of the philosophical background of the hermeneutics of metacriticism.⁷⁰ Whilst not highlighting it as such, all three writers converge on this issue of the being of the text and the assumption as fact that it is an entity present-at-hand; this is an inadequate concept of the being of the text. Consideration of the concept of the work of art shows the way forward.

(c) A Dilemma of Being: Neither *Dasein* nor Present-at-hand

There is a sense in which the 'work of art' that is a painting, as an entity present-at-hand, is simply paints on canvas. Similarly the 'work of art' that is a statue, as an entity present-at-hand, is simply a block of stone or marble. Yet a 'being' with the kind of 'being' *Dasein* has, perceives and understands a mode of 'being' not described in the present-at-hand description of paints on a canvas or block of marble. The 'being' as 'work of art' has an opaqueness and the 'being' of that which is present-at-hand a transparency. One 'sees' the work of art and 'seeing' the present-at-hand requires a deliberate re-orientation, such as in critiquing, in order to be seen.

The same holds true for the text. One reads the text as discourse, neither as print on paper, nor even as language, but it is the discourse, or composition, that one reads. The

⁶⁶ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 91.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 92.

⁶⁹ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 317. Ricoeur places the concept of otherness ontologically within the realm of selfhood, not that which is added to the self. Hence projection of 'world' as otherness is a projection within selfhood.

⁷⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 313-43.

matter of the text has an opaqueness, and hermeneutics specifically deals with this opaqueness, as Ricoeur has observed, noted above. This 'being' is different from that of the present-at-hand; though having the appearance of being related to it, for one cannot be seen without the other. The entities are linked but not identical. It would seem tempting to move to what appears as inferred, which is Ricoeur's concept, mentioned above, of differing modes of being, which is in essence what Vanhoozer attempted to do.

Before exploring the nature of this being further there is another important observation that can be made. The Observer can look at the 'work of art' without moving beyond observation and perception itself, i.e. without raising any thought of interpretation. In the case of the text, one can read without interpreting, yet to interpret one must read, hence reading is a prior requisite of interpretation. However, it is not necessary to move beyond that appreciation of reading by engaging in interpretation. It is the work of Ricoeur that gives insight into this phenomenon. Ricoeur observes that *ipse*-identity, i.e. selfhood, has within it the ability to see self as another. Therefore, as it were, within selfhood is the ability to distance oneself from self (yet remain oneself) and therefore, to extend this idea, to enter the world of the matter of the text, without making that which is other than self become that of self.

Therefore, the locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act can all be experienced, understood and appreciated without traversing the epistemological ground into the ontology of self. There is nothing about the illocutionary act itself that possess the force to move the interpreter forward. The decision to interpret is a movement subsequent to these acts. Reading can quite happily terminate at the perlocutionary act, as is generally done with a novel. Even if one decides that a text will be interpreted before engaging the text, the interpreter will have to become a reader and listener before he or she can become an interpreter. It is a mistake to equate reading and interpretation, as reading remains within the ontology of the event but interpretation requires a shift in ontological emphasis.

The above observations raise two separate, yet related issues. What is the nature of the mode of being that is the composition, as 'work of art' or as 'text?' Secondly, how is it that an entity with the kind of 'being' *Dasein* has can perceive this mode of 'being,' and yet, though

it is available in that which is present-at-hand, an entity without this kind of 'being' cannot perceive it, though they see it?

(d) The Being of the Composition

In essence the difference between paints on a canvas or a block of marble and a 'work of art' is authorial intent. The creator imposes their will through the use of brushes and paints or sculpturing tools upon the canvas or block of marble, in order to create the work of art. Similarly, the author of a text imposes their will upon *langue* in an act of *parole* to create the discourse that is portrayed in the written text. The printed page and the words on the page are vehicles for mediating the composition, i.e. the matter of the text. What the observer sees is a representation due to an authorial intent. Without that authorial intent there is no 'work of art,' i.e. there is no entity of the composition, just that of the text.

The authorial intent in this case is not an aspect of the consciousness of the author, which was operational in production of the 'work or art' or text. It is a reconstruction from an author's consciousness of what the author saw presented for viewing, so that the observer can see what the author saw. It is not only *what is*, but also *what the author saw in what is*, i.e. in the case of the text, what is said and what is said about it considered in the context in which it is to be understood. The authorial intent is not what the creator saw, but the means of 'seeing' what the author saw, and results in the vehicle of publication, i.e. making public that which was private, or, the communication of what they saw.

Consequently, Vanhoozer's focus on the *communicative act* is understandable and moves in the right direction, and epistemology should review the concept of the *communicative act* as one aspect of its task. However, the object of the author, or creator, is not the *communicative act* itself, which is primarily a vehicle to *represent* what they saw so as to *present* what they saw; the object of the author/creator is the *seeing* of what they saw. Hence the authorial intent is ontic in nature, in that it relates to the disclosure of entities and a view of a world. Its purpose, within the text or 'work of art,' is to make the observer aware of being of the 'work of art' or text. The Heideggerian concept of understanding, focused as it is on 'seeing,'⁷¹ is more to the thought of what the author desires. The *communicative act* is the

⁷¹ Heidegger, 186.

intentionally done of the author in order to communicate what is seen. The author desires, in this sense, that the observer understand what they understood. Heidegger clarifies the conception of sight so as to move beyond the physical act of seeing, so that sight “lets entities which are accessible to it be encountered unconcealedly in themselves.”⁷² In the process of understanding ‘being’ is perceived in its connectedness, hence its relationship to reality, and is given its value in the world of the one seeing.⁷³

In this sense the authorial intent is that which positions observers for viewing and presents to them the world viewed from that origin. The authorial intent is not the act of viewing or what is seen, it is the positioning of observers so that they see what the author saw. An observer can see a world, but if that observer doesn’t position himself or herself where the author was positioned, they won’t see what the author saw.

What the author seeks is sameness of sight, i.e. *sameness of understanding* (in the Heideggerian sense), *not sameness of meaning*, which is personal and different. The meaning observers will give to what they what they ‘see’ is impacted by the interconnections of their own unique consciousness. Thinking, and hence development of meaning, is a derivative of understanding, i.e. it is subsequent to understanding.⁷⁴ Interpretation is, as noted above, a further derivative of thinking, as it is always ‘I interpret.’ Interpretation is always grounded in an understanding ‘I’ already have, a “*fore-sight*.”⁷⁵ Heidegger asserts that when something is understood it is still veiled (to self is implied), and it is the appropriation to and by the self in the act of interpretation, which is the unveiling.⁷⁶ This interaction of what is understood and its appropriation, or the rudiments of the hermeneutical “circle,” is the essence of the structuring of meaning.⁷⁷ Consequently “All interpretation is grounded on understanding.”⁷⁸

Schleiermacher states that for him it is a canon that “in order to understand the first part correctly, the whole must have already been understood.”⁷⁹ This is the essence of what

⁷² Ibid., 187.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 191.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Heidegger states that which is veiled in this way “becomes conceptualizable through interpretation.”

⁷⁷ Ibid., 195.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, 217.

Heidegger asserts, but with the additional observation that this apprehension of the whole involves the presuppositions of the interpreter.⁸⁰ In the case of dealing with a text, one already speaks and has understanding of the language they are to interpret, or interpretation is impossible. However, possession of a language involves *fore-sight* in the sense of understanding, even if only purely on a Saussurian basis, i.e. the referential nature of signifier and signified. Culture and subsequent sub-culturation, as previously noted, impacts language beyond this basic level. Previous encounter with an author, or another author from the same era or tradition will also impact this “*fore-sight*.” All of which goes to emphasize that Heidegger’s assertion is well attested to.

The concept of ‘distanciation,’ developed by Ricoeur based on Gadamer’s work, has its origins here in Heidegger’s work. This distancing is not just an element of time but the recognition that every interpreter, and author, has their own unique set of presuppositions, irrespective of the degree of similarity of presuppositions. As a result sameness of meaning is illusory. There is an appearance of the possibility of sameness of meaning but it remains unachievable. If one accepts the reasoning of Pannenberg that the idea of God and the absolute is part of human being, then there is only one point at which sameness of understanding, as sight, and sameness of meaning become coincident, i.e. from the divine perspective or the point of origin (i.e. to ‘see’ from the same place with the same set of presuppositions). It has been noted before that Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Ricoeur all agree on this point, i.e. no theologian, or for that matter person, enjoys “the God’s eye view.”⁸¹ Every human being only ever has a relative view of God’s view of that which is absolute.

Nevertheless, similarity of presuppositions (hence understanding) obviously can possibly result in similarity of meaning. In his epistle to the Philippians Paul declared of Timothy, whom he had trained and travelled with, that in Paul’s estimation Timothy was ‘like-minded,’ i.e. by implication he had sameness of understanding seeing things the same way Paul himself did and possessing the same essential presuppositions. Thus Paul could be confident that the meaning Timothy would give or apply, and act upon, would have a large degree of similarity to that of himself. Therefore, within a community, e.g. the Christian

⁸⁰ Heidegger, 192.

⁸¹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 309.

community, broad agreement of presuppositions will result in similarity of meaning, which theoretically can approach extremely closely to sameness, but within human being-ness sameness of meaning remains illusory.

Although sameness of meaning is illusory this is not the case for sameness of understanding. It is logical that two people can stand at exactly the same place and see the same world. As Heidegger noted, physical eyesight is a general concept that falls within the provenance of understanding. Consequently, it is reasonable to assert that what one understands can be explained and what is explained can be understood. In essence this simple concept is what Ricoeur develops in this dialectic of 'explanation and understanding' in dealing with interpretation of texts. The very concept of understanding links epistemology and ontology, i.e. it involves both description and the being of the entity. It does this without being solely the province of either epistemology or ontology. The relationship between them is that each seeks and needs the other in understanding, i.e. it is not a matter of either/or, nor is it a matter of mutual exclusivity, but it is rather an interdependence in understanding.

Sameness of meaning implies both sameness of understanding and sameness of thinking. Ricoeur has recognized this is the error of Romanticism that leads to disjunction due to the aporia in the relationship of epistemology and ontology. Ricoeur's answer, to the 'revelation' of 'distanciation' is to remove the issue from that of meaning of the author to meaning of the text, i.e. separated from the psyche of the author. His problem is that as much as he may desire to return to otherness to circumvent a self-centered 'world,' the only otherness possible is a self-projection.⁸² In separating and thereby losing the author in the process of interpretation, he has lost the very thing he seeks, i.e. the potential for sameness of understanding,⁸³ hence in his theory of interpretation explanation is not the author's but the interpreter's. The reason is that although he can view the same world the author viewed, i.e. the content or matter of the text, he has lost the point of origin, the place from which to view

⁸² Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 329. Ricoeur notes that there "is not a single one of our analyses in which this specific passivity of the self affected by the other than self is not announced." Ricoeur regards the experience of otherness as a "passivity" related to phenomenological discourse, as the counterpart of ontological discourse, which is the experience of the attestation of otherness, 318. This implies the concept of otherness experienced from the 'self' side of the experience. Therefore, his desire for otherness is evident, but the route to otherness is always self. It would seem that what transpires is a *self-consciousness* of otherness rather than a *self* conscious of others.

⁸³ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 93. Ricoeur believes that the end result of his interpretation theory is an understanding of the author more faithful to the concept advanced by Schleiermacher.

the world that gives sameness of understanding, i.e. the authorial intent. In so doing he has also lost the ontology of the being of that which is other than self.

The nature of 'understanding' links the public domains of both author and interpreter. The failure to recognize that 'thinking' is a derivative of understanding, as outlined by Heidegger, leads to the epistemological approach that results in the understanding of 'understanding' as essentially derivative of thinking. Ricoeur's work has brilliantly brought to light that epistemology should lead to ontology but in the process an ontological shift is essential. This shift occurs in 'understanding.' Ricoeur's observation, based on the work of Gadamer and Heidegger, that the proper concerns of epistemology should be submitted to ontology, together with what has just been discussed, point to the realization that ontology provides the context of the world of the content, i.e. epistemology is conducted in the context of a recognized ontology.

Therefore, to engage in epistemological tasks, such as exegesis, without first considering the ontology of the text, moves the content, the world described in the text, out of orbit. The only *idem*-identity in this situation is that of the present-at-hand texts of language on some form of media, and the result is that the being of the 'work of art,' or composition, which is linked to but not identical with the text, is lost. Consequently, both aspects of identity of being of the composition are lost, i.e. both the *idem*- and *ipse*- identities. The apparent retention of *idem*-identity in the present-at-hand text is illusory. The *idem*-identity of the present-at-hand text is sufficiently broad, which Ricoeur labels as its 'polysemy,' so that the primary identity of the work of art is now determined by the *ipse*-identity, or selfhood, assigned by the interpreter. Otherness, as otherness, has been totally divested from the text. All that remain in the text will be the foundational remnants, highlighted in the epistemological description of ontological statements that relate to the 'being' of the text. The ascription of 'being' is lost to interpretation. It is therefore asserted that the nature of 'being' of the text is not equivalent to the nature of 'being' of the composition and 'being' of the composition must be retained.

(e) Created-ness and 'Being'

This implication should not be passed over without further consideration, i.e. the implication that the concept of 'being' of the text and 'being' of the composition are not simply modes of 'being' of the same entity. A digitized copy, as in a photograph, of the paints on canvas retains the 'being' of the 'work of art,' although the 'being' of the paints on canvas is now severed from the work of art. An entity with the same kind of 'being' that *Dasein* has can still 'understand,' or 'see' with appreciation, the 'being' of the entity that is the 'work of art.' In one sense the 'being' of the 'work of art' in each case is interchangeable, one with the other. However, those of the text on paper and the digitization are not.

Thiselton in a discussion of illocutionary acts alludes to the same issue. His object is to differentiate between the idea of informing in a text (which relates to a descriptive task) and the action a text performs, e.g. in a text describing worship an act of worship is actually performed.⁸⁴ He builds upon the work of Wolterstorff and Walhout et al, to show that a number of illocutionary acts can be performed in, or by, a text.⁸⁵ Essentially what he is pointing out is that a text can not only act referentially but also bring about a state of being. If this is the case then these aspects, or actions, must be considered as the ontological context within which the *what* of the action can be examined epistemologically. This being is attributable to (hence an attribute of) the one performing the act, whether the author of the text or a character within the text.

Thiselton acknowledges the problematic nature of this movement from text to "states of affairs outside language" and turns to the work of Searle as a basis for promoting discussion.⁸⁶ Thiselton takes note that Searle differentiated between "institutional facts" and "brute facts," e.g. in a person's act of bequeathing by writing a will there is an institutional fact of actually bringing about a state of being, i.e. transfer of property, and a brute fact of the text itself.⁸⁷ Perhaps the most illustrative example referred to is Searle's concept of currency, where the brute fact of the piece of paper is a separate issue to the institutional fact of being

⁸⁴ Thiselton, "Communicative Action and Promise," 144.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 145.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

actual currency supported by a government.⁸⁸ A state of being is brought about, and an entity created, that is linked to another entity but is distinguishable from it, i.e. the entities of currency and a piece of paper. This even holds in relationship to the example of the work of art described above, i.e. although a digitized copy of currency is not currency it is identifiable as an entity in the copy. It is suggested that rather than attempting to find accommodation within the epistemological task, the ontological task is primary, i.e. identification of the being created, and hence the concept of the illocutionary act described is ontological. Epistemology rightly then is employed to examine the *what* of the being, which can ultimately move to the selfhood of the interpreter, as highlighted in Ricoeur. The act of worship by an author of a text, once understood as an act and what was done in the act, can promote intention to act in the interpreter. The 'intentioned-ness' of the text, and not just its description, is critical to the 'intention to' of the interpreter.

A further important observation that can be made is that two independent 'beings' can perceive the same 'work of art' without the need of one consciousness revealing it to the other.⁸⁹ Consequently, the 'being' of the 'work of art,' though seemingly 'being' that is uniquely perceived by the entity with the kind of 'being' *Dasein* has, and largely therefore viewed by a sight beyond physical sight in the imagination, nevertheless exists independent of any one particular imagination. It also *therefore exists independently* of the imagination of the author-creator that gave it existence. As a result, it is inferred as an entity that is neither purely *Dasein*, though only this kind of being understands it, nor is it purely 'being' of the present-at-hand, although it is present-at-hand in being accessible to any *Dasein*. It is 'being' that exists in a dimension that defies the classifications so far advanced. In Vanhoozer's discussion of seeking to consider the issue of 'begotten and made,' in considering the text as 'work of art,' he noted that the answer is elusive. He sought the differentiation in a mode of being, by resorting to Ricoeur's concept of identity. However, the answer lies in a recognition of a separate 'being' itself and not relegation to a mode of 'being.'

It is suggested that the term that allows the differentiation as a category of 'being' is that of 'to create.' Other than when applied to the concept of 'divine fiat' of '*creare ex nihilo*' –

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 102.

to create from nothing – the word carries the idea of the causing of existence, hence ‘being,’ of some new entity from what is present-at-hand. However, though the entity so created is composed from that which is present-at-hand, it is also, due to the imposition of authorial intent in the act of creation, or act of *parole* in the case of a text, an entity whose ‘being’ is distinct from that of which it is composed. Therefore, following the Heideggerian understanding, it is similar to *Dasein*, in the sense that it can be present-at-hand and yet, like *Dasein*, but unlike the purely present-at-hand entity, it is not ‘worldless,’ hence ‘unmeaning.’ This fulfils what Vanhoozer observed, concerning the ‘work of art,’ that it “is neither the same as nor wholly different from its creator.”⁹⁰

Vanhoozer considers the issue of the recognition of a ‘work of art’ being identifiable with a particular person in his explication of the need of differentiation due to recognition that, though the work is not the person, there is some continuity with the person in the work.⁹¹ Thus the created work can be seen to inherently make some reference back to its creator. This operational principle would seem to be what the author of the biblical text is alluding to in Rom. 1:19-20. This recognition in the biblical text helps to further clarify the concept of reference to the creator of a work. The entity that is created, in the case of the biblical text of Rom. 1:19-20 “the world,” makes reference not to the personality, therefore psyche, of the creator, but does inherently reflect attributes, in the sense of qualities and characteristics, of its creator. In Ps. 19:1-4 the psalmist views the world as itself a communicator, i.e. it is implied that the world has ‘being’ that is essentially similar to that of a text by an author.⁹² Because it is a text, in understanding its content, i.e. the matter of the text, is recognition of attribution of qualities and characteristics attributable *to* the person not attribution *of* personality. It is suggested that this attribution is due to the similarity to presence, which the

⁹⁰ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 225. It is interesting that Vanhoozer uses the term ‘create’ but essentially passes over its significance, without recognizing that the term itself attracts the very differentiation he sought. In using its noun form he passed over its verbal significance as a transitive verb. As suggested his answer lay in mode of ‘being’ and therefore did not consider the imparting of ‘being’ inherent in the verbal form of ‘create.’

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁹² Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 96&101. Gadamer develops a similar principle in the ‘speaking’ work of art. In consideration of the natural world, although he considers its aesthetics he does not recognize it as a work of art in the sense of what a person does, 97. If he did then Ps.19 would be seen in this same light. In this his presupposition of a disregard of the world as created is revealed. This aspect of the ‘speaking’ of the work of art in Gadamer’s work is considered again below.

ascription by the author of 'being' bestows, i.e. this tendency to attribution is inherent within the text not just due to speculation by the interpreter.

This concept of identification with a creator is inherent within all created entities. It is well recognized that types of cars are associated with a particular automotive company. Not only are physical attributes recognized but also characteristics, such as reliability, economy etc. These attributes are not recognition of *idem* or *ipse* identities of the present-at-hand materials that do constitute a physical being, they belong to the created entity as linked to its creator. Therefore, anecdotally the biblical recognition of the created world as manifesting, or revealing to be seen and hence understood, attributes of the creator is not a religious interpretation but a religious application. What the world reveals is that the creation, as a created entity, reveals that its creator clearly has the attributes of immense power and a status of divinity. The only presupposition is that of metaphysics of presence. Interpreters, holding a presupposition of metaphysics of absence, recognize this in their understanding, and subsequently distance themselves from it in meaning. Nevertheless, sameness of understanding is possible despite metaphysical presuppositions that prevent sameness of meaning.

The above discussion began on an issue of understanding texts and was extended to works of art in general, with the inclusion of texts as a form of a work of art. However, in the course of the discussion an important implication suggests itself, which is that the work of art and text are themselves particular cases of the 'being' of the created entity as the general category. There is sufficient reason to suggest this being is a distinct 'being' that is neither *Dasein* nor purely that of the present-at-hand. The rudimentary proposal of a definition of 'created being,' as a result of these observations, is that 'created being' is the imposition of authorial intention, or creative will of the creator, upon the present-at-hand so that the identity of the entity so 'created' is not 'understood,' or 'seen,' as either that of the creator or the present-at-hand, but a different entity whose identity is only understood by, or visible to, an entity whose 'being' is the same kind of 'being' as *Dasein*.

During a discussion of aesthetics and hermeneutics Gadamer, in consideration of the communicability of the work of art, notes that whatever directly addresses a person takes on

person-like appearance.⁹³ This should be distinguished from anthropomorphism where person-like characteristics are attributed to the present-at-hand by the observer to aid understanding.⁹⁴ The work of art directly communicates in a direct engagement of the observer.⁹⁵ Thus it seems a distinction should be made between an appearance of person-likeness and behaving with person-likeness, i.e. the entity actually taking person-likeness. The present-at-hand, being worldless and unmeaning, however, can only have the appearance of person-likeness as that which is attributed to it, and as a result is only an object of understanding. Gadamer's reasoning presents the work of art as acting as subject in understanding, not just being conferred with subject-likeness by the observer. Whilst the concept of 'distanciation' can be argued as leading to detachment of the authorial intention, as related to the psyche of the author, from a text, it is this concept of the work of art acting as subject that is in essence what allows, or presents, the appearance of the possibility of autonomy. It is no wonder that Gadamer saw importance in art and aesthetics in relationship to hermeneutics.

Yet, in recognizing this aspect of the work of art, Gadamer has inadvertently demonstrated that the being of the work of art cannot be that of the present-at-hand. Also, as Gadamer and Ricoeur, as well as many others, have argued, the text, or work of art, also cannot have the attribution of personality or psyche. This would open the door to a return of Romantic theories of interpretation and place the issue back on Dilthey's ground. Consequently, it must be directly inferred that there is an entity whose being is not that of the present-at-hand, although it is present-at-hand, and not that of *Dasein*, although it does have inherent characteristics of *Dasein* ascribed to it, allowing this entity to act with person-likeness. The source and hence image of this person-likeness must be the creator, since it is other than the observer. This is implied in its ability to confront the observer, as Gadamer has pointed out. Further, as Gadamer has observed the work of art continues to act as a work of art in the absence of its creator.⁹⁶ Therefore, this person-likeness is not that which is an

⁹³ Ibid., 101.

⁹⁴ Note that when *Dasein* is treated as present-at-hand, as discussed in Heidegger above, it still retains the concept of a person, as in a text. Thus it becomes essentially a self-attribution, unlike that entity whose being is present-at-hand, which requires attribution by an observer.

⁹⁵ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 95.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 96.

extension of the 'being' of the creator, but it is an intentional presence of the creator that confers the being. This 'being' of the entity is the 'created being' described above.

Before further examination of this being it is important to ask if this 'being' is simply a result of imagination, and therefore only an appearance of 'being' and not 'being' of an entity, i.e. is it that the arguments for its identity are illusory in themselves? Gadamer endorses the concept of phenomenology's criticism in proposing as an error the conceiving of 'aesthetic being' as a mode of 'being.'⁹⁷ Does this constitute a challenge to proposing 'created being?' The aesthetic has an appearance of being, but in fact is an aspect of consciousness.⁹⁸ In essence the work of art only has 'being' in the consciousness of an individual.⁹⁹ Certainly it must be conceded that the idea of beauty and aesthetics are a judgment of the individual and are unique to that individual.

However, this simply implies that aesthetic consciousness is that aspect of consciousness by which one apprehends the work of art; it does not imply that this is what creates the work of art. Aesthetics is to do with making relative to self that which is understood. Therefore, it may make the judgment on a work of art relative to self but it does not determine the 'being' of the created entity. Consequently, the judgment that a work of art is beautiful or otherwise, or that it is masterful or ineffective, or that it even raises to the level of work of art, is indeed the observer's response to the 'communicating' work of art. None of this changes the intentionality that makes it a work of art. Aesthetics offers no grounds for dismissal of the concept of 'created being,' but it does highlight that this 'being' is perceptible only to a 'being' whose 'being' is the same kind of 'being' as *Dasein*.

This entity of 'created being' is able to speak, in the sense of communicate, after the fashion of a person. As noted in the previous chapter there is reasonable grounds to suggest the idea of a 'speaking voice,' as associated with a text, which is not the person of the author, but when understood within metaphysics of presence does act as a representative of the author. The nature of 'created being' confirms and gives identity to that voice. It is the observations by Gadamer on the work of art that offer great insight into the 'speaking voice.'

⁹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 75.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 76.

The work of art not only communicates itself but also in doing this “occupies a timeless present.”¹⁰⁰ The addressing of the observer also occurs such that “absolute contemporaneity exists between the work and its present beholder that persists unhampered despite every intensification of the historical consciousness.”¹⁰¹ Gadamer goes on to say: “The reality of the work of art and its expressive power cannot be restricted to its original historical horizon, in which the beholder was actually the contemporary of the creator.”¹⁰² If this is true, then its “reality,” or ‘being,’ and “expressive power,” or ability to relate itself to the reality of the observer, stands effectively outside time. In this sense it takes on essentially a characteristic of transcendence, which Gadamer does see in language, as has previously been considered in relationship to his thinking.

Yet here a true conundrum exists in the sense in that, what stands effectively outside time¹⁰³ does not undergo change. However, Gadamer and Ricoeur are both adamant that meaning is not fixed as unchangeable but does undergo change in interpretation by an interpreter. As has been agreed to and noted in this work there is not only room, but, considering the personal ontology of meaning that links it to the self, it is inevitable that meaning will undergo at least nuance of change due to differing interpreters. The real issue should be sameness of understanding, or perception, prior to appropriation to the world of self in meaning. The concept of sameness of understanding certainly is consistent with the unchanging, due to a timeless nature, as the nature of the composition. The question must be pursued as to why sameness of understanding, and not undergoing change, can result in difference of meaning, therefore undergoing change, and yet be the same composition? In other words how is the absolute made relative without being absolutely known?

Ricoeur, in what is agreed by Thiselton to be a brilliant insight and employed by Vanhoozer, as noted above, has opened up the means of understanding this conundrum. As covered in the previous two chapters of this dissertation, Ricoeur identified two modes of ‘being’ concerning identity, which were that of *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity, which act dialectically in identity. The concept of permanence in time is a highly significant feature of

¹⁰⁰ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 96.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ To be timeless, as Gadamer asserts, is an equivalent idea.

idem-identity.¹⁰⁴ The opposing pole of the dialectic in *ipse*-identity features the sense of change and variability.¹⁰⁵ Ricoeur notes, “identity in the sense of *ipse* implies no assertion concerning some unchanging core of personality.”¹⁰⁶ Selfhood is the identity explored in that of *ipse* identity. Consequently, the identity inherent in the text relates to the mode of *idem*-identity, not *ipse*-identity as suggested by Vanhoozer. Selfhood, in relation to the text, occurs when engaged by an interpreter, i.e. the *ipse*-identity is a function of the interpreter in encounter with the text. Hence the concept of sameness of understanding is not mutually exclusive with that of difference of meaning. It is the dialectic of the two poles of the differing modes of ‘being’ that result in the interpreted understanding, i.e. a relative understanding of an absolute. One pole is within the text and the other within the interpreter, thus interrelating both.

This nature extends to all created, or made, entities. The previous example of a motor vehicle is seen in that the created state gives it functional *idem*-identity. However, the passage of time can render it a classic, so that the *ipse*-identity established in encounter with *Dasein* can cause its selfhood to almost rise to the status of work of art. Yet it remains in its *idem*-identity a car. Although Heidegger was not using this terminology he noted the same nature of the created, or made, entity. Heidegger noted that antiquities in a museum belong to past time and yet are still present-at-hand as contemporary.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, they remain items of use, as what they were, but are now out of use.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, their *idem*-identity is manifest as what they were, but their *ipse*-identity is related to the present understanding, i.e. they have a conferred selfhood that alters their meaning, but the understanding remains the same. Their present value is not related to their *idem*-identity, but is now related to their place in time and therefore their *ipse*-identity. The text as composition and the work of art are simply particular examples of the entity of ‘created-being.’

The recognition that the work of art and the composition are both particular examples of the entity of ‘created being,’ not modes of the same being, also requires that they be

¹⁰⁴ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* (Italics original)

¹⁰⁷ Heidegger, 431.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 432.

considered separately, as individual entities, as well as together as examples of 'created being.' An important distinction suggests itself in a consideration of the understanding of each, i.e. what is being viewed. The work of art is suggested by something the author perceives in consideration of their world. This can be a landscape, person, a tragedy etc, or even characteristics such as pathos, pain love etc; the important thing is that the author sees something or someone they will represent in the work of art. The direction of perception, i.e. the thing to be viewed, is not what the author saw but the representation of what they saw, i.e. the work of art. The referent of the work of art is not what is to be viewed but it is the position from which the work of art itself is to be viewed. For example, in Michelangelo's statue of *David*, the observer does not look at the statue to see a man, but rather, from the place of the 'being' of a man to consider the statue. The situation with the text as composition is the reverse of this situation. The thing to be viewed is the referent of the text not the text itself as in the work of art; this referent is the matter of the composition. In this instance the text is the place from which the referent is viewed. Gadamer's use of the work of art as a basis for severing any ties to the place in history of the work of art is misleading,¹⁰⁹ since in the case of the text as composition, to view the text itself as the work of art is not to understand, or 'see,' the composition, i.e. it is to *not* see what the author saw.

The above discloses the concept of identity related to the nature of the being of the text as composition. Gadamer's consideration of the aesthetic would suggest that he would regard the implication of 'created being' as an order of error comparable to that of the concept of 'aesthetic being.' However, it is Gadamer's observations that actually point to the actuality of this 'being,' hence indicating existence as an entity and not just as an experience of consciousness. As mentioned above Gadamer stressed the ability of the work of art, not only to directly communicate, but also to do so in a confronting way.¹¹⁰ Therefore, like the kind of 'being' *Dasein* possesses it is capable of 'touching' the person. However, Heidegger explained that this phenomenon of 'touching' was unique to *Dasein*.¹¹¹ The text as

¹⁰⁹ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 101-3. This is a constant theme of this article in the book; however, these pages specifically address the issue and the perceived relationship to texts. It is interesting that although he uses the concept of art as an analogy for the textual situation, he does recognize the difference of focus, 101.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹¹¹ Heidegger, 81.

composition therefore possesses this person-likeness that is an attribute of *Dasein*, that of 'touching.'

Nevertheless, though it itself is capable of being touched by *Dasein*, it is incapable of experiencing that touch, which is consistent with its present-at-hand 'being' and lack of personality as an entity, and as such it remains unchanged by that touch. As suggested above the nature of its being is disclosed as neither *Dasein*, nor yet wholly that which is present-at-hand and worldless. Therefore, it is sound to suggest that this 'being,' at this point described as 'created being,' is indeed an entity. The 'world' of the text, which is so important to Ricoeur's thinking, belongs to the *idem*-identity of the text and cannot be interpreted with an *ipse*-identity in its encounter as self-projection without first considering its ontology, which Ricoeur does not do. The otherness of the text relates to its possession of *idem* not *ipse* identity.

(f) 'Intentioned-ness' and Being

The concept of the 'speaking voice' and that of 'touching' both imply the complementary concept of 'intention.' Intention is a directed act of a consciousness, and therefore it is that of a person.¹¹² 'Intention to' leads to an intentional act. However, this not only relates to the creation of that which is made, it also relates to the thing made. Created being has directedness, often related to functionality, i.e. its existence, from the perspective of the creator, relates to what it is intended to do, or achieve. Whether ones speaks concerning the car or computer, or entities such as the work of art and text, they have a directedness, which is the result of an 'intention to' of the author, that must be co-operated with in order to function in accordance with purpose.

The concept of communication implies itself the concept of engaging someone in an act of communication. In the case of the work of art, the work of art has within it 'intention to' confront, to use Gadamer's word of what it does, and present itself to an observer. The object of the creator is for the observer to go to the work of art itself. It uses its referent as the place of viewing, in order to draw attention to itself, by engaging the *ipse*-identity, i.e. the

¹¹² Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 67. This is the essence of the phenomenological description. This issue is discussed by Ricoeur, 67-87, covering both the idea of the act and that of the idea of 'intention to,' in relating intention to the agent. This has been discussed at more length in the previous chapter.

selfhood, of the observer. In the case of the text of a composition the 'intention to' is to refer the reader to its referent, i.e. its world, so that the world of the text is viewed from the text.

This is the sense to which Ricoeur attracts in the idea of opening a world before the reader/interpreter, it is just that Ricoeur gives no place to the author although he recognizes the directedness, i.e. the text has inherent structure that directs the seeing of the interpreter.¹¹³ The object of the author is for the reader to go to the world projected. In Ricoeur this simply becomes the object of the text; the author is lost, having been drowned in a sea of subjectivity.

The *idem*-identity of the text as the creation of the author, which must be the locus of any concept of 'intention' since this presents the person-likeness, seeks to engage the *ipse*-identity of the observer to enter the world of the text in an engagement of the imagination of the observer. The object of the author is not only identifying the place of viewing, but to actually position the observer at this place, and this is therefore the intention of the author. In Ricoeur's thinking this is the basis of a twofold task of hermeneutics, i.e. the structure and the seeing.¹¹⁴ However, in the task of hermeneutics this twofold task is in reality two aspects of the same task. The purpose of the directedness is the seeing; the two things can be examined independently but not understood independently. It was noted above that 'created being' has inherent within it person-likeness, and as a result is not worldless, as in the case of the entity present-at-hand, and hence is an entity whose 'being,' though not that of *Dasein*, nevertheless acts with intentionality, unlike the present-at-hand.

This intentionality is significant in understanding the nature of 'created being.' In the work of Ricoeur, previously discussed in his work *Oneself as Another*, note was taken of his argumentation concerning the substantive use of the concept of intention as the stronger sense, and, the adverbial usage of intentionally, the sense usually taken in arguing authorial

¹¹³ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 18. Ricoeur states his concept of the purpose of hermeneutics; "The task of hermeneutics...is twofold: to reconstruct the internal dynamic of the text, and to restore to the work its ability to project itself outside itself in the representation of a world that I could inhabit." For Ricoeur to think of the author in this context seems to move to subjectivity, which he abhors, and yet he notes that to fully allow the text to disclose itself the interpreter must pay attention to this twofold work, which features the directedness, 17. He gives a more detailed view of the second of the twofold aspect, 17, as "the power that the work possesses to project itself outside itself and give birth to a world that would truly be the 'thing' referred to by the text." Thus Ricoeur takes note of the fact that an 'intention to' has conferred a directive function in the seeing of the interpreter. This dramatically sets out the significance of the appearance of intention inherent in a composition, but this intention is unrelated to a person. There is simply no reference to the Being-of-the-being, i.e. the author, just the 'intentioned-ness' that is now an authorless attribute of the text.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 & 18.

intent, as the weaker sense.¹¹⁵ However, the concept of intention can also be considered from its adjectival purpose, i.e. the descriptive form of 'intentioned.' This form can be used essentially as a suffix to 'describe' an act, e.g. an act can be considered to be well-intentioned, wrongly-intentioned etc. The substantive aspect of 'intention' attracts directly to the agent, the adverbial form, as qualifying action, is predication but is still primarily attracting to the agent, but in a weaker sense. However, the adjectival form has moved to the objective aspect and has much weaker reference to the agent. Its focus is on the performance of and a description of the action.

It is the 'intentioned-ness' that directs the seeing of the interpreter, hence is the aspect of the structure of the text to which Ricoeur refers in his concept of the twofold task of hermeneutics. In Heidegger's development of understanding his point of reference and analogy is that of 'seeing' or 'sight.'¹¹⁶ Therefore, in this conception of understanding, to see what the author saw is to understand what the author understood. Consequently, the 'intentioned-ness,' as structure of the text, seeks to firstly position the observer where the author stood in order to see, and then secondly to direct the gaze of the observer to the world the author saw. This 'intentioned-ness' is therefore ontological in the truest sense of Heideggerian thought, since it fulfills the very concept of "*da sein*," i.e. 'be there.' This becomes important in the issue of handling the text, since the authorial intent is therefore disclosed in the ontological language employed by the author, i.e. in assent, assertion and inference that discloses the being of the composition. Hence, the authorial intent is in a real sense the point of origin, or place of viewing, of the world the author wishes to disclose in his or her projection. The content of the world that is seen is descriptive, hence is disclosed in its being as impersonal event in the task of epistemology. However, the context of the epistemological task is the ontology of the author, i.e. the authorial intent.

This entity of 'created being,' has person-likeness but not personality. Therefore, it cannot substitute for a person, and so to speak of 'intention to' in relationship to a text would be misleading. However, by adopting the weakest sense, the adjectival sense, interest has

¹¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 79-80. This is where Ricoeur discusses the issue of the stronger and weaker sense of intention.

¹¹⁶ Heidegger, 186-7.

moved from the person doing the action, to performance and description of the action. Consequently, the adjectival form would seem to be the more appropriate form to consider the appearance of an apparent 'intention to' in 'created being.' This avoids the inference of personality that would become almost anthropomorphism, which would be only avoided on the technicality of the 'being' as person-like. The entity whose being is that of 'created being' is directed, and therefore behaves as 'intentioned being.'

This phrase 'intentioned being' is more general, and therefore a more appropriate phrase, to that of 'created being.' The term 'created' implies the apriori existence of a creator as personal, and hence this word is one that primarily attracts to metaphysics of presence. The term 'intentioned being' allows for both the presupposition of metaphysics of presence and the presupposition of metaphysics of absence. It is also a suitable term if a position like that of Ricoeur is adopted, i.e. where meaning is seen to be inherent within the text in his concepts of sense-meaning. In 'intentioned being,' the being that *is*, as directed being, is within itself intentioned; genesis of this 'intentioned-ness' in relationship to the text is a matter of presuppositions.

3. A Brief Excursus: Phenomenological Presuppositions

The prime movers in the development of Postmodern thought in the field of hermeneutics have approached the subject of interpretation on a phenomenological basis. As a result Postmodern thought has regained interest in the ontology of the reader/interpreter. However, in the re-awakening of this interest in ontology, there has not been a concurrent re-awakening of the interest in the ontology of the author as the complement to that of the interpreter. The philosophical excursion back into ontology has only related to the reader/interpreter's side of hermeneutics. Epistemologically and ontologically authorial intent has been excluded or ignored. As has been previously noted, in relationship to the work of Ricoeur, this is probably due in part to the psychological identity associated with the idea of authorial intent inherited from Romanticism. As agreed above, following both Gadamer and Ricoeur's analysis, the only person, hence psyche, involved is the 'I' of the interpreter; consequently, understanding is the interpreter's. However, this in itself does not exclude the understanding being that of otherness, i.e. in the case of a text that of the author.

The exclusion also seems due, in part, to the fact that 'I interpret' begins with epistemology, since interpretation is a reflective task initiated by an interpreter thinking about their understanding of the text. As Ricoeur has demonstrated the movement to ontology is difficult, in the light of the descriptive power of epistemology. Ricoeur's observation of the necessity of submission of epistemology to ontology, in the interpretive process, is that ontology of the selfhood of the interpreter, not that of the author. As previously argued this fails to acknowledge that the task begins with listening to that which is other than self, and therefore the proper ontological context should be that of otherness related to the text.

Whether or not it is acknowledged, or intended, the composition as text has been assumed to be, and hence treated as, an entity that is purely present-at-hand, to use Heidegger's category of being. This has been shown above to be a deficient categorization. Therefore, within the presupposition of phenomenology, there is an unavoidable tendency to treat the text as impersonal and 'unmeaning,' which only regains these attributes in the interpreter.¹¹⁷ The failure to perceive the entity of the text having the ontology of 'intentioned being,' as described above, is critical. Certainly this exclusion and disregard of authorial intent is also due, to some degree, to the failure to recognize the *ontic* nature of authorial intent, as distinct from the personal ontology of the author. The authorial intention related to the psyche of the author is that which gives 'intentioned being' to the text and is that which also establishes its relationship to reality as a composition, i.e. it is the Being of its being in its identity within the world. Consequently, the authorial intent in the act of *parole* is transformed into the 'intentioned-ness' of the text. Therefore, in relationship to a composition, the substantive 'authorial intention' to be evaluated in interpretation, is not that which is related to the psyche of the author but the 'intentioned-ness' of the text.

Yet the question must be asked as to why this ontic nature has been overlooked in postmodern thought. Is it as simple as the reasons just advanced or is there a more complex issue at the very presuppositional basis of postmodern thought? Thiselton conceptually places Gadamer on the "boundary-line between modern and post-modern thought" and notes

¹¹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 349. Although Gadamer grants the status of partner to the text it is clear that he regards it as 'unmeaning' without the interpreter, or in the discussion, translator.

his work has facilitated the movement to a new paradigm in hermeneutics.¹¹⁸ Consequently, Phenomenology, an approach which Ricoeur shares with Gadamer (and with Derrida as another important contributor to postmodern thought), is at least the background in the conception of the postmodern thought. It is here stemming from Heidegger, who impacted both Gadamer and Ricoeur, that a presupposition begins that will in essence exclude authorial intent, even though ironically it is its ontological roots, though not recognized, that have led to this exclusion.

Heidegger's Ontological Presupposition

Depoortere in his book *The Death of God*, which examines the image of the death of God presented in Nietzsche, notes that in the thinking of Nietzsche "nature no longer points to a transcendent source beyond itself."¹¹⁹ Some philosophers have rendered the understanding of this to be the end of, or death of, "onto-theology."¹²⁰ Depoortere seeks to pursue the issue of whether or not the "critique of the metaphysical God also hits the Christian God," and his thought in the book is that they are too linked for this not to occur.¹²¹ Depoortere observes that if philosophers in general are trying to distinguish between the metaphysical God and the Christian God, in Heidegger as a philosopher "the critique of the metaphysical God also hits the Christian God," with the result that in Heidegger this becomes the pronouncement of the death of the Christian God.¹²²

Whether or not this is a fair assessment of Heidegger's thought probably can only be taken up with Heidegger himself. However, there can be no doubt that in Heidegger's vigorous attempt to distance himself from ontological tradition that developed from the time of Aristotle, there is an automatic distancing of himself from 'onto-theology' as part of this tradition, which has developed from that time.¹²³ Heidegger specifically rules out any reference to the ontology developed in tradition as impacting a 'true' understanding of

¹¹⁸ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 314.

¹¹⁹ Frederiek Depoortere, *The Death of God: An Investigation into the History of the Western Concept of God* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), vii.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 4. He observes that no clear-cut distinction is possible between a God of philosophers and a Christian God, 5. The concept of the metaphysical God is a result of reflection on the Christian God so that "the God of the Christian tradition is the metaphysical God of the philosophers," 12.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Heidegger, 42-9. Heidegger seeks "the destruction" of the traditional ontology that has enveloped the idea of being. He indicates his desire to begin to consider the question afresh, beginning with the ancient Greek philosophers and in particular Aristotle, 49. Hence Depoortere's observation that the God Heidegger sought was that of the poets, *Death of God*, 5.

ontology.¹²⁴ In so doing he creates an important presupposition in his work, one which will blind ‘understanding’ of any impact of the Christian God, and one that opens the door to metaphysics of absence, developed to its ultimate statement in Derrida. The God of Scripture, not just the Christian God, is excluded from the development of ontology for Heidegger. For Heidegger only phenomenology, which begins with what presents itself as opposed to conceptions of its origins, represents a philosophical viewpoint that will allow an unprejudiced investigation.¹²⁵

Vanhoozer observed that, in his view, the “fates of the author of traditional literary criticism and of the God of traditional theism stand or fall together.”¹²⁶ Vanhoozer’s comments relate to a discussion about the unitary concept of the book, however, they also relate to the general concept of authorization of ‘intentioned-ness’ present in an entity. The words creator and author can be used interchangeably without distortion of the concept of either. In the case of a text one speaks of the author, in the case of the work of art one speaks of the artist. However, one could alternately speak of the creator in both cases without any alteration of meaning to the concept of author and artist. The problem is that phenomenology does not consider the origins of existence, hence authorization of existence, just that existence is.¹²⁷

For Heidegger a central thesis of his work is that, regarding the reality and substantiality of man, “the substance of man is existence.”¹²⁸ His view of this substance is the specific exclusion of the idea of spirit, declaring “man’s *substance* is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*.”¹²⁹ Heidegger’s view of the traditional concepts of body, soul and spirit, allows these designations to cover phenomenal domains that can be examined as themes.¹³⁰ They are ways of looking at being as opposed to actuality of being. The concept of the Being of *Dasein* does not come as a derivative of their consideration.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Ibid., 49.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 71.

¹²⁷ Heidegger, 432. In discussion of the concept of *Dasein* in time Heidegger notes *Dasein* can never be past, because it can never be present-at-hand (although as discussed previously Heidegger notes it can be treated as present-at-hand without implication on its being). Heidegger notes concerning *Dasein* “if it is, it *exists*.” (Italics original)

¹²⁸ Ibid., 255.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 153.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹³¹ Ibid., 74.

It is interesting to note that had Heidegger based his search for being at the idea of the identity of the creator, as revealed in the LXX, he would have found support for the development of his ontology, but on the basis of the Being of the Creator. The translators of the LXX, in Ex. 3:14, translated God's declaration of His name that discloses His identity as "εγω ειμι ο "Ων" ("Myself I am the one being", or, "I myself am the being").¹³² In a proper understanding of onto-theology there is here a presentation of the Being of being. It is an ontological statement as an assertion, i.e. it is itself a statement that posits being, not a description of being. Heidegger argued for time as the horizon of *Dasein*, and hence being is locked into this temporal world and what transcends is specifically excluded.

As a result Heidegger has not considered this, as it is excluded by his own presuppositions. Neither has he considered the biblical description of the created state of human being as an incorporation of both this temporal existence, in the creation of the body, and eternal existence, in the living human being-ness itself due directly to the inspiration (i.e. breath) of the divine into the body. In the biblical context Heidegger has placed humanity as having being, hence existence, of the same kind of being as the creation of all other living beings, Gen. 1:20-25, which does have the horizon of time related to its being. Humanity has temporality as a mode of its being, as is observed by Heidegger and confirmed in the biblical text, Gen. 2:7, but the same verse of Scripture indicates an eternal mode to human being in the breath of God as the source of its living-being, contrary to the accounts of the creation of all other living things. If the Being of being is lost then being simply presents itself as un-attributable existence. In this movement the creator and the concept of the creator, or author, is lost. In developing the origins of his basic ontological concepts he asserts specifically "we have nothing to do with a vicious relativizing of ontological standpoints."¹³³ It is admitted that the above discussion is examined from within onto-theology. However, it does show that there are alternate presuppositions and ways of understanding being. How human-being is understood is a matter of presuppositions and the observer decides which presuppositions they will hold. Consequently, they will then evaluate the proposed being and their experience

¹³² Sir Lancelot C. L. Benton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 73.

¹³³ Heidegger, 44.

and decide which meaning is given to the same understanding, i.e. that humanity is existent as living being, but noting that the point of origin taken will dramatically impact the meaning given in the life of the observer. This will subsequently impact their interpretation of texts at a primal level, since it will decide for the observer the possibility of real presence in otherness, as opposed to an understanding of otherness that is simply self-projection. Any subsequent argument on the meaning of a composition due to intention of that which is other than self will be decided on the basis of the presupposition, not the text.

Therefore, here in Heidegger's presuppositional basis, is that which will initiate the disappearance of the author, and hence the ontology of the author manifest in authorial intent. Consequently, in Heidegger's understanding of human being there is only that which is temporal, the eternal is not only excluded as outside comprehension, as in Kant, but is excluded from being. It must be re-emphasized that this is a matter of presupposition dictated by the constraints Heidegger placed on his search. It is not something whose reality demands that any concept of the impact of the eternal hermeneutically is simply 'special hermeneutics,' as distinct from 'general hermeneutics.' Thereby excluding those from general debate, concerning the understanding of a composition, who hold that a proper ontological interpretation presents the impact of the ability of otherness, which is able to transcend self, is hermeneutically valid. The Christian God is not dead, just excluded.

Chapter 12

Conclusions

Introduction

The issue that began the journey leading to this dissertation is that of the conundrum and paradox of Scripture. For a Christian, and a Pentecostal Christian especially, the concept of God speaking in direct relationship with humanity in the person of the Holy Spirit is a dynamic and vital aspect of life. There is no conundrum or paradox in interpersonal communication with the Spirit, because the central issue is one of belief in terms of perception of a person, but the concept of communication within that perception is the same. The same is not the case with the scriptural text. If the Scripture is held to be a communication inspired by God, and the view of dictation of the text is not adopted, this leads to the conundrum of how the Scripture is at the same time both a human voice and a divine voice, and this subsequently produces the paradox that the text is at the same time a fully human and fully divine message.

The conundrum and paradox, if the concept of allegory is not pursued as an answer, raises two possible directions to be pursued. The answer is either the proposal of the concept of a special hermeneutic unique to sacred text, if not specifically the Scripture, or the proposal of the special use of hermeneutic functions inherent in human communication in all texts. In this proposal the direction taken is the latter proposal, i.e. the answers are to be found in a special use of hermeneutics. The question therefore arises about how any author speaks in their text. The second issue concerns the understanding of that message.

The issue of the proposal of inspiration of the scriptural text is a theological issue, not a hermeneutical issue. It is held to be a collection of written texts authored by numerous, and in some cases unidentifiable, human authors who lived in history.¹ However, the superintending belief that God has inspired these human authors to write what they had written, as the unifying principle that turns the collection of individual authors into a book inspired by a single author, is

¹ Ladd, 84. Ladd assertion that God spoke to men who then wrote in their own words, is important. Gordon Fee, as a Pentecostal scholar and theologian, noted it is important to understand that Scripture involves the historical particularity of an eternal message, *Gospel and Spirit*, 30.

just that, i.e. a belief that this collection of texts is a unified book. It has hermeneutical implications, as presuppositions of the authors impacting the texts they had written. The hermeneutical implications for the interpreter concern understanding of the text within its 'intentioned-ness.' Anthony Thiselton, as a prominent evangelical scholar, proposes that the Holy Spirit must be understood to work through the processes of normal human understanding, not independently of them or contrary to them.² As a result the Holy Spirit doesn't "short-circuit" the problem of hermeneutics.³ Therefore, the issue of the speaking author, within the domain of hermeneutics, is important.

Consequently, the central issue is or should be for Christianity, in proposing the speaking of the Holy Spirit in the text, and therefore through the text to Christians, that of authorial intention within the task of hermeneutics. Both the conundrum and paradox of Scripture directly relate to this central issue. Traditional hermeneutics, prior to Schleiermacher, considered the central issue was one of ensuring that an understanding of an author was correct, however, after Schleiermacher the issue was a far wider question; how is understanding itself possible?⁴ The interest and emphasis shifted from the author to the reader, and in this process, under postmodern influence, the very concept of authorial intent has come under strong challenge.

The question that therefore becomes important is the following. Is the issue of authorial intent an issue uniquely the concern of the *pistology* that is developed as onto-theology, i.e. is it primarily a problem and matter of interest for those of the Judeo-Christian worldview? In which case only a special hermeneutic developed within this *pistology* will deal with the perceived issue. The consequence of this would be that authors adopting this presuppositional mindset would be excluded and marginalized in authoring texts dealing with understanding issues outside their faith. Therefore, the concept of creation in dealing with the corporeal world would be strictly an onto-theological viewpoint. However, since all authors and interpreters have presuppositions then the concept of evolution would similarly relate to those whose *pistology* was that of the absence or a

² Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 90.

³ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

non-immanent involvement of a creator. Yet in this situation Nietzsche would be correct and all is interpretation. Therefore, every *pistological* position is marginalized and everything is relative to the individual interpreter. Modernism sought to establish a viewpoint independent of the observer, but could demonstrate no such point of origin. Therefore, the issue of authorship and the concept of authorial intent is either important for all texts (as that unifying aspect that runs through all texts), or no texts (being merely a religious curiosity to placate some form of Heideggerian angst).

What has been established within the scope of this work is that authorial intent is an aspect of all texts. However, what has also been uncovered in the process of this dissertation is that authorial intent has mistakenly been considered within the domain of epistemology. It is this mistaken understanding of authorial intent that has led to its marginalization and relegation of it to that of belief as external to the text. When authorial intent is properly recognized as an ontological aspect of the text, the issue then becomes the 'intentioned-being' of the text, which is the being of the entity that is present as any composition.

In all texts the pre-understanding and presuppositional world of authors allows the impact of that which is other than the author to speak in and through the author. Even the concept of prophetic speech, as that inspired by another so that the author of the text speaks for another, is analogous to the concept of biography and the 'speaking voice' of any composition as text. The concept of the entity of the composition as 'intentioned-being,' plus the ability of self to see self as other than self in understanding, provides opportunity for authors. They are able to make their composition a vehicle not only of their understanding, but providing within their explanation, i.e. the text as composition, a message that is contemporary with their own. This also directing the 'gaze' of the interpreter to the message of another. The following draws these things together to develop a holistic model of interpretation for any composition.

1. Understanding and Explanation: Disclosing the Entity of the Composition

In Ricoeur's modeling the key dialectic of explanation and understanding, from which meaning is developed, has both poles of the dialectic based in the 'self' of the interpreter. The

interpreter is not dealing with an explanation the author presented, but instead they are constructing an explanation, which will become the other pole of the dialectic for their interpretive task. Ricoeur's concept appears based on Heidegger's concept of meaning. Heidegger asserts that in interpretation "understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it."⁵ Hence it is the pursuit of a disclosure of the potential of what is understood.⁶ That which is disclosed in this process is then articulated, having been understood or brought close in interpretation.⁷ It is this articulation that is defined as 'meaning.'⁸ However, this articulation is not itself a communication, hence it is an articulation within the realm of the self.

Importantly in this situation it is an explanation that follows understanding; it does not precede it. It is therefore essentially an explanation to the self and for the self of that which is understood. This is the dialectic that results in the meaning of the text for Ricoeur, i.e. between understanding and explanation resulting in the personalization of that which is understood, but the process remains within the domain of self. It is this concept that Ricoeur seems to have adapted for his interpretive theory. Consequently, the dialectic he is proposing is a dialectic where there is only one voice that speaks, which explicates the explanation, and it is the same voice that is listened to in providing understanding of the explanation, which is in all cases the self. Any otherness is purely self-projection, i.e. that of a self-based decision concerning otherness.

Ricoeur does recognize the potential issue of the subjectivism of the author, as in Romantic hermeneutics, simply being replaced by that of the interpreter, as in Postmodern hermeneutics, if it is conceded that "all hermeneutics terminates in self-understanding."⁹ His answer is based in the idea of self being able to see self as other than self, and it is in this way, Ricoeur states that the "matter of the text becomes my own...only if I disappropriate myself, in order to let the matter of the text be" and thereby "exchange the *me*, *master* of itself, for the *self*,

⁵ Heidegger, 188.

⁶ Ibid., 189.

⁷ Ibid., 190.

⁸ Ibid., 193.

⁹ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 35.

disciple of the text.”¹⁰ Ricoeur assumes the ability of the text to act as other. Yet it is without the ability to in fact act as otherness capable of touching the observer, since within phenomenology, as determined in Heidegger, it is an entity present-at-hand and worldless, unlike *Dasein*.

Ricoeur’s argument seems a largely semantic one rather than a substantial one, and one that relies heavily on the integrity of the interpreter with no way of monitoring the real achievement of the aim. Consequently, the only real conclusion is that he has recognized the potential problem but has no definitive answer, since the authorial intent, and hence the ‘intentioned-ness’ of the text, is excluded as otherness. It remains self-projection with no real reference to a concept of otherness. It is very difficult to see in this modeling how any effective otherness can come into view, let alone impact the concept of the self. The only otherness is that which self will predetermine and allow.

Conversely, when explanation is seen as the author’s, then the being of the text reflects a being that is imputed by the author, so that subsequent reference to genuine otherness is possible. Whilst it is the self of the interpreter that evaluates this being, the interpreter is not the one who is the ‘author’ of it. It is alternatively one that the interpreter encounters; consequently it brings genuine otherness into encounter with ontology of the self. The resultant meaning in this modeling is a meaning relative to the understanding of the author.

Nevertheless, what Ricoeur’s modeling and argument has clearly highlighted is that hermeneutics is a task undertaken by a Cartesian ‘I’ and involves making one’s own what is the subject matter of the text. Hermeneutics is therefore always a relative task, even when undertaken within a community, and meaning is consequently always personal, although it may be submitted to a community. In dealing with a text, any statement of meaning is in reality not a statement of the author’s meaning, but it is always an interpreted meaning belonging to the interpreter. The meaning understood is never indisputably the author’s meaning.¹¹ Hermeneutical argument thus favors change of meaning, as a relativization, even if only as a nuance, as being

¹⁰ Ibid. (Italics original)

¹¹ E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 236. Even Hirsch, perhaps the most strident advocate of authorial meaning, hence intent, as acknowledged in Vanhoozer’s work, notes; “However, no one can establish another’s meaning with certainty.”

unavoidable, since meaning is always relative to an 'I' in 'I interpret.' Consequently, as has been suggested in the last two chapters, sameness of meaning in dealing with authorial intent is an unrealistic aim. The more fruitful pursuit is the issue of sameness of understanding, which is the self-disclosure of the entity of the composition as 'intentioned being,' the Being-of-being of which is the authorial intent of the author. It has been noted earlier in this work that there is an audience impact on interpreted meaning when dealing with texts. It is not the text changing but the audience. This disclosure, which is that interpretation is undertaken as 'I interpret,' is the reason for this relativization of meaning, provided the explanation is seen as the author's.

Otherness is referenced in understanding the entity of the composition, which is not an understanding of the meaning an author has, as a current possession. It is an understanding of a meaning they had, which they sought to disclose to any prospective interpreter, and which therefore becomes a 'meant' that they have communicated. Therefore, the first movement involving otherness, which is understanding, corresponds to the 'meant' of the author, and it is the second movement of interpretation that results in 'contemporary meaning,' which is the relative meaning of the interpreter. The act of *parole* gives being to the communication that is no longer a private meaning, as a personal ontology, but publicly available in an ontology of 'intentioned-being.'

This act of *parole* by an author gives being to the 'explanation pole' of the dialectic, which is operational in developing a meaning relative to the self of the interpreter. This concept of explanation as belonging to the author is thus shown to be the only way to proceed that involves otherness. The other pole of the dialectic, being that of understanding, is operational within the interpreter. Thus in this model there is genuine encounter with otherness in the task of interpretation. Understanding, as related to the being of the interpreter, must be considered as the counterpart to the being of the text as a composition in the author's explanation. The understanding is a self-disclosure of all the forms of knowledge, i.e. *rational*, *arational* and *non-rational*, which are shown as involved in this work.

2. Understanding: The Heideggerian Perspective

Schleiermacher saw 'understanding' developing from an inter-play of grammatical and psychological interpretation, as representing an inter-play of universal and particular aspects.¹² Ricoeur discusses how this concept was picked up and extended in the work of Dilthey, with a focus on psychology and the human sciences in which was sought methodological conceptualization of 'understanding'.¹³ It is in this situation understanding becomes simply a development or extension of thinking that is analyzed methodologically. The presupposition of a methodological basis of understanding is what leads to the construal of hermeneutics as essentially, and therefore primarily, epistemology, simply having a different methodological basis. It is this presupposition that is strongly challenged in the work of Heidegger and Gadamer.¹⁴ In Heidegger and then further developed in Gadamer, understanding is seen not as a mode of knowing but one of being.

Heidegger contends that in developing the *cogito sum* Descartes focused on the *res cogitans* without first considering the 'being' of the thinking person, as Heidegger puts it "*the meaning of the Being of the 'sum.'*"¹⁵ In other words, for Heidegger, Descartes focused on the thinking of *I think* leaving the *I am* as undetermined in *cogito sum*, and hence the 'I' in *I think* becomes a presupposition with its ontology unable to be explored.¹⁶ Subsequently, the concept of understanding in modernism that develops from Descartes' work has the appearance of largely being an issue of epistemology, i.e. understanding is a task of the thinking 'I' and is not regarded as integral to the being of the 'I' who thinks. In this situation understanding becomes a derivative of thinking.

Whilst it is possible to understand without reflective thought, it is not possible to interpret without reflective thought. Gadamer notes that all translation involves interpretation.¹⁷ He also notes that where understanding occurs there is speech not translation, furthermore to understand

¹² Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, 5.

¹³ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 56-61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁵ Heidegger, 46. (Italics original)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 126/7. (Italics added)

¹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 346.

a foreign language means not having the need to translate it into your own.¹⁸ In the act of translation there is a gap between the spirit of the original words and their reproduction in another language, this gap can never be “completely closed.”¹⁹ This indicates that interpretation always involves reflective thinking, whereas understanding does not of necessity involve reflective thinking.

In Heidegger, interpretation is derivative of understanding²⁰ and in this situation ‘thinking’ must also be considered derivative of understanding.²¹ This occurs since the articulation of interpretation is “the meaning,”²² which is reflective in its origin as a process that results in intelligibility.²³ Heidegger’s view, noted above, is that in interpretation there is an “appropriation of understanding.”²⁴ This sheds light on what Ricoeur has observed, which is that the Heideggerian modeling of the process of interpretation begins with an impersonal ontology of the event. In Heidegger’s thought interpretation is an *action* within understanding. Therefore, it immediately attracts to this ontology, being itself an event.

Heidegger notes the basis on which Ricoeur can regard this as a diversion from the agent, or concealment of the agent. What Heidegger points out is that interpretation is not acquisition of information but is rather disclosure of possibilities “projected in understanding.”²⁵ The nature of interpretation as event, therefore naturally attracting to epistemology, gives the impression of acquisition of knowledge as its primary goal. Such a direction subverts as misdirection the real idea of interpretation, which is to disclose possibilities for being, which in turn is to do with persons.

In the movement to postmodernism, note was taken of modernism’s failure to recognize and deal with ontology, and also with its subsequent failure to develop the epistemological

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Heidegger, 195. Heidegger asserts that, “interpretation is grounded on understanding.”

²¹ Ibid., 385. Explanation and conceiving are species of cognition, which is rooted in *Dasein*’s “fundamental *existentiale*.” (Italics original)

²² Ibid., 195. This issue of ‘meaning,’ which leads to the concept of the hermeneutical circle is important and is pursued in the issue of the explanation pole of the dialectic.

²³ Ibid. Heidegger develops the concept of ‘meaning’ as the interaction of “disclosedness” that is reflected upon so that something becomes intelligible as something and maintains its intelligibility.

²⁴ Ibid., 188.

²⁵ Ibid., 189.

methodology of the human sciences that would allow access to the mind of the author. If the absolute existed, as authorial intent involving the thinking author with its resultant authorial meaning, it was not demonstrated within methodology. Consequently, in this situation it is also easy to see why the concept of authorial intent becomes abandoned within epistemology. The recovery of ontological categories in dealing with the text, in postmodernism, has focused on the interpreter, leaving the author abandoned and 'out in the cold.'

The concept of *Dasein* (being-there) in *Being and Time* concerns a seeking to analyze and explicate the nature of 'being' and the 'there' of that being that is *Dasein*. Understanding is a phenomenon (hence having existential structure) that is "equiprimordial" with "state-of-mind" in constituting that 'being.'²⁶ Understanding works with 'state-of-mind' in a way that discloses the 'there,' and it is not just a development from thinking; it is an attribute of 'being.'²⁷ Heidegger's thought is that state-of-mind "*implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us.*"²⁸ Understanding, working with 'state-of-mind,' brings that which matters within the domain of the being of self; hence it presents the possibility of the particularizing of what is known to *Dasein*. Heidegger shows the concept of a disclosive nature of understanding, which particularizes what is known, by his observation that it presents potentiality for *Dasein*, a potentiality that projects possibilities.²⁹ This projection is a self-understanding that is unique to each *Dasein*. Heidegger's recognition of this nature of understanding is clearly what has impacted Ricoeur's concept of understanding texts as opening up a world before the interpreter.³⁰

Understanding and Knowing

As noted above in Heidegger the task of interpretation develops within understanding. One can know that one understands, in which case interpretation is not necessary, conversely

²⁶ Ibid., 182. In a translator's note care is taken to help avoid focusing on the word mind, hence confusing the concept as just a thinking process, in the English translation 'state-of-mind.' The German word so translated speaks of a condition or "state in which one may be found" and consequently indicates a total package including general attitude at a point in time. Therefore, ordinary usage of the English phrase 'state of mind,' which is far broader than a state of thinking, corresponds to the basic idea, see note 2, 172.

²⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 7.

²⁸ Heidegger, 177.

²⁹ Ibid., 184-5.

³⁰ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 64.

one can know that they do not understand, in which case interpretation becomes the vehicle to make one's own what is foreign. The interesting thing is that at this point one cannot know that one misunderstands. Misunderstanding can only be known reflectively, i.e. it is a realization that what one perceived self as understanding, was indeed not understood. Rather the understanding proceeded on was incorrect.

Misunderstanding is often disclosed in a process of interpretation of something else that is initially perceived as not understood, during the process of which that which was previously seen as understood is exposed as misunderstood. Therefore, misunderstanding cannot itself be seen as the prerequisite of the interpretative task. Alternatively, misunderstanding is disclosed by experience that causes the person to directly re-visit prior understanding, and in this re-visiting of understanding what occurs is primarily ontological interpretation not epistemological. This results in a 'perception' of having not understood initially, because the person originally understood incorrectly. It is the 'not understanding' discovered in the re-visiting of understanding that initiates the task of interpretation. The misunderstanding is exposed in the reflection upon the re-visiting of understanding, i.e. recognition of misunderstanding is still a reflective process.

Consequently, if cognition is seen as a derivative of understanding, misunderstanding is a further derivative once removed from understanding, being itself derivative of states of reflective cognition. It is always a reflective process that discloses misunderstanding. The result of this is the realization that misunderstanding can be disclosed epistemologically but, in requiring a revisiting of understanding, it is not directly resolvable epistemologically. Previously note has been taken that, unlike Heidegger and Gadamer, Ricoeur recognizes the importance of the methodological task of epistemology. However, Ricoeur noted that epistemology must be submitted to a correct ontology. Hence, in resolution of misunderstanding the first movement is ontological and is achieved in first re-visiting the being of the composition. Therefore, it is a revisiting of the authorial intent, as the being of the 'intentioned-being' of the composition, and thereby establishing a context prior to any epistemological task. The ontology of authorial intent,

i.e. understanding, should in all cases be the first step prior to the reflective task of epistemology, i.e. interpretation.

An important aspect of this reasoning is what it discloses about understanding. Misunderstanding, in its very terminology, is within the province and hence provenance of understanding. Yet its existence is shown in a reflective disclosure, having therefore the appearance of being itself cognitively derived, in the same fashion as meaning. However, although it is cognitively disclosed it is not cognitive in its inception, it is a direct application of misunderstanding as understanding, but it is not recognized as misunderstanding at its inception. If it were, it would no longer be misunderstanding, but it is a species of 'not understanding.' As such it is a concealed species of 'not understanding,' as belonging to understanding. The concept of a deliberate misunderstanding is not relevant, since deliberate misunderstanding implies understanding has occurred and is subverted by the interpreter.

Although specifying understanding as a "fundamental *existentiale*" and therefore not a "species of cognition" of *Dasein*,³¹ Heidegger nevertheless noted its ability to take on cognitive likeness, as in issues such as explanation and conceiving.³² It is for this reason cognitive expression must be seen as derivative of understanding, as constituent of *Dasein*.³³ Heidegger notes that 'knowing' is considered to be due to relationship between subject and object. As such its reality appears to exist exteriorly as in Nature, however, for Heidegger 'knowing' is unique to the kind of beings who 'know,' i.e. those having the kind of being that *Dasein* has.³⁴ Knowing belongs to the essential constitution of "Dasein's Being."³⁵ Heidegger acknowledges that this concept potentially raises a problem in the concept of knowledge, which thereby would need to transcend the subject, to exist as exterior.³⁶ Heidegger presents a discussion to show that his concept of knowing, i.e. cognizing, doesn't have to raise the idea of moving from interior to exterior, the answer is in how 'knowing' exists "outside" in the first place as "Being-already-

³¹ Heidegger, 385.

³² *Ibid.*, 182.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

alongside-the-world.”³⁷ His consideration of ‘knowing,’ with its developed link to understanding, itself makes constant reference to the link between ‘knowing’ and looking, which presupposes his development of the existential of understanding being an issue of disclosure.

Therefore, in Heidegger’s development, concerning all the preceding discussion and issues, these all occur themselves within the existential of understanding. However, the discussion of misunderstanding has also revealed that the concept of ‘understanding’ offers some powerful insights that can assist the task of hermeneutics. The task of understanding itself presents a way forward in finding a solution to the seeming *aporia*, or impasse, in the movement from epistemology to ontology. Understanding, in possessing what almost amounts to ambivalence in that it is ontological yet can appear cognitive, must be able, in the one person, to relate epistemology and ontology, by allowing passage from one to the other.

Therefore, like Ricoeur’s previous observations about the symbol, the concept of understanding, in the two sides to its nature, is able to relate to both ontology and epistemology. In dealing with this concept of the ‘symbol’ it was suggested in this work that the concept of authorial intent has the features of the symbol in interpretation of texts. This discussion shows that it is because authorial intent possesses ontological properties, which result in disclosure, or understanding. However, authorial intent also relates to content, or the *what* of the text, i.e. what is viewed in the disclosure, and therefore on the basis of this disclosure in understanding, there can be a movement to epistemology. Heidegger also noted in ‘knowing’ the appearance of what seems to be transcendence of self, which he explains, yet this appearance is itself a clue indicating its possibility within the understanding of understanding.

3. A Holistic Approach to Understanding and Knowing

The presuppositions of the person doing the describing in philosophical works create ‘intentioned-ness,’ manifest as the impact of authorial intent on the composition, that in turn directs what the reader sees and doesn’t see. This section examines, in a brief excursus, these issues in Heidegger’s work. Numerous references have been made above to Heidegger pointing

³⁷ Ibid., 88-9.

out the role of pre-understanding. He notes himself that the person investigating being already lives in an understanding of being, yet questions show it remains veiled.³⁸ Ricoeur points out that the writer of poetry as he or she writes each verse already anticipates the completed work.³⁹ The ‘intention-to’ of the writer is already acting to give the work ‘intentioned-ness’ because of the anticipated direction and ends that the writer intends to reach. This is not just true of poetry but all writing, i.e. even though a writer discovers on the journey of writing, the course of the journey is set and the beginning of the work already anticipates its conclusion. What the author is explicating as understanding is already understood. That is to simply say that the writer has presuppositions that will direct their presentation consistent with their pre-understanding.

Heidegger’s critique of Descartes’ understanding of being focuses on what is, for Heidegger, Descartes’ central problem. This occurs with Descartes definition of *res cogitans* (thinking thing) as *ens* (being) in his understanding of it as *ens creatum* (created being).⁴⁰ In this, for Heidegger, Descartes succumbed to medieval ontology, and in doing so caused the “implantation of a baleful prejudice” at the very inception of the consideration of being.⁴¹ As was previously observed Heidegger launches a virulent attack on traditional ontology, and hence onto-theology. This conceptualization will lead Descartes to define being in terms of substantiality.⁴² Heidegger’s central thesis is that entities of the kind of being that *Dasein* possesses can’t be conceived of in terms such as Reality and substantiality, for Heidegger “the substance of man is existence.”⁴³

The very concept of created being itself does raise the issue of *substantia*, since what is created has substance as an entity. Again it is important to note that had Heidegger not confined his understanding of entities to *who* and *what*, but also recognized the entity whose being is ‘intentioned-being,’ he would have had an entity that has being, yet whose *substantia* that gives it

³⁸ Ibid., 23.

³⁹ Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 82.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, 46.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 122. Heidegger saw that what Descartes was “trying to grasp ontologically” is in fact Nature, 128.

⁴³ Ibid., 255. Heidegger considered the idea that this proposal risks presenting the core of *Dasein* as a vapor that can disappear. His answer was that this very question assumes the concept of being to be related to the present-at-hand, even when not considering substance as corporeal, i.e. even if considering the idea of spirit, 153. He notes; “Yet man’s ‘substance’ is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*.” 153. (Italics original)

presence in this world is in its link to the present-at-hand, i.e. the *what*. Yet the entity though linked is not equated with the present-at-hand, since as previously discussed the work of art can be disclosed as an entity in different present-at-hand media, e.g. digitized copy. The composition as an entity can be re-written in different languages, yet remain the same composition, it can be converted to a form of digitization presenting as a speaking voice on a CD or even DVD. Yet it is the same entity that is linked to differing present-at-hand entities. Therefore, the issue of 'intentioned-being' and being of entities 'present-at-hand' is not one of modes of being of the same entity. Consequently, there is within human being-ness a precedent for being that is manifest in the world, yet whose being is only perceptible to human being but is itself distinct from the *substantia* of this world.

Hence, the idea that an entity can have being that is perceptible in this world, yet have *substantia*, i.e. spirit, that is not itself perceptible as *substantia* within the world, has analogy. As noted above, the biblical concept is that life, other than human being, is indeed defined within this world, having been directly created as living being within the confines of this creation, see Gen. 1:20-25. The *substantia* of its being is within this world, i.e. the realm of Nature, and therefore it is describable within the province of physical sciences. In this Descartes was correct. Yet so was Heidegger who recognized that this is inadequate as a description of human being, i.e. the kind of being that is *Dasein*. In this, Descartes' view of being became limited in a way that led to modernism. Although Gen. 1:26-28 gives an initial impression of human being having similar being, the true nature of human being is disclosed in Gen. 2:7-25. The corporeal existence of man, as body, is indeed within the domain of this created world, but the *substantia* of the being of human being is not from within this created world. It is the breath of the Divine, who Himself is Spirit, John 4:24, that inspires the being of humanity as spirit, hence of the same kind of being, and hence *substantia*, as that of the divine. This Heidegger did not investigate, nor acknowledge. Yet the biblical account agrees in essence with his observations, the only real point of difference is recognition of the creator and that of 'being' as *ens creatum*.

Consequently, at the very outset of his investigation is the exclusion of any created-ness of humanity. This concept means that at best any concept of God can only be Deistic. What takes place, and indeed the very nature of being, occurs in the absence of God's involvement, and as has been noted this is taken to its logical conclusion in Derrida. Heidegger's rejection of 'spirit,' considered previously, is tied to his presupposition of his view that *substantia* is not the proper domain for the discussion of being. It is this that leads to his subsequent developing and defining *Dasein* within the domain of phenomenology. Heidegger desired to move away from the idea of *substantia* and took his lead from Husserl's thought that the constitution of a person is different from the things of nature.⁴⁴ This is in fact the biblical position, as outlined above, even to the point, previously discussed, that in the LXX the disclosure to Moses of the identity of God, recorded in Ex. 3:14, was interpreted to be an identification of God as ultimate being. It is the failure to acknowledge even the idea of God in the discussion, which Pannenberg notes is not excluded from philosophical discussion, which results in the ontology that is developed in Heidegger.

Ricoeur, like Heidegger and Gadamer, places himself within the presupposition of phenomenology, yet himself does not discount the impact of the divine. Ricoeur finds in phenomenology the opportunity to move from what he terms regional hermeneutics, e.g. biblical hermeneutics, to general hermeneutics, freed from the prejudice of regional concerns.⁴⁵ Consequently, it seems for Ricoeur phenomenology is almost prejudice free and therefore primarily looks at the task without itself having an agenda. This is similar to Heidegger's approach regarding ontology. However, since every interpreter has presuppositions that result in pre-understanding, this is then essentially an abstraction, since no one interpreter is free of presuppositions and can therefore do 'general hermeneutics.' Consequently, it may be said that phenomenology simply looks at the task as an abstraction, which can be useful. Nevertheless, to regard it as the "*unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics*," and therefore imply its

⁴⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 51-71. This chapter titled "The Task of Hermeneutics" has this concept as its central theme, though not expressed in as many words; it is the thrust of the chapter.

importance as an essential pre-requisite of hermeneutics, is itself a prejudice in the truest sense.⁴⁶ Therefore, the works of Ricoeur, Gadamer and Heidegger are indeed useful tools in developing the hermeneutical task of the interpreter, but should not be used themselves uncritically and offer no reason to abandon the biblical viewpoint as a presupposition. It is not as if one viewpoint has disrobed itself of its presuppositions and therefore stands as the reference point *par excellence*.

Heidegger noted that in Descartes' conceptualization of being substances become accessible in their attributes.⁴⁷ It is this strident insistence of Heidegger concerning 'being' as existence and not *substantia* that appears to stop him considering 'understanding' as an attribute of *Dasein*, i.e. a characteristic of 'spirit' as *substantia* of human being. However, recognition as an attribute would automatically imply the existence of the creator of that attribute, i.e. the one to whom the attribute is attributable to, to whom Heidegger has denied impact. As an attribute it discloses something about the human being, and in the case of understanding as an attribute, this is the possibility of encountering otherness.

If understanding is seen as an attribute of 'spirit' this implies that there is something foreign to the self to be understood. Knowing, as active reflective thinking, then becomes an attribute of the human consciousness, having been instigated by the will, i.e. the formation of intention-to within the self. Hence, understanding looks outward at the world but knowing is the orientation of self within the world perceived. It is the internalization, or inward looking, and applying to self. Consequently, knowing directly derives meaning as relative to self. This biblical modeling achieves similar ends to the modeling of Heidegger; however, it places the initial importance not on self but on otherness.

The interpreter chooses which set of presuppositions they will allow to position them in the seeing. Presuppositions, as the basis of understanding, are the 'eye' that doesn't see itself in the looking. This is the metaphysical 'I' of the author and these presuppositions are 'intended' by the author to position the interpreter at the point of origin of viewing of the author. They consist of

⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, 123.

the *non-rational* knowledge that is posited and once accepted becomes the basis of understanding. Since knowing is a willful personalization this also allows interpreters, once they understand what the author saw, to then decide for themselves in a reflective re-viewing of the content, or matter of the text, which occurs within their own presuppositions; having first understood the composition. If the interpreter accepts the presuppositional basis of the author then interpreted meaning is a contemporary relative understanding of the author, i.e. approximates authorial meaning, as relative to the meaning the author had and explicated as understanding.

4. Understanding: The Dialectic Pole of the Interpreter

In seeking to relate 'knowing' and 'knowledge' Heidegger developed the concept within the being of *Dasein*. *Dasein* directs itself towards something and in 'knowing' grasps it, not by getting out of itself but in a primary form of being that is "always 'outside' alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered."⁴⁸ However, there can be an alternate way of viewing this issue. In Heidegger 'knowing' is derivative of understanding within the being of *Dasein*, and Heidegger noted it is something only a being with *Dasein's* kind of being does, i.e. only *Dasein* knows in this sense of knowing. Thus knowledge can be known by another *Dasein*, hence appearing exterior, yet this exteriority is only perceptible by the same kind of being as that of *Dasein*.

This has echoes of the issues discussed above of 'intentioned-being,' which, as being, is only disclosed to a being with the kind of being *Dasein* has, including such things as the work of art and composition. Consequently, knowledge in all its forms, though being exteriorly understandable and communicable, does not really exist as exterior to the being of *Dasein*, other than in its link with the present-at-hand entity, which is consistent with Heidegger's concepts. It is being that is associated with the present-at-hand, but as an issue of meaning it is not the same being as the entity to which it is linked. It can be known by different *Daseins* independently and individually, but is not something, which, as exteriority, is disclosed other than to *Dasein*.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 89.

Had Heidegger noted, or anticipated, this entity and its being as ‘intentioned-being’ this would have supplied the answers to the issue of knowing.⁴⁹ Only *Dasein* has consciousness of these entities, and this consciousness is primordial in the being of *Dasein*, it is not developed or constructed. This observation is seen as consistent with the biblical presentation by the author of Genesis, previously considered. It was noted that in the Genesis account understanding is indeed primordial, it is immediate and not learned or constructed. Knowing is an immediate counterpart, which is exemplified in the immediate directive and commands given to the created human being. It is suggested in this work that *Dasein* possesses not only aesthetic and historical consciousness, but a third dimension of consciousness, titled in this work *ontic-consciousness*. This is a consciousness that perceives knowledge of being and is able to ‘see’ the entities to which they relate. The imagination would therefore be suggested to be an attribute of this consciousness. It is this consciousness that allows a person to watch a two-dimensional world presented in visual media, e.g. a TV, and to ‘imagine,’ and therefore see, a three-dimensional world represented. It is this consciousness that allows a person to view a photo presentation of an event, e.g. a wedding album, and in the imagination re-construct a representation of the event as event.

Knowledge can be both developed by an individual *Dasein* or it can be communicated from one person to another. Ong noted, concerning literary culture, “abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and reading.”⁵⁰ Consequently, literature, as both the composition and transcription of data, provides a repository of knowledge for communication between people. However, this is only accessible to a being of the kind of being *Dasein* has, and is available in understanding to disclose both knowledge and being of entities. Hence, effectively knowledge remains at all times within *Dasein*, yet is able to transcend the situatedness of each *Dasein* to be known by each *Dasein*.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 71. In Heidegger’s ontology every entity is either a *who* (existence) or a *what* (present-at-hand).

⁵⁰ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 8.

5. Understanding As Sameness of Sight

Heidegger noted the tendency in common usage to use the word *meaning* as related to what is understood, i.e. the disclosure of entities is perceived by the interpreter as the meaning of the entities.⁵¹ However, this is not really meaning but the disclosure of the entity in its being.⁵² This perception as meaning is in reality disclosure as understanding. 'Meaning' itself is essentially a step beyond this disclosure. It is this common usage of the word meaning that leads to the confusion of authorial meaning, which belongs to the author, and authorial understanding, which is the communication of that meaning. The authorial intent provides 'intentioned-being' that is the presentation of what the author has understood presented by explication in an explanation. This is the being of the composition as a result of the act of *parole* as a willful, hence intentional act.

An author communicates the disclosure of what they saw. Understanding is not the author's meaning, it is the composition communicated by the author to position a reader/interpreter and direct their vision so that they see what the author saw. There is no conceptual difficulty with the concept of one person taking another person to look at a view by standing where they stood and directing their gaze to see what they saw. It is proposed in this work that this is the purpose of the composition, i.e. sameness of understanding.

Heidegger has argued that meaning is not something possessed by an entity but something only possessed by a person. Vanhoozer agrees, not with Heidegger *per se*, but with the concept that meaning is a function of persons.⁵³ In his discussion the person to whom meaning is referred in the text is the meaning of the author. However, if meaning is a function of persons then the meaning of the text in interpretation is the interpreter's meaning, as discussed above, and even Hirsch agrees, also noted above, that this meaning can never be equivalent to the author's meaning. The object of communication is an understanding of the composition, as public, not a meaning as personal and private. The desire of an author is probably and

⁵¹ Heidegger, 192. (Italics added)

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 202.

reasonably seen to be one of provoking the interpreter to develop as close as possible a sameness of meaning, but the vehicle to fulfill this desire is the communication of an understanding. Sameness of sight is at the discretion of the author, but sameness of meaning is that of the interpreter.

In noting that understanding is at the discretion of the author, this should not be seen to equal compulsion by the author. The interpreter can choose to not be led to the point of observation; following the direction is at the discretion of the interpreter. However, if direction is not followed then he or she won't see what the author saw. One can see a view from another vantage point, in which case there is sameness of content, but not sameness of understanding, since the interpreter has not stood where the author stood to see the content in the context from which the author saw it. Disregard of authorial intent can result in viewing the same content, but it cannot result in the understanding of the author. Hence, if the desire of the interpreter is understanding of the author they will allow themselves to be positioned, which is respect for otherness represented in the text, i.e. they will listen to the speaking voice of the text as other than self, which represents the author, as previously discussed.

(a) Positioning for Understanding

The author seeks to first position the reader, or place them at the point from which observation will enable the reader to see what they saw. In terms of the composition that which positions the reader is that which positioned the author. The authorial intent, reflecting the 'intention-to' of the author, places before the interpreter the point of origin from which to see what the author saw. This directly involves the idea of presuppositions. These are inherent in the tradition in which the author stands, which can be attributed to an author, which as noted previously is the weakest form of attestation. That aspect of a tradition to which the author directly refers by assent, assertion and inference is the primary positioning of the interpreter. This is positing by the author that gives being to the composition. Generally speaking, therefore, an author should provide these in a prefatory manner, i.e. as part of introductions or prefaces to the book as a whole or an individual chapter. They are recognized in language by the nature of

positing being; as such they are not descriptions of being but the imputation of being. Using them as descriptions that give exteriority to being is a secondary or subordinate task. Scriptural examples have been noted in the body of the text. The important realization is that as disclosure of being, the knowledge posited is *non-rational*, and only human being sees the disclosure.

(b) Directing Vision

Clearly linguistic devices such as the imperative can be used to capture attention and direct the view in an intended direction. An author can also intentionally employ, or desire to elicit, perlocutionary responses, which also has the effect of directing vision by capturing attention. This aspect of intentional use of perlocutionary effects has been discussed and examples considered in the body of the text. Narrative, by capturing the interpreter in the story, automatically directs vision by ordering the disclosure in front of the interpreter. Generally, genre is a device an author can use in this aspect of directing vision.

(c) Viewing the Content

This aspect concerns both the being of entities and their interconnectedness or relationship to reality, as perceived by the author. This is the world that the author saw from their point of origin. In seeing this world from the same position sameness of understanding is achieved. Clearly statements of being by characters within a narrative give being to entities within the content. Statements of being employing the third person, as discussed in the body of the text, also provide understanding of the content and are a device that authors can use to make themselves visible, though being the eye that sees. It is in this area of the viewing of the content that epistemology can be conducted as subordinate to a correct ontology.

6. Explanation: The Dialectic Pole of the Authorial Intent

The explanation is by its nature, as a description of, and also being itself a direct representation of the understanding of the author, primarily determined in the epistemological task. This issue has been discussed within the body of this work and is extensively discussed in each of the primary authors. The observations and methodology employed are not new in this

work and have been indicated as widely accepted. There are some observations that can be made on the basis of this work.

(a) The Transcending of Self in Understanding

The idea of transcendence taken as an aspect of faith concerns transcending time within the concept of eternal as opposed to the finite-infinite conception. This has been discussed in the body of this work. However, in the interpretive task as presented in the modeling used in this work, there is the opportunity to perceive the idea of transcendence. This can then be employed beyond interpretation in the realm of faith, i.e. to make special use of an aspect hermeneutically operational in the understanding of any author's text.

The concept of 'intentioned-being' developed in this work relates to knowledge in the following ways. The ability to grasp the work as a complete and unique entity relates to aesthetic consciousness, as has been outlined as related to the work of Gadamer, in this work this is perceived as *arational knowledge*. The ability to perceive the work in its link and relationship to the present-at-hand entity is related to historical consciousness, i.e. its place in time, or temporality. This relates to *rational knowledge*. The ability to perceive its 'intentioned-ness' as a functioning dynamic within the world as an entity relates to the ontic consciousness, discussed above. This relates to *non-rational knowledge*. Human imagination and consciousness have the ability to use these dimensions of knowledge to achieve a three-dimensional understanding of the author's work, i.e. to understand the disclosure of the scope of entities and connectedness, the content and hence 'matter' or *sache* of the text. Only in this complete picture is the explanation of the author properly understood.

However, for this understanding to be an understanding of the author requires the transcending of self by the interpreter in placing self at the point of origin of the author. Only then does the interpreter see what the author saw. The work of Ricoeur, together with the discussion of understanding above, provides the insight into achieving this state that is effectively a transcendence of self without ever becoming other than self. It is a hermeneutic principle that can have special use in the theological setting, not a special hermeneutic.

The work of Heidegger, developed further in Gadamer then Ricoeur, places emphasis on the concept of distanciation. It was noted that both Thiselton and Vanhoozer acknowledge and agree with the basic concept. It is this that Ricoeur sees as the primary reasoning for his concept of the autonomy of the text. However, the concepts of understanding set out above, plus Ricoeur's concept of the ability within selfhood to see self as other than self, and also with the three dimensional concept of consciousness, offer a way of dealing effectively with distanciation, whilst not ignoring its reality.

All the forms of knowledge to be used must be available in their relationship to the text; the sentence is the semantic unit available to the author. Another aspect available to the author is the realization that they are communicating with another *Dasein*, within whom consciousness is the same as for the author. The author intentions the explanation based on these two basic principles in communicating their understanding. They can reasonably, i.e. within the concept of reasoning in all forms of knowledge, expect the interpreter/reader to understand what they understand, and the explanation is endowed with 'intentioned-being' to the end of this disclosure.

The ability of selfhood to 'see' or 'understand' self as other than self becomes significant when the interpreter assumes the presuppositions of the author. As set out above these are available in relationship to the text, and include the historical context within the concept of tradition. The operation of the three dimensional aspect of consciousness allows the imagination of the interpreter to transcend their situatedness in a direct relativization of that of the author. A person can imagine himself or herself in another historical setting, this aspect was considered in the concept of the medium of narrative. This imagination can be that of an author in the setting of a novel, hence for entertainment, or that of an author for the purpose of interpretation. The interpreter does not become the author, so the sameness is not sameness of meaning and is not related to the psyche of the author. However, the interpreter transcends their situatedness to see what the author saw, so sameness of understanding is achieved. Meaning will relate to the articulation, or self-explanation, that is undertaken by the interpreter in the integration of otherness into self. This of necessity provides the opportunity to impact the 'intention-to' of the

interpreter and can form part of the authorial intent, as has been discussed in this work. It is perhaps a defining feature of the concept of sacred text that it is presupposed to be endowed with 'intentioned-ness' to develop 'intention-to' in the interpreter.

The positioning of self in the presuppositions of another, together with the three-dimensional aspect of consciousness that accesses within the communication the differing forms of knowledge available in the explanation, effectively cause a transcending of self. In this situation selfhood involves an ability to see self as impacted by the understanding of another, and in the seeing 'imagine' self as that person seen. Thus the text can confront self with 'otherness' and within self 'intention to' can be formed within the domain of self, so as to traverse from the epistemological description to the ontology of self resulting in change of self, i.e. *ipse*-identity. This is a process of conformation by an impact of 'otherness.' Where new presuppositions are 'believed' and adsorbed to form part of the *idem*-identity, i.e. the unchanging identity, transformation occurs.

This is a hermeneutical principle of which special use is made in Christianity. The text of Rom. 10:9 asserts that if a person confesses the Lordship of Christ, hence a change in *ipse*-identity due to adapting lifestyle to this recognition, and if that person believes in their heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, i.e. at the core of being, or spirit, a change of *idem*-identity is effected in making the presupposition one's own, this effects salvation. Salvation comes into actual being in this process, it is not a description of being, although it can be used epistemologically, it is the attribution of being. The text of Romans chapters 6 to 8, and, 12 to 15, involve many exhortations for the person who has personalized 'belief' to form 'intention to,' with the result of giving meaning to what has been understood due to what has been believed. All of this is special use of hermeneutical principles operating in texts.

(b) The Transcending of Self in Performance Interpretation

In a previous section of this work passing reference was made to Wolterstorff's proposal of "Performance Interpretation."⁵⁴ He prefaces the concept with a discussion of Ricoeur's concept of 'sense of the text,' concluding that consistent meaning is impossible, and in his view Ricoeur's concept is unworkable.⁵⁵ However, his implication is that people appearing to engage in text sense interpretation can actually be seen to be engaging in a form of authorial-discourse interpretation, hence the discussion of 'performance interpretation.'⁵⁶ Wolterstorff notes that Ricoeur, in a discussion of 'text sense interpretation,' alludes to the concept he wishes to discuss, which is in Ricoeur's mention of the concept of a conductor being led by the musical score in a performance.⁵⁷ Wolterstorff's argument is that the conductor, or for that matter any instrumentalist, is working from an author's composition, even though they are interpreting it in each performance of the score.⁵⁸

The purpose here is to pick up on the idea rather than discuss Wolterstorff's proposal. It is this principle that is relevant to the above discussions of understanding and consciousness. Ong noted that reading itself results in listening, since the reader converts it into sound, even if only in the imagination.⁵⁹ In other words a reader/interpreter almost inherently performs the composition. When the ability to transcend self in seeing self as other than self, is put together with the three-dimensional concept of consciousness, then there is ample evidence to suggest that one can imagine the composer of the score, or text, performing the text for the observer.

The Christian can imagine Paul as a person performing his text for the sake of the contemporary reader, however, the performance takes place within the 'situatedness' of the interpreter, hence understanding can be immediate to the interpreter's life. The Pauline usage of Hosea in Rom. 9:25-26 would seem to be such a 'performance interpretation,' since Paul in his text is discussing the bringing in of the Gentiles to salvation following the advent of Christ, but

⁵⁴ Wolterstorff, 171-82. This is a chapter title.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 8. See also Ong, "Interpretation," 9.

Hosea in his text is discussing the restoration of the Northern Kingdom, some time prior to the advent of Christ, Hos. 2:23 & 1:10. Paul used the same 'score' but gave it a different interpretation. Furthermore, Paul clearly felt that since the text is viewed as inspired, then the Holy Spirit knowing the presuppositions of Hosea could transcend the 'situatedness' of Hosea, for an understanding that is relevant to Paul's presuppositions. Nothing that has occurred here is outside viable hermeneutical concepts, it is the belief of the interpreter in the person of the Holy Spirit as a divine author that can make special use of the principle.

What is sometimes referred to as devotional interpretation is primarily 'performance interpretation.' In the above example Paul stood in a tradition that reached back prior to the cross, in fact reaching back to the tradition that precedes Hosea. Hence, although it is a performance of the text, it is based on presuppositions that have included up to Hosea's time and further developed since his time. He can subsequently believe his understanding is consistent with that of Hosea, however, the meaning is not the same. Hosea saw a Northern Kingdom out of covenant relationship restored to covenant relationship. In the tradition of humanity since Genesis, Paul saw the Gentiles as representing a people out of covenant relationship who are brought into covenant relationship in Christ. He would believe his understanding was consistent with Hosea's.

The Holy Spirit remains in relationship with believers as a presupposition of the believer. For the believer it is not a cognitive concept but a state of being, given actual being in statements of assent, assertion and inference by the believer. This belief is the context of what is to be understood. However, what then takes place applies operational hermeneutics in making special use in relationship with the person of the Holy Spirit. Another person may accept or reject the presupposition; this is a matter of his or her own presuppositions. However, due to the incredible nature of understanding and consciousness, as an interpreter they are able to assume, or imagine, the presuppositions of the author and thereby understand what the author understood, it is the interpreter's meaning that will change due to their own presuppositions. Both the Holy Spirit and the believer are able to avail themselves of the principles of transcending self and

consciousness in dealing with the scriptural text, as principles operational in all beings that have the same kind of being as *Dasein*.

The realization that understanding is an attribute, not a cognitive development at the will of the person, allows the transcending of self. The transcending of self opens up the field of 'performance interpretation' as a legitimate approach to authorial-discourse interpretation. The concept of God speaking in and through the text, whilst presupposing a belief about the Holy Spirit, simply employs operational hermeneutic principles. The believer should not be marginalized or considered mystical about their understanding. All people bring their own presuppositions to the task; hence the 'performance interpretation' of a person who has an active disbelief can result in the same understanding, within 'performance interpretation,' but will result with a different interpretation of the 'score' that has been performed.

The ability to transcend self within the horizon of time as in 'performance interpretation,' offers an analogy for, and even sets a precedent for, the transcending of time itself. The issue is not the concept of transcending but the presuppositions of the interpreter. Scripture supports the idea that the holding of presuppositions positions the person for understanding that transcends their previous 'situatedness,' as indicated in Heb. 11:3 "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." It is the assent and assertion of belief that positions a person to understand and see what they previously did not understand and see. As has been referred to previously, when Paul 'performed' texts he had previously understood as an orthodox Jew, in the context of the faith he had assented to in his encounter with the otherness of Christ, he saw what he had not seen previously, i.e. a whole new world came within the range of his understanding. This is exemplified in numerous texts attributed to Pauline origin; however, it is most prevalent in the composition of Romans. Paul's communication, e.g. Romans, is presented on the basis that any person assenting to the same presuppositions will understand the same thing, thereby transcending their current 'situatedness' as Paul did his.

7. Concluding Remarks

Philip Clayton remarks that the result of the revolutions in both the physical and human sciences in the modern period “was to move humans from a position of ontological primacy.”⁶⁰ As a result of this loss of primacy of human ‘being’ in modernity there was a consequent shift to an emphasis of ‘knowing’ that was given priority over ‘being.’ As Clayton observes this ontological primacy was “replaced by the frightening immensity of infinite words, by a universe without a centre, and by a blind process of natural selection.”⁶¹ In essence the postmodern period has brought a shift in emphasis back to personal ontology, but it is the ontology of the one who is interpreting this world into their lives, the universe remains empty and life retains its randomness. Thus the inherent concept of ‘intentioned-ness’ is not re-considered nor re-instated. Life remains authorless, not only in the understanding of life, resulting in detachment of meaning from authorship, but at its very ‘being,’ other than in religion.

Lundin developed the argument that Cartesian thought had moved humanity to essentially an orphaned state of being.⁶² If it is the thought of Descartes that detached the thinking agent, rendering it effectively parentless, it is the thinking of Heidegger that has rendered it authorless. The orphan knows it has parents; it simply lacks relationship with a parent. In the thought of Heidegger, as discussed above, not only is human being parentless in terms of relationship, but authorless in terms of being. Heidegger’s thought moved to the isolation of ‘I’ in order to seek a primordial answer.⁶³ The answer is found not in the ‘I’ that posits itself, as in Descartes, but becomes authentically itself “in the primordial individualization of the reticent resoluteness which exacts anxiety of itself.”⁶⁴ At the core level of existence this anxiety promotes care and only in the outworking of this care is identity found.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Philip Clayton, "Boundaries Crossed and Uncrossable: Physical Science, Social Science, Theology," in *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology: Reason, Meaning and Experience*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer & Martin Warner (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 92.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Lundin, 3. Lundin observes that the *Cogito* (italics original) of Descartes is “a parentless, autonomous thinking agent who is dependent upon nothing outside himself for the truth he has uncovered within himself.” This is developed as the theme of the article.

⁶³ Heidegger, 151.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 369.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

In essence, in the isolated state of existence, identity is found not in anterior authorship (hence Derrida attacks vehemently the idea of anterior meaning) but in an inherent motivating force of anxiety. Even if a positive spin is placed on anxiety it is still based on the idea that only in self-alone is an answer discoverable. Identity of selfhood unfolds, not in a disclosure of what is, but a disclosure of what can be. The concept of projecting forward is biblical, faith gives reality to hope projected, Heb. 11:1. However, in biblical thought the foundation that is projected from is grounded in a presupposition, not of isolation, but of belongingness and an identity transmitted and deposited as the basis of understanding self in the universe. In Heidegger's thought human being is alone in the universe at its very core and has to discover itself. It is small wonder that in postmodern hermeneutics authorial intent is considered *passé*, since the author is now simply a writer, any 'intentioned-ness' of the text is attributable to the interpreter not the author.

The postmodern shift, or turn, hermeneutically is based upon a phenomenology that assumes itself to be 'de-regionalized' hermeneutics, to use Ricoeur's term. Ricoeur claims that the result is general hermeneutics, which essentially amounts to a claim that it is normative. This is confirmed by his assumption that phenomenology is the presupposition *par excellence* in the hermeneutical task. However, as explored above, it is just that, i.e. it is a presupposition that is believed and as a result orients understanding. Furthermore, it is a presupposition that excludes at its core the concept of the author, or creator. The basis for this exclusion is an appropriation of its *epistology*, the metaphysics in which it derives its being and relationship to reality. It is no more authoritative than the biblical viewpoint, and as a result the person who operates from the biblical viewpoint has no need to feel that their presuppositions will exclude them from the task, nor should they feel that they must distance themselves from their presuppositions. All those engaged in physical sciences, human sciences and theology, or theological sciences (since theology does indeed concern the structure and behavior of the physical world in the context of a creator), all have a presuppositional basis that determines their understanding. In placing self within those presuppositions each can understand what the other understood, however, meaning for self is indeed the impact of the Cartesian 'I' and even the biblical understanding recognizes

the importance and centrality of this precept. Salvation is always individual in meaning, but it is corporate in understanding.

Therefore, the reality is, despite the assertions by the postmodern authors considered, no interpreter is in a position to do general hermeneutics, it is always regional, if one holds to that terminology. A person cannot isolate themselves from their presuppositions in the hermeneutical task, no matter how aware the interpreter is of their presuppositions. The concept of general hermeneutics is an abstraction, and in this is its value, i.e. it highlights how the task unfolds as a task. The interpreter can, in this light, examine a text using this model to facilitate understanding, not decide understanding. The division into regional and general is misleading in that it implies that some interpreters have an agenda, those engaging in regional hermeneutics, and others do not, engaging in general hermeneutics. However, hermeneutics is the movement from understanding to meaning, and meaning is always regional, i.e. it is the appropriation, or regionalization, within the Cartesian 'I' of what is understood.

In excluding the author and seeking to analyze the task an important aspect that was highlighted was that of understanding occurring at the level of existence, in the metaphysics of absence, or spirit, in the metaphysics of presence. It is in removing the concept of the author-creator as an issue that it is noted that understanding is primordial. Consequently, regardless of the belief of presence or absence, understanding is a given. However, understanding, as the 'I' that sees, is predetermined by presuppositions, or beliefs, held. Another way of stating this would be to say that understanding is based upon the posited *non-rational* knowledge resident as operational within the person.

Since self does not develop this, it is inherent having been posited either in recognition of tradition or simply regarded as innate, it is this aspect that opens the door to understanding as being able to be independent of the observer. Each observer/interpreter can imagine the self as holding other presuppositions and therefore understand what another has understood. This can be done without surrendering one's own beliefs, since within selfhood is the ability to see self (holding beliefs) as other than self (holding potentially differing beliefs). In this process one can

re-visit his or her own understanding and modify or even change it, but this is not automatic, since one can decide not to accept the alternate view of self. Understanding presents the possibility for change, but it does not mandate it. This hermeneutical principle is important in its special use within Christianity, i.e. acceptance of posited knowledge is a decision that remains with the self. Thus the Christian concept of salvation is possible within the practice of hermeneutics. Therefore, this concept of understanding is the basis of interpersonal and media communication, i.e. to see what another sees; it is also the basis of both sympathy and empathy. In the primordial idea of understanding, as attribute or existentials, is the anticipation of otherness.

This concept of absence and presence here is not an implication as to the individual belief a person may have about the existence of God, it has been noted that Ricoeur had a functioning belief in the God of Scripture. Nevertheless, adoption of phenomenological concepts in hermeneutics employs metaphysics of absence as operational hermeneutically, as considered above stemming from Husserl, through Heidegger in the rejection of spirit as *substantia*, and Gadamer's metaphysics of language, down to the present time. Hence, in Ricoeur the absence of the author is retained together with the belief in the divine. The fear of fideism has prompted a refusal to consider the link between belief and knowing. Belief is the context of knowing, so that understanding becomes possible, so that what is knowable can indeed be known. What a person does in terms of meaning is the assertion of the 'I' in what is understood. The issue of hermeneutics is a consideration of 'intentioned-being,' which is given being by authorial intent, so that the interpreter understands, or sees, what the author understood, or saw. What is understood can be assimilated inwardly as meaning, which determines selfhood as expressed in life. Meaning is therefore the impact of what is understood, and understanding is the encounter with otherness. Meaning should not begin with self, but with understanding in the encounter of otherness. The incorrect view of interpretation is as sameness of meaning, as incredible. True interpretation is sameness of understanding, as credible.

In the course of this dissertation the ontological nature of the authorial intent has been demonstrated. Consequently, the proper domain of interpretation for its correct disclosure and

evaluation, which allows it to fulfill its function in the literary text, is ontological interpretation. At the conclusion of Chapter 4 the thesis statement to be investigated was proposed in the light of some current issues impacting hermeneutics. The thesis statement of this dissertation is: "Authorial intent is what gives being to the entity of the composition in relationship to a text, so that an observer is positioned to understand what the author understood, i.e. see what the author saw." The subsequent chapters, in highlighting and examining the ontological nature of the authorial intent, together with its implications, explication and resultant impact, and, also the recognition and disclosure of the entity of the composition, have established the validity and importance of this thesis statement.

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