PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION
THE HERMENEUTICS OF PAUL RICOEUR

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Abstract

During the 1970s, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur carried out two separate projects that came to be known as his philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics. Until now, these two bodies of work have been perceived as broadly independent from one another. The current study sets out to offer a re-appraisal of Ricoeur's hermeneutical outlook from this period, and to determine the role of religious reflection in it. By focusing on Ricoeur's publications from 1968 to 1979, it is initially observed that his hermeneutics presents striking similarities with the, so called, Romantic model of the 19th century. Part 1 of the thesis therefore considers Ricoeur's critique of the hermeneutical tradition and how, from the outset, he aligns his own research with the 'universal' principles of Friedrich Schleiermacher. It is specifically shown that Ricoeur appropriated from Schleiermacher the belief that only through a back-and-forth movement between *general* philosophical theory and *regional* interpretation can hermeneutics become a serviceable tool for the human sciences. It is further contended that, following this 'general-regional' outlook, Ricoeur's hermeneutics took shape through a 'constructed opposition' between philosophical and biblical hermeneutics. Part 2 of the thesis provides a detailed examination of the individual investigations that Ricoeur carried out during the 1970s, in particular highlighting how his explorations of polysemy, metaphor and poetic language brought together the study of "language as discourse" and biblical exegesis. It is hoped that, by exposing the relationship between these two competing facets of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, this research allows for a more widespread re-appraisal of the compatibility between contemporary philosophy of language and biblical textuality.

In Memory of Pamela Sue Anderson

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who helped make this research possible. I firstly would like to acknowledge my supervisor Prof. Pamela Sue Anderson, who showed unwavering belief in this project, as well as my ability to carry it out. By urging me to say what needs to be said, regardless of how it would be received, she helped me grow as a scholar. Special thanks are also due to my supervisor Prof. Graham Ward, for his dedication and encouragement. I gained much from our stimulating discussions and consider myself fortunate to have met him. I would like to also recognise the support I received throughout my DPhil from Brasenose College and the Faculty of Theology and Religions.

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PART 2: RICOEUR'S INTEGRATED HERMENEUTICAL STUDIES

PART 1

Two Hermeneutics

Introduction

> "[I must] face, if the time is left to me, the question… concerning the relation between the arguments of philosophical and non-philosophical sources; more specifically, the question of the conflictual–consensual relation between my philosophy that refuses the absolute and my biblical faith that is nourished by exegesis more than by theology."
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> *The Intellectual Autobiography of Paul Ricoeur*[1]

The boundaries between philosophy and religion have for decades been at the centre of Ricoeur scholarship.[2] It was, however, a subject that Paul Ricoeur himself came to explore with some hesitancy. Certainly, throughout his career, he published on a variety of Christian themes alongside his major philosophical works. In particular, he returned to questions surrounding religious textuality and routinely employed biblical passages in his literary criticism. Yet, despite an abiding interest in Christian themes and biblical language, he also held to the belief that religion and philosophy were separate "manners of thinking" whose distinctiveness should be maintained:[3] "My primary concern, which has never wavered, not to mix genres together has instead drawn me closer to the notion of a philosophy without an absolute…"[4]

In many respects, Ricoeur's corpus is defined by this methodological separation between philosophy and religion. Any examinations carried out within one sphere tended to be treated in isolation from those in the other, with little to no overlap in terms of sources or theorists cited. However, exceptional periods, such as the 1970s, saw these two focuses become aligned.

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[1] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 53.
[2] Recent contributions to this area of study include the proceedings from the 2008 Leuven conference *Paul Ricoeur: Poetics and Religion* (later published in J. Verheyden et al. 2011). Other pertinent publications include: Stewart, 1995; Stiver, 2001; Jeanrond, 2004; Blundell, 2010; Venema, 2010.
[3] Ricoeur, 1998, p. 142.
[4] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 13.

From 1968 to 1979, Ricoeur appeared to carry out two concurrent, though independent, projects. On the one hand, he conducted explorations into the nature and forms of discourse, metaphorical language and narrative time. These studies are cumulatively seen to represent Ricoeur's textual hermeneutics. During the same period, he published on religious symbolism, the New Testament parables and the biblical "modalities" of revelation. These works comprise Ricoeur's 'biblical hermeneutics'.[5]

While some theoretical interchange was inevitable between the "two hermeneutics",[6] they have largely been interpreted as discrete, autonomous bodies of work:

> Ricoeur's respect for the distinction between philosophy and theology manifests itself most clearly in how he organizes his publications. He has led a "double life" in his published work… His contributions to scriptural exegesis and biblical studies are never published in the same volume as his philosophical work.[7]

This presumed "watertight division" was,[8] however, brought into question by Ricoeur himself later in life. In a set of autobiographical works published between 1992 and 2004, Ricoeur indicated that there in fact existed an "intimate dialogue" between the two:

> What becomes apparent through all these diverse writings is the idea of an analysis of biblical language that ties together the diversity of the ways of naming God with that of the literary "genres" employed in the biblical canon. In this way…, I directed my undistracted attention to the understanding belonging to faith, in an intimate dialogue between "philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics".[9]

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[5] A number of scholars hold that Ricoeur's biblical hermeneutics should also include his 1998 collaborative study with André LaCocque, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*. These include: Wall, 2005; Topping, 2007; Ford, 2012; Grzegorzewska, 2014; Sarisky, 2015.
[6] Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 321. See note 10 below.
[7] Blundell, 2010, p. 51.
[8] Gschwandtner, 2013, p. 96.
[9] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 25.

This proposed synergy brings into question much of what had previously been assumed about Ricoeur's corpus, while also exposing the need for a comprehensive re-assessment of his publications from the period in question. Herein lies the primary challenge for the present study, namely, to clarify the "complex relation of mutual inclusion" existing between Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics,[10] as well as determining if they should be considered separate bodies of work or, rather, two facets of one grand interdisciplinary project.

Why, though, is reassessing Ricoeur's writings from this period, and the possible misconceptions surrounding them, so important to present-day scholarship? Broadly speaking, since the 1970s, the formal explorations of polysemic language, literary 'worlds' and the narrative form have been kept apart from the study of biblical textuality and, in particular, the Bible's capacity to affect the ontological outlook of its readers. It has further been assumed that this separation followed the tried and tested path laid out by Ricoeur himself in his groundbreaking studies. By considering how the competing facets of Ricoeur's hermeneutics inform, and are informed by, one another, this thesis looks to initiate a much-needed reappraisal of the 'compatibility' between the study of biblical textuality and contemporary philosophy of language.

Mediating Two Traditions

Prior to proceeding, it is worth reflecting on what is intended by the term "hermeneutics" within the context of Ricoeur's 1970s publications.

Though the term is commonly rendered as "methodology of interpretation",[11] the twentieth century has witnessed a notable fragmentation of this "methodology"

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[10] Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 321: "…biblical hermeneutics is only one of the possible applications of philosophical hermeneutics to a category of texts. That, however, is only half of my working hypothesis. It seems to me rather that there exists a complex relation of mutual inclusion between the two hermeneutics."

[11] Mantzavinos, 2016.

into a number of seemingly distinct theoretical models.[12] J. Grondin (1994) suggests that this should simply be seen as hermeneutics branching into two tracks: "philosophical hermeneutics" and "hermeneutic philosophy".

Since antiquity, hermeneutics was commonly understood as "an 'auxiliary discipline' within the established disciplines that concerned themselves with interpreting texts or signs".[13] Through the efforts of Schleiermacher, Droysen and Dilthey (in the 19th and early 20th centuries), the interpretative conventions associated with the texts of these disciplines were consolidated into one 'general' study of language. It was at this point that 'philosophical hermeneutics' became a discipline in its own right, though it largely remained an epistemological enterprise concerned with the interpretation of texts.

Following the publication of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1936),[14] hermeneutics became less focused on the interpretation of written works, and more so on the meaning of "being".[15] As Ricoeur himself notes, "Heidegger's hermeneutics appeared to break precisely with this kind of questioning [of Schleiermacher and Dilthey]… His question was an ontological one: what being are we, we who ask ourselves the question of being?"[16] Because the new orientation was defined by the quest to map "the ontological structure of

[12] In Porter and Robinson (2011), six distinct branches of hermeneutics are seen to exist in the 20th century. For them, Ricoeur is representative of the fifth form: "hermeneutical phenomenology". In other texts, however, Ricoeur's hermeneutics is defined as: "critical hermeneutics" (Mootz and Taylor, 2011; Busacchi, 2015, 2017), "phenomenological hermeneutics" (Bleicher, 1980; Petrovici, 2013), "textual hermeneutics" (Zimmerman 1988; Moyaert, 2014), "structuralist hermeneutics" (Hoy, 1982), "post-structuralist hermeneutics" (Valdés, 1991), and "poetic hermeneutics" (Abel, 2003a; Kearney, 2004).

[13] Grondin, 1994, p. 1.

[14] In fact, Heidegger's first contributions to hermeneutical studies were presented in his 1923 university lectures at Friedberg: "Ontology – the Hermeneutics of Facticity" (Brocker-Oltmanns, 2008, p. 88). These talks, published posthumously (in Heidegger, 2008), provide the most comprehensive understanding of his hermeneutics. As noted by Campbell, the outlook therein broadly conforms to Heidegger's hermeneutical discussions in *Being and Time*: "In both texts, hermeneutics attempts to discern the structure of Being in Dasein: In *Ontology: The Hermeneutics* of *Facticity*, he calls this the Being-character of Dasein; in *Being and Time* he says that by way of [hermeneutics], 'the authentic meaning of Being, and also those basic structures of Being which Dasein itself possesses, are made known to Dasein's understanding of Being'." (Campbell, 2012, p. 244, n. 3) See also: Grondin, 1994, p. 92.

[15] Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 89.

[16] Ricoeur, 2013, p. 67.

understanding", interpretation was seen as simply an application, or "development", of these underlying processes.[17]

From a disciplinary standpoint, the new emphasis placed on "ontologised understanding" shifted attention away from individual acts of interpretation and, more specifically, exegesis: "In bold new contrast to [the earlier] tradition, Heidegger's existential hermeneutics flatly reverses the teleological sequence. Now, the primary thing is understanding, and interpretation consists in merely cultivating or extending this understanding." [18] Indeed, for many scholars, including Ricoeur, this shift in focus from interpretation to understanding (i.e. from epistemology to ontology) is the dividing line between the 'philosophical hermeneutics' of Schleiermacher and Dilthey and the, so called, 'hermeneutic philosophy' of Heidegger and, later, Gadamer.[19]

An often understated aspect of contemporary scholarship is that Ricoeur locates his own 1970s hermeneutical research within the earlier more established tradition, where the interpretation of texts was still seen as the primary function of the discipline: "I shall adopt the following working definition of hermeneutics: hermeneutics is the theory of the operation of understanding in its relations to the interpretation of texts."[20]

Indeed, contra the stance of 'hermeneutic philosophy', Ricoeur stoutly maintains that the discipline must remain tied, at least in the first instance, to particular acts of exegesis: "By hermeneutics we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis – that is, over the interpretation of a particular text, or group of signs that may be viewed as a text."[21] On the surface, then, Ricoeur's

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[17] Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 88, 70.
[18] Grondin, 1990, p. 96.
[19] Ricoeur, 1973a, pp. 120-127. See also: Grondin, 1994; Fehér, 1998; Purcell, 2013.
[20] Ricoeur, 1973a, p. 112.
[21] Ricoeur, 1970, p. 8. This belief is echoed in the recently translated publication, "Hermeneutical Logic" (2013). In this expansive work outlining the recent developments in hermeneutics, Ricoeur argues that, by placing all emphasis on the existential aspect of interpretation, Heidegger ignored the purpose for which the discipline was initially founded, namely, the interpretation of historical documents: "It seems as if with Heidegger we move toward the foundation, but

desire to unite the various forms of textual interpretation under the auspices of a contemporary philosophy of language (i.e. the presiding "theory of the rules") closely parallels the 19th century 'general' hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher. This association between the two was first noted by D. Klemm (1983),[22] and later expounded upon by W. Jeanrond (1994):

> The dialectic between understanding and explanation in Ricoeur's model of interpretation allows modern hermeneutics for the first time since Schleiermacher to return to an examination of the dimension of textuality… Schleiermacher (whom Gadamer considered to be a dated Romantic thinker) had begun to reflect on the problems of the textuality of a text. He described texts as structured wholes composed out of *general* patterns of language and an individual style.[23]

This is not to say, however, that Ricoeur's hermeneutics simply adopts or conforms to 19th century models of interpretation, while ignoring the conceptual resources offered by 20th century ontology and phenomenology. As O. Abel (2003a) suggests, Ricoeur's approach is best seen as an attempt to navigate a path between the "epistemologically oriented" hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and the "ontological hermeneutics" of Heidegger and Gadamer.[24] This perspective is shared by Venema (2000) who likewise holds that, while Ricoeur's studies initially proceed from the interpretation of discourse as "codified in a textual form", he inevitably seeks to demonstrate how, through language, the "possibilities for *being* take shape".[25] In this way, Ricoeur combines Heidegger's "method of ontologised understanding" with the conspicuously phenomenological belief that "lived experience" is encapsulated, in an objectified form, in discourse.[26]

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without the 'second navigation' – to speak like Plato – that would bring us back towards the epistemology of the human sciences." (Ricoeur, 2013, p. 69.)

[22] Klemm, 1983, pp. 20-26.

[23] Jeanrond, 1994, p. 73.

[24] Abel, 2003a, p. 16.

[25] Venema, 2000, p. 30.

[26] Ibid., pp. 30: "By joining the phenomenological and hermeneutical projects into a single, albeit complex, method, Ricoeur passes over the rationalism of modern philosophy without accepting the irrationalism of romanticism. The focus on language provides him with a productive means

As will be demonstrated in this thesis, Ricoeur's use of these contemporary philosophical resources is aimed at rectifying the deficiencies that earlier philosophical hermeneutical models had succumbed to.

Poetic Language

A recent trend in contemporary scholarship that is likewise pertinent to the current study involves re-assessing the 'poetic' dimension of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. In 1988, Richard Kearney's influential critique "Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutic Imagination" drew attention to the wide array of topics covered by Ricoeur during this period. These ranged from the study of discourse and metaphor (in the 1970s) to the examination of narrative emplotment (in the 1980s). At the time, Kearney proposed that these seemingly unrelated "episodes" were linked by an underlying intention to explore the ontological capacity of creative, or "poetic", language:

> Ricoeur's hermeneutic exploration of imagination – an exploration which, it should be noted at the outset – is less systematic than episodic in nature. Ricoeur's tentative and always provisional probing of a poetic hermeneutic of imagination represents, I believe, the ultimate, if discreet, agenda of his philosophical project… An understanding of the possible worlds opened up by the poetic imagination also permits a new understanding of ourselves as beings-in-the-world. But, for Ricoeur, the hermeneutic circle precludes any shortcut to immediate self-understanding. The human subject can only come to know itself through the hermeneutic detour of interpreting signs – that is, by deciphering the meanings contained in myths, symbols and dreams produced by the human imagination. [27]

Following Kearney's publication, a significant amount of attention was directed to the role of "semantic creativity" in Ricoeur's writings. Initially, though, most commentaries dwelt on Ricoeur's studies of metaphor, arguing that they provided

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of mediation between critical reflection and historical understanding, where one presupposed the other… Phenomenology provides the means for taking distance from lived experience, but only because what comes to language is intelligible of experience itself. Language does not produce experience; it opens experience to an interpretive understanding."

[27] Kearney, 1988, p. 116, 120.

a comprehensive lens by which to interpret his entire hermeneutical corpus.[28] These works tended to conflate Ricoeur's separate investigations of the 1970s, in particular presenting his studies of discourse and of the New Testament parables as adjuncts to his publication *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975). This resulted in seminal *poetic* elements of Ricoeur's hermeneutics being ignored – including his distinctions between "poetic works" and "metaphors", and between "poetic language" and "ordinary language".[29]

This shortcoming has just recently begun to be addressed in contemporary scholarship. Though coming at the issue from the perspective of theological ethics, Wall (2001, 2005, 2011) convincingly argues that Ricoeur's 'poetic' understanding is a central, though under-explored, aspect of his hermeneutics. He particularly draws attention to the centrality of "poetic creativity" in many of his publications from the 1970s.

Wall's call for a wholesale reassessment of the poetic "orientation" of Ricoeur's hermeneutics is likewise echoed by Abel (2003). In "Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics: From Critique to Poetics", Abel suggests that Ricoeur sought to demonstrate that poetic compositions are distinct from ordinary language because they generate new representations of the world.[30] Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that Ricoeur's desire to integrate a 'poetics' into his textual hermeneutics is what distinguishes him from other philosophers in the hermeneutical tradition:

> A text is able to "open" up new spaces in front of itself, other worlds to the world in which it first responded. It also creates the possibility of new meanings… And that is what keeps Ricoeur from being considered part of the hermeneutical school: after having been considered the leader of this school in France, he redirected hermeneutics towards a poetics of meaning, of narrative and so forth.[31]

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[28] Major publications in this vein include: Stiver, 2001; Laughery, 2002, Simms, 2003, etc.
[29] An example of earlier scholarship where these considerations were taken into account is Vanhoozer's 1990 publication, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology.*
[30] Abel, 2003a, p. 19.
[31] Ibid., p. 18-19.

The present study argues that the notion of 'poetic' is not only a defining feature of Ricoeur's textual interpretation theory but, rather, one of the cornerstones on which his integrated hermeneutical project is built. In Part 2 of the thesis, we consider how Ricoeur's understanding of poetic language evolved from a seemingly tangential exploration of polysemy, to become the basis for his literary reception theory and, consequently, his biblical hermeneutics. In this respect, an important research question driving this thesis is: What did Ricoeur intend when he stated: "The Bible is a poem, albeit… a unique and eccentric one"?[32]

General and Regional Hermeneutics

The present study does not challenge Kearney's portrayal of Ricoeur's 1970s publications as a heterogeneous body of work comprising a number of "episodic" investigations. It does, however, propose that the coordinated exploration of philosophical and biblical "forms" of discourse provides a comprehensive framework for Ricoeur's separate studies.

In his 2010 publication "The Source of Ricoeur's Double Allegiance", Venema argues that, for Ricoeur, hermeneutics is a point of mediation between two seemingly incompatible spheres: philosophy of language and religious interpretation. Though Venema turns his attention to the question of 'selfhood' in Ricoeur's later works, he first puts forward the compelling claim that "[for Ricoeur] conviction and critique are not isolated from each other; both are mediated by a hermeneutical circularity".[33] It is indeed this "circularity" between philosophical and religious interpretation that is the focus of the current study.

Ricoeur believed that, as a discipline, philosophical hermeneutics was ideally placed to account for both the subjective and objective elements of language and, in so doing, could become an invaluable resource for the human sciences. In contrast to earlier hermeneutical philosophers (particularly Wilhelm Dilthey), he

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[32] Ricoeur, 1979a, p. 218.
[33] Venema, 2010, p. 64.

also held that hermeneutics risked becoming obsolete because the modes and conventions of interpretation were always changing. In order to *remain* a viable resource, therefore, the theoretical paradigms deriving from hermeneutical enquiry needed to be continually tested (and honed) against contemporary acts of exegesis. This is to say that, for Ricoeur, the discipline had to embrace a necessary back-and-forth movement between universal theories of language and particular acts of interpretation. In his own studies of the 1970s, this interchange between *general* theory and *regional* practice took the form of an interdisciplinary dialogue between the philosophical study of *discourse* and biblical exegesis.

Notably, the movement from general (philosophical) to regional (biblical) in Ricoeur's hermeneutics mirrors the 'general-regional' model of interpretation initially put forward by Schleiermacher in his 19th century hermeneutical lectures.[34] For both theorists, the "particularity" of biblical discourse (as a form of 'speech') offered a stringent test of the discipline's claim to universality. Indeed, in Jeanrond's seminal publication *Theological Hermeneutics*, he highlights the need for a comprehensive assessment of how Ricoeur's "dipolar" hermeneutics builds upon Schleiermacher's innovative, though flawed, model of interpretation:[35]

> Among the explanatory moves which Ricoeur has suggested, linguistic considerations rank very highly. For the first time since Schleiermacher, the text as text and the dynamic character of texts begin to be taken seriously again in philosophical hermeneutics. Accordingly, the relationship between reader and text appears as a dynamic process. However, a more detailed description of this dynamic process would be needed in order to allow us to draw more precise conclusions as to how a text can transform its reader in the act of reading.[36]

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[34] Schleiermacher, 1977.
[35] Jeanrond, 1991, p. 72: "…it is important to appreciate that Ricoeur, not unlike Schleiermacher, defends a dipolar theory of interpretation and thus provides a connection with the founder of philosophical hermeneutics. Both hermeneuts are aware of (1) …the 'objective' dimension of the acts of interpretation; (2) …the subjective dimension of interpretation; and (3) that both dimensions are of equal importance in any act of interpretation."
[36] Ibid., p. 75.

Though these parallels with Schleiermacher's hermeneutics were noted by Ricoeur himself throughout his career (e.g. Ricoeur, 1981e),[37] they have been left largely unexplored by contemporary scholarship since Jeanrond's publication in 1991. With this in mind, a logical point of departure for the current study is to consider the so called Romantic origins of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, as well as the constructed opposition he creates between philosophical and religious discourse. Indeed, as shall be argued in the chapters that follow, the interdisciplinary approach employed by Ricoeur during the 1970s looked to build upon the "unrealised potential" of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics.[38]

Outline of Chapters

The thesis is presented in two parts. Part 1 provides a preparatory analysis of the influences and overarching vision that guided Ricoeur's hermeneutical studies between 1968 and 1979. This begins (in Chapter 1) by assessing the relationship between the, so called, Romantic hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Ricoeur's 1970s explorations of 'language as discourse'. Initiating from Ricoeur's own critique of the hermeneutical tradition, this chapter looks to identify the key tenets that Ricoeur appropriated from Schleiermacher's universal interpretation theory.

The subsequent three chapters provide a systematic analysis of how Ricoeur's own hermeneutical vision is realised through the interplay between 'philosophical hermeneutics' and 'biblical hermeneutics'. Appealing to insights from his late autobiographical publications, these chapters challenge the common belief that Ricoeur's hermeneutics is comprised of two autonomous bodies of work, one secular and one religious. It argues instead that, by employing a conceptual framework based on the distinction between *modes* and *forms* of discourse, Ricoeur

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[37] Ricoeur, 1981e, p. 191: "The link…is, in my view, the cornerstone of a hermeneutics which seeks both to overcome the failures of historicism and to remain faithful to the original intention of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. To understand an author better than he understood himself is to unfold the revelatory power implicit in his discourse, beyond the limited horizon of his own existential situation." See Chapter 2 and Chapter 8 (Part 2) for discussion.
[38] Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 90.

carries out an ambitious interdisciplinary project in which the philosophical study of language is brought into a "relation of proximity" with biblical exegesis.[39]

Part 2 of the thesis offers a reassessment of Ricoeur's "episodic" investigations themselves. In Chapters 5 and 6, attention is given to Ricoeur's separate though coordinated explorations of metaphorical language and biblical textuality, specifically showing how they led to a composite understanding of 'semantic innovation'. Chapter 7 goes on to explore the implications of this notion for both biblical and philosophical hermeneutics. It is shown that Ricoeur's exploration of the unique temporality of religious metaphors gave rise to an influential understanding of biblical *models* and *root-metaphors*, on the one hand, and insights concerning "the narrativistic nature of time itself" on the other.[40]

Chapter 8 of the thesis looks at Ricoeur's most ambitious interdisciplinary study from this period, in which a comparative analysis of religious and philosophical "ideas of revelation" was carried out. Unlike his earlier segregated works, Ricoeur here attempts in a single study to bring the concept of biblical revelation directly into dialogue with a secular understanding of "poetic" (or literary) reception. This chapter explores how Ricoeur employs 'the world of the text' as a mediation concept that unites biblical and philosophical outlooks, while also considering future applications of this innovative approach.

The thesis concludes by discussing the implications of re-casting Ricoeur's hermeneutics as an ambitious interdisciplinary experiment that looked to combine *general* and *regional* studies of language. This includes a summary of the key findings, an appraisal of the significance of Ricoeur's characterisation of 'poetic language', and a detailed discussion of the future challenges facing the integrated study of philosophical and biblical hermeneutics.

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[39] Ricoeur, 1974d, p. 403. "I understand by this the incessant work of philosophical discourse to put itself into a relation of proximity with kerygmatic and theological discourse."
[40] White, 2002, p. 142. See Chapter 7, Part 3 for discussion.

Chapter 1

Ricoeur, Schleiermacher and the Appropriation of Romantic Hermeneutics

Over a two-year span (from 1971 to 1973) Paul Ricoeur composed a collection of inter-related articles which, when viewed together, offer a comprehensive critique of the hermeneutical tradition and his placement in it. This small constellation of texts begins with a concise overview of the evolution of modern hermeneutics, from the foundations set by Schleiermacher and Dilthey to the more recent ontological contributions of Heidegger and Gadamer.

While a wide breadth of material is covered in these publications, their initial goal was to illustrate how, at the beginning of the 19th century, the discipline underwent a stark transformation. Thanks mainly to the efforts of Schleiermacher, classical hermeneutics evolved into a truly philosophical enterprise, based on the study of the relationship between epistemology and language. Ricoeur stresses that, while this turn towards a more epistemic vision of interpretation was both necessary and insightful, the new discipline of 'philosophical hermeneutics' (as it was then coined) was plagued by methodological problems that persisted into the 20th century. In his studies, Ricoeur's primary aim was therefore to identify the "problems" that modern philosophical hermeneutics had inherited from its Romantic origins.

From our vantage point, nearly 50 years after the initial publication of the "Task of Hermeneutics" in *Philosophy Today*, these texts have an added significance. They delineate the point where Ricoeur deviated from his pre-hermeneutical anthropology of the 1950s and early 1960s, and mark a watershed moment in the evolution of his thought. More specifically, they offer unique insight into how and why Ricoeur turned to the mechanics of textual interpretation as a means to confront the grander problem of understanding.

This chapter has two focuses. Firstly, it considers Ricoeur's critique of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, and its importance in establishing a contemporary understanding of 'discourse'. Secondly, it argues that Ricoeur's landmark theories of interpretation took shape, not (as is commonly held) through an engagement with structural linguistics, or as a response to Heideggerian/Gadamerian hermeneutic philosophy. Rather, it evolved through a process of assimilating and amending the original tenets of Schleiermacher's 'universal' hermeneutical project.

In this respect, Part 1 of the chapter offers a re-appraisal of Schleiermacher hermeneutics in light of Ricoeur's critique, whereas Part 2 focuses on, what Ricoeur terms, the "failed legacy" of Romantic hermeneutics. The chapter concludes by considering the "unrealised potential" of philosophical hermeneutics, as well as those elements that Ricoeur would appropriate from Schleiermacher's inaugural lectures on interpretation.

Part 1: The Father of Modern Hermeneutics

It is generally agreed that modern hermeneutics came into being through the efforts of Friedrich Schleiermacher to establish a general understanding of text and discourse where none had previously existed. Prior to the 19th century, little attention had been given to the overarching rules underlying all modes of communication, both spoken and written. Instead, attention was given to identifying the specific conventions that informed each genre of writing. Textual interpretation took place within a variety of disciplines (such as law, philology and biblical studies), but these analyses were isolated from one another and focused solely on the particularities of the subject-specific texts under examination.[1] Prior to Schleiermacher, then, the interpretive process was primarily concerned with the interpretation or, rather, translation of problematic passages, with little regard given to general linguistic or semantic principles.

[1] Schleiermacher, 1977, pp. 95-97.

Radical De-Regionalisation

Schleiermacher's first step in recasting hermeneutics occurred through a proposal to *generalise* the discipline. In a clear break from previous approaches, Schleiermacher sought to shift the focus away from the peculiarities of a given literary genre and towards the general problems of interpretation that concern *all* texts: "This subordination of the particular rules of exegesis and philology to the general problematic of understanding constituted an inversion fully comparable to that which Kantian philosophy had effected elsewhere, primarily in relation to the natural sciences."[2]

This "radical de-regionalisation" of hermeneutics, as Ricoeur termed it, required two separate steps. Firstly, Schleiermacher argued that the study of textual interpretation, as occurring within the classical disciplines, should be merged into one all-encompassing subject: hermeneutics. The importance of this move to "centralise" the discipline was summarised by the renowned scholar and translator H. Kimmerle, in 1975:

> Schleiermacher rejected every attempt of so called special hermeneutics to regionalise these hermeneutical insights or to manipulate the act of interpretation through the imposition of supra-textual authorities. He called for a general hermeneutics and he tried to unfold its universal conditions.[3]

Schleiermacher second proposal was to distance the interpretive methodology of hermeneutics from its medieval and Renaissance practices. The discipline was to move away from the interpretation of cryptic passages and translation of foreign languages. Rather, it would seek to identify and replicate the common practices that allow individuals to successfully understand intelligible communication:

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[2] Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 54. (Originally published in Ricoeur, 1973a, p. 114.) Please note that for a number of Ricoeur's early publications from the 1970s, the translations found in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981a) are deemed more accurate vis-à-vis their original English translation in *Philosophy Today*, and are thus preferred in this thesis. In the interest of transparency, both sources are cited. The reader should also be aware that the most recent ("Cambridge Philosophy Classics") edition of *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (2016) employs a different paratext and ordering of chapters in relation to the first edition cited here.

[3] Jeanrond, 1991, p. 85.

> Hermeneutics deals only with the art of understanding, not with the presentation of what has been understood. The presentation of what has been understood would be only one special part of the art of speaking and writing, and that part could be done only by relying on general principles.[4]

Perhaps most importantly, Schleiermacher's so-called 'general hermeneutics' deviated from the previous stance by placing its focus squarely on the universal phenomenon of understanding.[5] As noted by W. Dilthey, Schleiermacher was the first to postulate that the specific rules which inform regional interpretation were determined by the fundamental processes of understanding: "Now Schleiermacher went behind this rule [of philology] to the analysis of understanding, i.e. to the comprehension of the purposive act itself and from this comprehension he deduced the possibility of valid interpretation, its aid, its limits and rules."[6]

For Schleiermacher, understanding (*verstehen*) the 'speech' of others involved grasping the circular unity of language. By appraising the relationship between the external (syntactic) form and the inner (subjective) meaning, one could arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the original intention of the speaker or author. In this way, Schleiermacher moved the study of interpretation away from the conventions of specific rhetoric types, to instead focus on the common practices that bind all forms of interpretation: "[For Schleiermacher] all interpretation of literary works is merely the methodological development of the process of understanding, which extends over the whole of life and relates to any kind of speech or writing".[7]

One corollary of this move towards a "procedural" theory of interpretation was that scripture was no longer granted a preferential status with respect to other literary texts.[8] Technically, at least, the Bible was seen as a book like any other (i.e. a transcribed utterance which represents the individual thoughts and character of

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[4] Schleiermacher, 1977, p. 96.
[5] The term "general hermeneutics" first appears in the introduction to Schleiermacher's 1819 lecture notes.
[6] Dilthey, 1979, p. 256.
[7] Ibid., pg. 258.
[8] Ormiston and Schrift, 1990, p. 22.

its numerous human authors, who were themselves "products of their age").[9] In this light, the interpretative issues arising when reading the Bible were no different from those of any other pieces of literature, be they fictional or non-fictional. As a regional hermeneutics, biblical interpretation likewise needed to cede to a broader doctrine of universal understanding.

Schleiermacher was neither ignorant nor fearful of the implications that this outlook would have on the long-standing practices of Old and New Testament exegesis, as he had long held that they were in need of reform: "There is no other diversity in the methods of exposition aside from those [general hermeneutical practices] outlined above."[10] In Part 2 of the thesis, we consider the 20th century repercussions, for both theology and philosophy, that derived from Schleiermacher's decision to place biblical studies under the subset of general hermeneutics.

The Hermeneutical Circle

Having stressed the need to "generalise" hermeneutics, Schleiermacher turned his attention to both delineating its parameters and developing a comprehensive methodology. His early lectures (1805 – 1810) were instrumental in establishing the basic precepts on which the new discipline of hermeneutics was to be founded. No principle was more enthusiastically received by philosophers and linguists of the age than that of the "hermeneutical circle".[11] In its earliest incarnation, this concept proposed that the meaning of any linguistic construction should be appraised through the relationship between its inner and outer form.

In Schleiermacher's early lectures, this concept was presented as the "incontestable principle" on which to build a modern hermeneutics.[12] It was also deemed the primary challenge for all acts of interpretation, as it involved a

[9] Schleiermacher, 1977, pp. 103-108.
[10] Ibid., p. 89.
[11] It should be noted that the "hermeneutical circle" denotation itself was coined by Dilthey in his later work.
[12] Schleiermacher, 1977, pp. 195-196.

complex to and fro between the inner and outer facets of language. The hermeneutical circle advanced the belief that the meaning assigned to the different parts of language (words, sentence etc.) is determined by the overall linguistic context while correspondingly, the sense expressed by the context is defined by the semantic meaning of the individual parts. As summarised by D. E. Klemm, "the whole of discourse is understood from its parts, and the parts are understood from the whole. Understanding is a movement of mediation between part and whole, singularity and generality."[13]

A question arising in the years following the introduction of the hermeneutical circle principle was: *Given the mutual reliance of microscopic and macroscopic interpretation, where did Schleiermacher locate the beginning and ending of the process of interpretation?* Though this was not a question that Schleiermacher himself addressed in his lectures, many 20th century scholars believed that his model assumed a process of appraisal and reappraisal (involving a "shuttlecock" movement). In this view, the individual parts and whole of a given speech were continuously defining one another:

> The process is not a one-way movement from part to whole but, rather, like that of a shuttlecock. We understand the words to some extent and so we understand the sentence; then we return to a closer understanding of the words which, in turn yields a more precise understanding of the sentence. The same is true in other cases.[14]

Through the lens of the hermeneutical circle, sentences only become intelligible when the meaning of their individual words is assessed against the meaning of the sentence as a whole, and then back again. In the example "You must help the soldiers bear their arms against the king", the overall meaning can only be grasped through our understanding of the lexical terms used. Likewise, we only select the fitting meaning of the terms "help", "bear" or "arms" (from a list of several possible denotations and connotations) through our contextual understanding of

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[13] Klemm, 1986, p. 58.
[14] Rickman, 1960, p. 316. See also: Rickman, 1976, pp. 10-11.

the sentence's unifying message. In this way, we arrive at an intelligible sense by "making, then revising, provisional assumptions".[15]

In the years following his inaugural lectures, a number of scholars suggested that the principle of the hermeneutical circle may have a wider application than that initially proposed by Schleiermacher. None was more successful in affirming this belief than Dilthey. In "The Development of Hermeneutics", he postulated that the movement between inner and outer form did not only apply at the level of the sentence, but was in fact a necessary practice in interpreting all signs within the human world. To exemplify this, Dilthey pointed to Schleiermacher's own interpretation of Plato's *The Republic*. He argued that, by relating the meaning of each distinct segment of Plato's manuscript to the author's overall argument, Schleiermacher had successfully examined the relationship between inner and outer linguistic form on a compositional level. For Dilthey, then, Schleiermacher's exegesis inadvertently demonstrated that the applicability of the hermeneutical circle was not limited to the semantic interpretation of words. Rather, the method was the basis for all human understanding, and should therefore be seen as a "primary process" within all acts of interpretation:

> This circle is repeated in the relation of an individual work to the mentality and development of the author, and it recurs again in the relation of such an individual work to its literary genre... Only then did interpretation proper begin. Theoretically, we are here at the limits of all interpretation; it can only fulfil its task to a degree; so all understanding always remains relative and can never be completed. *Individuum est ineffabile.*[16]

Identifying the circular process of interpretation between the inner and outer form of language is certainly one of Schleiermacher's legacies for philosophical hermeneutics – though, as we've seen, credit likewise goes to Dilthey for highlighting its broader implications.

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[15] Rickman, 1960, p. 316.
[16] Dilthey, 1976, p. 259.

Misunderstanding

A second underlying assumption of Schleiermacher's interpretive model featured in Ricoeur's critique is the belief that "problems of interpretation" invariably arise due to the inability of speech to accurately transmit its intended meaning. For Schleiermacher, all dialogue brings with it the potential for misunderstanding because of the indeterminacy or ambiguity of language. Indeed, this belief was so widely accepted that, throughout the remainder of the 19th century, hermeneutics was often thought of as "the art of avoiding misunderstanding the speech of others".[17]

It should at this point be clarified that, for Schleiermacher, the term 'speech' (*Rede*) was meant to encompass "the totality of language", and not only communication in its verbal form.[18] He made this broad understanding of 'speech' *qua* language the central object of study of his hermeneutics in order to distinguish his own outlook from earlier interpretive models where text and textual interpretation were prioritised. Ricoeur notes that, by focusing on the common elements of language, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics had a much broader scope:

> We can here speak about a truly general hermeneutics; it is general because it applies not only to all kinds of writing but also to all spoken interaction and non-verbal expressions (sculpture, architecture, painting). Hermeneutical interpretation has the same scope as attempting to understand the life of another. The text is like a framework [*membrure*] in which genius can express itself. It is because of this that all forms of production that can be expressed in a text are already present in Schleiermacher."[19]

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[17] Schleiermacher, 1977, pp. 109-110: For Schleiermacher, any hermeneutical enquiry could either take a less rigorous or more rigorous path depending on one's inclination to presume understanding or misunderstanding, as the case may be. It was deemed by him more rigorous, and therefore preferable, to presume the latter: "There is a less rigorous practice of this art which is based on the assumption that understanding occurs by a matter of course… There is a more rigorous practice of this art of interpretation that is based on the assumption that misunderstandings occur as a matter of course, and so understanding must be willed and sought at every point."

[18] Schleiermacher, 1977, pp. 97-98.

[19] Ricoeur, 1968, pg. 23: "On peut ici parler d'herméneutique générale ; elle est d'abord générale parce qu'elle s'applique en droit non seulement à tout écrit mais à toute parole et aussi aux

Grammatical and Psychological Interpretations

Taking into account this shift in focus from text to speech, Schleiermacher held that the "art of interpretation" should be practised in two separate but related stages. For him, all speech comprised two aspects, one grammatical and one psychological and, consequently, its interpretation implied two phases of analysis (or "movements").[20] From this perspective, interpretation broadly conforms to the constitution of language as he saw it, in which the internal, subjective thoughts of the speaker were represented in an external, objectified form.

Put another way, all communication presupposed two separate elements: a personal idea and a public expression of that idea.[21] It therefore followed for Schleiermacher that these two elements of speech warranted different analytical approaches. The *grammatical* interpretation, which was to be the first of the two stages, dealt with all that was public (or "mechanised") in language. Its aim was to fully comprehend how speech could and should be interpreted objectively as a linguistic construction. In this phase, emphasis was placed on how "what was said" could be understood in terms of syntax and lexical conventions:

> In hermeneutics the receptive aspect in the subject's relationship to language involves what Schleiermacher terms the "grammatical". The vocabulary, syntax, grammar, morphology and phonetics of language are received by the subject from the object-world, and they can be "mechanised".[22]

Following the grammatical phase, a *psychological* examination was to take place. Here, the interpreter would focus on the singularity of the author's message: "The

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expressions non verbales : sculpture, architecture, peinture ; l'interprétation herméneutique a même extension que la compréhension d'une vie étrangère. Le texte est comme la membrure d'une génialité ; c'est par là que toute espèce de production dans la mesure où elle s'exprimera dans quelque chose comme un texte est déjà présente chez Schleiermacher." (Translation mine)

[20] This second, psychological stage was alternatively termed 'technical' in Schleiermacher's work. See note 26 below for clarification.

[21] In Ricoeur's view, this element of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics conformed to defining tenets of Romantic thought: "This theme is found in all Romantic thinkers: how can man be both universal and unique?". (Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 185.)

[22] Bowie, 2005, pp. 74-75.

spontaneous aspect involves what Schleiermacher refers to as the 'psychological' or the 'technical,' which has to do with the ways in which the subject employs language for its own individual purpose."[23] The aim of this second phase of interpretation was to gauge the extent to which the earlier linguistic analysis conformed to the psychological outlook and individual intentions of the speaker.

Here, the interpreter was expected to use all available biographical resources at hand and construct a comprehensive sketch of the speaker's mental state. In Schleiermacher's words, this second phase of interpretation explored "how the statement, as a fact in the person's mind, has emerged and to sense how the thoughts contained in the statement will exercise further influence on and in the author".[24]

Despite the stark methodological differences between the two "movements", Schleiermacher expected the conclusions reached in the grammatical phase to conform to, and thus affirm, the findings of the psychological phase. How the two were meant to correspond with the universal and individual aspects of language was succinctly articulated by Dilthey:

> In the process of interpretation itself we can only distinguish two aspects to grasping an intellectual creation through linguistic signs. Grammatical interpretation proceeds from link to link to the highest combination in the whole of the work. The psychological interpretation starts with penetrating the inner creative process and proceeds to the outer and inner form of the work and from there to a further grasp of the unity of all his work in the mentality and development of the author.[25]

It is worth noting that there was some inconsistency in how the second phase of analysis was defined in Schleiermacher's work. While his early lectures used the term 'psychological' interpretation, his later works favoured the term 'technical' interpretation.[26] Indeed, in Ricoeur's critique of Schleiermacher, both terms are

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[23] Bowie, 2005, p. 75.
[24] Jeanrond, 1991, p. 47.
[25] Dilthey, 1976, p. 259.
[26] In his annotated translation of Schleiermacher (in *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, 1998), Bowie offers a detailed comparison of Schleiermacher's use of

used (seemingly interchangeably). As noted by Bowie,[27] in recent years, there has been some debate as to whether this change in terminology signalled an evolution in Schleiermacher's thought. However, as this issue falls outside the scope of the present study, it will not be examined in this chapter and, for clarity's sake, only the term 'psychological' interpretation will be used.

Up until the 1970s, commentaries on Schleiermacher's hermeneutics attributed the psychological phase of analysis to the influence of Romanticism. This interpretation is prominent in Ricoeur's own critique, where he often defines Schleiermacher's hermeneutics (and particularly his predisposition towards psychological interpretation) as *Romantic* in nature. More recent commentaries, such as those of Bowie, have sought to downplay the Romantic tenor of Schleiermacher's outlook. They propose that the introduction of a two-part methodology did not reflect the influences of Romanticism but, rather, the attempt to mediate between two outlooks common in the 19th century: linguistic interpretation and empathetic interpretation.

This is to say that, on the surface, Schleiermacher's perspective resembles that of Schlegel and other Romantics in that he was mindful of the limits of any mechanistic, grammatical interpretation.[28] It was thought that he was particularly concerned with the prospect of hermeneutics embracing social extremism, where the interpreter comes to "understand and interpret an agent's speech in terms of what others mean by the same word".[29] In this light, the psychological phase was put in place to safeguard interpretation from only adopting objective (i.e. grammatical) criteria.

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these two terms to designate the secondary phase of analysis: "In his unpublished manuscripts Schleiermacher calls this part *technical interpretation*, although in the Introduction he regularly called the second side of explication the *psychological*. But in his lecture of 1832, he calls this part psychological, but distinguishes within this a dual task, the purely psychological and the technical. The marginalia of 1832 agrees with this. We have all the more reason to follow this division and designation because it not only belongs to Schleiermacher's final conception but also… to a really profound justification and exposition of this side of hermeneutics." (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 90, note 2.)

[27] Bowie, 1998.

[28] Ibid., p. xi, xxii-xxiii.

[29] Davidson, 2001, p. 199 (in Bowie, 2005, p. 76).

On the other hand, Schleiermacher was equally suspicious of a move towards unchecked psychologism, whereby the interpreter would only seek to "intuitively" grasp the intention of the speaker/author while ignoring the syntactic composition of their words. Thus, for Bowie et al., Schleiermacher's two-part interpretive methodology was introduced as a way to maintain the two poles of interpretation without allowing one to eclipse the other:

> Schleiermacher does not, however, think "knowing the individual" is "intuitive" or "empathetic", as many commentators suggest. Instead, access to individuality requires a method which will enable it to become accessible. It is the inherent generality of language resulting from the fact that any language involves a finite number of elements for the articulation of non-finitely differentiated world which makes such a method necessary.[30]

Part 2 of this chapter will offer a more detailed discussion on how, in this respect, Ricoeur's critique of Schleiermacher compares to contemporary scholarship. For the moment, it suffices to say that Schleiermacher's two-part methodology was created to account for the objective and subjective aspects of language. What's more, neither grammatical nor psychological analysis was initially privileged over the other, as his understanding presumed "the co-inherence of these two movements".[31]

Having reviewed some key elements of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, let us now consider its relevance to 20th century philosophical hermeneutics and, especially, to Ricoeur's 1970s publications.

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[30] Bowie, 1998, p. xxix.
[31] Schleiermacher, 1977, p. 98.

Part 2: The Failings of the Romantic Model

In his three separate analyses of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics,[32] Ricoeur portrays the German as a visionary who, by way of combining linguistics, biblical studies and psychology, exposed the archaic norms of textual interpretation.[33] It is however unfitting to read these works as a simple homage to one of the, so called, fathers of modern hermeneutics. Rather, Ricoeur holds that the advances and failings of Schleiermacher's interpretive model determined the trajectory of linguistic and epistemological studies from the early 19th century onwards. He therefore believed that the first step in constructing a viable, contemporary hermeneutics was to identify and address the flawed postulates that had been passed down from Schleiermacher.

De-regionalisation Revisited

In his 1974 publication, Ricoeur acknowledges that by seeking to identify the processes of interpretation common to all communicative acts, Schleiermacher brought a much needed, post-Enlightenment mindset to reading and interpreting manuscripts:

> It is easy to see how, in a Kantian climate, one could form the project of relating the rules of interpretation, not to the diversity of texts and of things said in texts, but to the central problem that unifies the diverse aspects of interpretation... Schleiermacher's hermeneutical programme thus carried a double mark: Romantic by its appeal to a living relation with the process of creation, critical by its wish to elaborate the universally valid rules of understanding.[34]

This attempt to synthesise the study of human understanding around the "common" elements of interpretation was however not without its risks. Ricoeur notes that, following Schleiermacher, hermeneutics came to be seen less as an

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[32] See: Ricoeur, 1968; Ricoeur, 1973a; Ricoeur, 1977a.
[33] At this stage, Ricoeur's treatment of Schleiermacher is mainly restricted to two sets of lectures on the subject: "The Compendium of 1819" and "Two Academy Addresses of 1829".
[34] Ricoeur, 1981a, pp. 45-46. (Originally published in Ricoeur, 1973a, pp. 114-115.)

interpretive tool and more as an end in itself. This was at least partially due to the initiatives of several notable historians in the later 19th century (such as Droysen, von Ranke and, particularly, Dilthey). These theorists succeeded in modifying Schleiermacher's basic hermeneutical model into a compendium of interpretive techniques in the hope that, in so doing, hermeneutics could become the accepted methodological basis for the 'human sciences' (in much the same way as empirical methods united the natural sciences).[35]

Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory of the 1970s sought to distance itself from this initiative. In his view, the primary task of hermeneutics was not to provide a set "schematic" of interpretation, nor offer insight into the relationship between text and historical reality. In line with Schleiermacher's initial writings, Ricoeur saw the primary object of study to be the fluid relationship between the 'general' and 'regional' processes of understanding.

What's more, in Ricoeur's view, any sustainable philosophy of interpretation must necessarily be linked to contemporary exegesis itself. For, if interpretive methods are not constantly being revised by specific acts of interpretation, they risk once again becoming a set of prescriptive, exegetical conventions that have progressively little value over time.[36] It could thus be said that, in contrast to Dilthey et al., Ricoeur envisaged hermeneutics as an adaptable cyclical process, whereby general theories of interpretation are constantly being tested against particular communicative acts.

It is worth highlighting that, while the "prescriptive" interpretive ideology of Dilthey et al. was inspired by Schleiermacher's two-part interpretive model, it did not conform to the principles that Schleiermacher himself set out in his lectures. From the outset, Schleiermacher asserted that the role of philosophical hermeneutics was to account for the complex cultural and linguistic factors that

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[35] Ibid., p. 116.

[36] In this respect, Ricoeur believed that hermeneutics should emulate the advances of the 1960s and 1970s linguistics that were brought about through the developments in generative semantics. See: Ricoeur, 1975a, pp. 41-43.

inform interpretation. In both his early and later lectures, Schleiermacher signalled the importance of the bilateral movement (between theory and practice) that would become a mainstay of Ricoeur's hermeneutics.[37] It can thus be said that, like Ricoeur, Schleiermacher believed in the necessity of testing and amending 'general' philosophical principles against specific acts of interpretation. In this light, Ricoeur's rejection of the prescriptive ideology of 'Romantic hermeneutics' was more directed at later theorists (such as Dilthey), and not at Schleiermacher himself.

The Dialogical Problem

Regarding the specificities of Schleiermacher's interpretive model, Ricoeur highlights two separate but interrelated problems. Firstly, by prioritising spoken language over other forms of discourse, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was ill-suited to account for the attributes of text and textual discourse. This is particularly damning when considering that textual interpretation was the primary application for which hermeneutics was initially established.

From the outset, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics centred on the general principles that govern the production and acquisition of speech (or *Rede*). As earlier discussed, 'speech' was an umbrella term that incorporated all modes of communication: oral, written, aesthetic etc. Yet, despite Schleiermacher's intention to focus on "language in its totality", the base model used was the spoken word:

> By taking "significant conversation" as the model of understanding, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics relates its theoretical formulations back to a ground in living communication. Hermeneutics is a theory of understanding that takes the communication existing between friends as a standard for more sophisticated reflections on human texts.[38]

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[37] In both the appendix to the "First Draft of 1809", and throughout "The Compendium of 1819", the theoretical discussions on the canons of grammatical interpretation are followed by an examination of its practical "Application to the New Testament". See: Schleiermacher, 1977, p. 89, 117-147.

[38] Klemm, 1986, p. 58.

Schleiermacher believed that verbal communication was the "purest" mode of discourse, because all types of language derived from, or shared common processes with, it. This led to the enduring belief that textual discourse was a mere subset of the primary mode of human communication – spoken dialogue – and that the interlocutional relationship between speaker and listener was analogous to that of author and reader. For Ricoeur, this elevation of the spoken word was misguided to begin with and resulted in Schleiermacher's interpretative model failing to account for the idiosyncrasies of other forms of discourse, such as textual discourse.[39]

In this respect, up to the mid 20th century, textual interpretation was unduly influenced by the spoken, or "dialogical", criteria that Schleiermacher had put in place. This was evident in the way that primary, exegetical considerations (such as compositional unity and the intertextual relationship between text and genre) were routinely omitted from hermeneutical analyses. While these criteria are of negligible significance when assessing spoken dialogue, they are essential when appraising the meaning of any piece of writing.[40]

> The relation between message and speaker at one end of the communication chain and the relation between message and hearer at the other end are deeply transformed when the face-to-face relation is replaced by the more complex relation of reading to writing, resulting from the direct inscription of discourse in *littera*. The dialogical situation has been exploded. The relation writing-reading is no longer a particular case of the relation speaking-hearing.[41]

The problem of incompatibility was however not only limited to verbal criteria affecting the interpretation of textual discourse. In the effort to create an all-

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[39] Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 183.

[40] A further particularity of "textual discourse" vis-à-vis oral dialogue is the mode of relating the written word to its audience. Ricoeur observed that textual meaning transcends space and time in a way that dialogue cannot: "In contrast to the dialogical situation, where the vis-à-vis is determined by the very situation of discourse, written discourse creates an audience that extends in principle to anyone who can read. The freeing of the written material with respect to the dialogical condition of discourse is the most significant effect of writing. It implies that the relation between writing and reading is no longer a particular case of the relation between speaking and hearing." (Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 139 [originally published in Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 133.])

[41] Ricoeur, 1976, p. 29.

encompassing paradigm of communication, one idiosyncrasy of textual discourse had found its way into Schleiermacher's notion of 'speech'. To recall, a tenet of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics (and, indeed, the Romantic outlook in general) was that misunderstandings unavoidably occur with any act of interpretation. Ricoeur noted that, while this problem of understanding typically arises when reading (as a result of the temporal, spatial and cultural "distances" between text and reader), it is not a typical problem of verbal exchanges:

> Schleiermacher likes to say that hermeneutics exists because there is a "misunderstanding": the critical problem of hermeneutics is always that of correcting a "misunderstanding". This is in some sense a result of the foreign character belonging to discourse itself. There is no hermeneutical problem in a straightforward conversation where understanding takes place by the direct rectification involved in the play of question and answer.[42]

We can therefore say that, in attempting to devise a universal paradigm of communication, based on the belief that there was one basic way of interpreting all discursive forms, Schleiermacher produced a patchwork understanding of discourse that failed to adequately represent any one mode of discourse.

Psychological over Grammatical

The second major problem that Ricoeur identified in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was the prioritisation of psychological interpretation over grammatical. As previously observed, Schleiermacher's early lectures placed both spheres of enquiry on an equal footing.[43] In his later lectures, however, there was a notable shift "in the direction of 'psychological' interpretation", whereby the initial grammatical phase became a simple precursor to the "true", psychological, analysis.[44] The 1829 lectures, in particular, placed much more emphasis on the individuality of the author and "the subjectivity of the speaker, where language is

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[42] Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 184.
[43] It should be noted that for Ricoeur, "The Compendium" (or "Preliminary Sketch"), of 1819, was seen to be Schleiermacher's 'early' writing, while "The Two Academic Addresses" of 1829 were seen as his 'later' lectures on hermeneutics.
[44] Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 187.

forgotten".[45] This undermined the carefully constructed parity between the two phases of analysis that Schleiermacher had earlier promoted.

For Ricoeur, this evolution in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was somewhat inevitable when considering the context in which he was writing. Romantic interpretation was predominantly concerned with assessing how public expressions housed the private (or subjective) thoughts of the individual. This interest in the process of creation, and the role of the creator, naturally led theorists such as Schleiermacher to conclude that the latent meaning of language could only be found through psychological analysis.

In Ricoeur's view, this shift in Schleiermacher's understanding ushered in a more speculative brand of hermeneutical enquiry. In effect, the emphasis he placed on psychological analysis in the late 1820s set the hermeneutical tradition down a path in which "empathetic interpretation" was praised, and critical or linguistic analysis were overshadowed. Later theorists would be responsible for further diminishing the significance of linguistic interpretation. Dilthey's 1894 work, "Ideas Concerning a Descriptive or Analytic Psychology",[46] effectively bound the study of human understanding to interpretive psychology and, in so doing, gave rise to a conceptual crisis from which hermeneutics would struggle to escape:

> Dilthey's work, even more than Schleiermacher's, brings to light the central aporia of hermeneutics which subsumes the understanding of texts to the law of understanding another person who expresses himself therein. If the enterprise remains fundamentally psychological, it is because it stipulates as the ultimate aim of interpretation, not *what* a text says, but *who* says it. At the same time, the object of hermeneutics is constantly shifted away from the text, from its sense and its reference, towards the lived experience which is expressed therein.[47]

While Ricoeur mainly charges Dilthey with having integrated 'psychologism' into 19th and early 20th century hermeneutics, recent scholarship has gone even further

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[45] Ibid., p.186.
[46] Here cited as, Dilthey, 1977.
[47] Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 52. (Originally published in Ricoeur, 1973a, p. 119.)

in absolving Schleiermacher. Building upon the groundbreaking work of the German scholar M. Frank,[48] Bowie suggests that there are significant "distortions" in the prevailing interpretation of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. He particularly notes that many of Ricoeur's contemporaries (notably Gadamer) wrongly concluded that Schleiermacher valued empathetic interpretation over critical reasoning. For Bowie et al., Schleiermacher's approach was an extension of his dialectic understanding, in which a balance between subjectivism and objectivism was needed:[49]

> The kind of objection to Schleiermacher's work relates to a widespread move at the end of the nineteenth century against "psychologism"… Gadamer's objection to Schleiermacher's supposed attachment to empathetic understanding connects Gadamer to aspects of the analytic philosophy of language…which drive "thoughts out of consciousness" and into language. Were Schleiermacher to have meant what Gadamer and many others say he did, his hermeneutics could happily be consigned to an – admittedly significant – role in the history of ideas. However, it is clear that these accounts in fact involve a considerable distortion of Schleiermacher's thinking… If one does read the text of hermeneutics in the context [of his *Dialectic*], a very different image of Schleiermacher's work emerges, which offers much for contemporary debate. New approaches to Schleiermacher's work were already initiated by the work of Manfred Frank in the late 1970s. Frank saw Schleiermacher's work in relation to new versions of textual theory in the structuralist and post-structuralist traditions, such as those of Barthes and Derrida.[50]

While, on the surface, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics appeared to be dominated by the individual psychological concerns of the writer and interpreter, this stemmed from an attempt to illustrate the degrees of deviation in language, and the need for both grammatical and extra-linguistic analysis. Bowie convincingly argues that, in particular, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics sought to account for the differences between mundane utterances (such as "conversations on the weather") and the unconventional use of language employed by a poet. The attention given

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[48] In particular, see: Frank, 1977, 1988, 1992.

[49] Bowie et al. argue that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was attempting to mediate a balance between the intentions of the author/speaker on one hand, and a correspondence theory of truth and social extremism on the other.

[50] Bowie, 2005, pp. 75-76.

to the psychological stage of interpretation was therefore in response to the inability of grammatical analysis to adequately interpret unconventional forms of discourse, of the 'poetic' kind:

> The assumption of the contextuality of all interpretation actually renders these extreme cases relatively uninteresting, as compared, for example, with the attempt to grasp the meanings of the modern poet, where the degree and nature of deviation from the standard usages of the poet's context opens up an endless field of interpretation… Texts where intentions do play a part in interpretation open up a whole series of methodological questions, of which Schleiermacher was fully aware.[51]

Ricoeur's critique of Schleiermacher thus falls between two camps, namely, the more critical interpretations of Gadamer et al., and the more recent commentaries of Frank and Bowie. In line with current scholarship, Ricoeur mainly attributed the problems of 19th century hermeneutics to the *reception* of Schleiermacher's lectures (rather than the lectures themselves). Unlike Frank and Bowie, however, he maintained that Schleiermacher's understanding of speech *qua* language negatively affected the evolution of general hermeneutics by ignoring the particularities of non-verbal modes of communication. What's more, the initial objective of hermeneutics – to viably interpret different genres of text – was further undermined by its association with classical psychology. For Ricoeur, both of these failings arose due to the palpable influence of Romanticism on Schleiermacher's thought.

Despite these differences, it could also be said that Ricoeur anticipated the move in recent scholarship towards re-appraising the importance of Schleiermacher's 'general' hermeneutical vision. From the outset, Ricoeur held that Schleiermacher's work was an untapped resource that could significantly enrich the contemporary study of linguistics, critical theory and epistemology.[52] Part 3 of this chapter will therefore identify the specific elements of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics that contributed to recent developments in philosophy of language.

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[51] Bowie, 1997, p. 112.
[52] See: Bowie, 1997, p. 110; Bowie, 1998, pp. xx, xxxi; Bowie, 2005, pp. 74, 88-89.

In particular, it will consider how Schleiermacher's dialectic notion of discourse provided a basis for Ricoeur's own general hermeneutical project.

Part 3: The 'Unrealised Hope' of Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics

Thus far our attention has been directed at the problems deriving from Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, particularly observing how his critical, linguistic approach was undermined by the attention he gave to the individuality of the speaker/author's message. It is however important to remember that Ricoeur's critique of Schleiermacher was also the beginning of his own hermeneutical explorations. Indeed, in many respects, Ricoeur's research progressed from the belief that 20th century hermeneutics must address the failings inherited from the Romantic model. What's more, while Schleiermacher was seen to have fallen short in creating an all-encompassing system of interpretation on which to base the *scientific* study of human testimonials, his early lectures on the interpretation of speech provided Ricoeur with a solid basis from which to proceed.

While there are few commentaries that explore the affinity between Schleiermacher and Ricoeur, Klemm's (1983, 1986 and 1997) investigations are noteworthy in that they suggest that Ricoeur's hermeneutics directly proceeded from 19th century German Idealism. In particular, Klemm believed that Ricoeur placed "his own hermeneutical theory in direct line with the intentions of Schleiermacher and Dilthey even while he argued against the psychological emphasis of Romantic hermeneutics."[53] This was based on two observations:

1. Firstly, Schleiermacher and Ricoeur shared the belief that interpretation was inextricably tied to the phenomenon of understanding. If hermeneutics was to ever evolve as a discipline, it needed to develop into an "epistemology of interpretation" that all human-based studies could access.

2. Secondly, they were both heavily concerned with establishing a general theory of interpretation that could be applied to various forms of

[53] Klemm, 1986, p. 56.

> discourse. While Schleiermacher proposed a dialogical interpretative theory that was clearly at odds with Ricoeur's textual focus, there was a shared conviction that a paradigm of interpretation, once determined, could inform all kinds of linguistic expression.[54]

Klemm's work therefore was the first to expose the influence of Schleiermacher's general understanding of 'language as speech' on Ricoeur's hermeneutics, as well as their shared Kantian outlook.

From Speech to Discourse

Despite the faults that Ricoeur observed in Schleiermacher's model, he was compelled by the notion of a general (or "philosophical") hermeneutics. By firstly demonstrating that hermeneutics had little value as a fragmented catalogue of exegetical practices, Schleiermacher had set the hermeneutical tradition down a new path. What's more, he convincingly argued for the need to recast the whole enterprise as a 'philosophy' of understanding that was primarily concerned with the relationship between language and epistemology.

It must not be forgotten that, at the time of writing his critique (in the late 1960s and early 1970s), Ricoeur saw Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as a novel, and largely untapped, resource. This was because of the relative inaccessibility of Schleiermacher's lectures up to this point. Though initially presented between 1805 and 1833, the completed manuscripts only came to light in 1959 (following Kimmerle's efforts to compile Schleiermacher's unpublished handwritten lecture notes).[55] As observed by R. E. Palmer, "what emerges in this edition is not merely a fuller picture of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics but a hitherto unknown part of Schleiermacher – the earlier, language-centred and less psychological Schleiermacher."[56]

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[54] Klemm, 1986, pp. 55-56.
[55] Schleiermacher, 1959.
[56] Palmer, 1968, p. 92.

It was the linguistic elements found in the early lectures – and particularly Schleiermacher's discussions on the inherent polysemy of language –[57] that exerted considerable influence on Ricoeur during this period. In his 1968 and 1977 analyses of Schleiermacher's writing, Ricoeur is drawn to the notion of a base understanding of language from which all specific forms of expression (written, spoken, artistic) derive.[58]

It is worth noting that, in the original French versions of both analyses, Ricoeur chose to translate Schleiermacher's use of *Rede* as "*discours"* (i.e. discourse), as opposed to the more technically correct "*langage"* (i.e. speech). While this rendering occurs within other contemporary translations of Schleiermacher,[59] in Ricoeur's work it takes on an added significance. By equating *Rede* to *discours,* Ricoeur draws a clear link with his own hermeneutical writings, in which 'discourse' is the central object of study. To use Klemm's phraseology, Ricoeur's translation of Schleiermacher allowed him to put his own text-based studies "in direct line" with Schleiermacher's project.[60]

Indeed, unlike his contemporaries (specifically Heidegger and Gadamer), Ricoeur never sought to distance his own hermeneutics from that of Schleiermacher. Within his 1970s works, he stressed the viability of the 'general-regional' outlook, and regularly echoed Schleiermacher's belief that the "task of hermeneutics" was to construct an anthropology of understanding based on a dialectic notion of discourse:

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[57] Ricoeur, 1977a, pp. 185-186: "The pages dealing with grammatical interpretation are no less teeming with interesting remarks; here Schleiermacher was, along perhaps with Herder, one of the first to raise the problem of polysemy, the fact that a word has several meanings. Schleiermacher distinguishes between *Sinn*, the unity of sense belonging to a word, and *Bedeutung*, the multiple realizations of a word in different contexts. The same word has one *Sinn* and several *Bedeutungen*. It is worth noting that Schleiermacher placed this problem in grammatical hermeneutics and not in technical or psychological hermeneutics. This represents, precisely, an indeterminacy in language and one which is part of the common legacy; it is indeed language itself which displays this plural unity."

[58] See also: Ricoeur, 1968; Ricoeur, 1977a, pp. 181-196.

[59] See: Jeanrond, 1985.

[60] See note 53 above.

> My attempt here is to call into question the assumptions of this hermeneutic from the point of view of a philosophy of discourse in order to release hermeneutics from its psychological and existential prejudices… Therefore what is at stake in this discussion is the correct definition of the hermeneutical task… The concepts of intention and dialogue are not to be excluded from hermeneutics, but are instead to be released from the onesidedness of non-dialectic concept of discourse.[61]

The Critique of Discourse

In Part 2 of the chapter, much was made of the way that Schleiermacher's speech-oriented model of interpretation eclipsed the specific attributes of textual interpretation. It was also noted that the emphasis he placed on the dialogical elements of language was understandable when considering the historical development of hermeneutics up to the 19th century.

Prior to Schleiermacher, the hermeneutical tradition was primarily occupied with the interpretation of written texts. Exegetes had long held that there existed an objective interpretation of each text, and that the role of the interpreter was to establish it. Beginning with the Stoics, an allegorical mode of interpretation was introduced in order to uncover the correct meaning in each work. For them, the goal of interpretation was to identify the meaning *behind* the literal meaning within the text. This viewpoint was enshrined into biblical hermeneutics by Philo and, later, Augustine. Indeed, it remained prevalent until the 15th century when, during the Reformation, there was a widespread rejection of this, so called, classical 'allegorical' model. Interpreters instead began to prioritise 'literal' interpretation and translation.

However, as Gadamer reminds us, neither of these dominant, yet competing, historic outlooks challenged the underlying belief that every work held an objective, authentic interpretation that could be both located and recovered by the interpreter:

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[61] Ricoeur, 1976, p. 23.

> [From the Stoics to the Reformers] the central motive was still a normative one: both in the theological hermeneutics as well as in the humanistic hermeneutics of modern times, the aim was to get back to the correct interpretation of those texts which contained material that was authentic. In this respect, the motivation of their hermeneutical effort was not so much what it was in Schleiermacher, that is, to make a tradition understandable that was difficult to understand and gave rise to misunderstanding. Rather, they wanted to bring a whole new understanding to an existing tradition by uncovering its lost beginnings, the access to which had been broken off or changed."[62]

In moving the focus from text to speech, Schleiermacher exposed the objective fallacy of these two classical models. He proposed that meaning is as much determined by the reflexive awareness of the contemporary interpreter as by the "authenticity" of the work itself. He specifically demonstrated the need to consider the perspective, context and methodology of the interpreting subject and, in so doing, effected a critical shift away from the status quo:

> The force behind the universalization of the hermeneutical problem in the nineteenth century is that of the central position accorded to the power of *critique*… is closely tied to the spirit of the Kantian "Copernican Revolution" in that it implies the shift from the naïve assumption that objects are realities in themselves to the critical view that objects represent appearances for the situated viewer.[63]

Schleiermacher's focus on the critical elements of language challenged the long-standing belief that hermeneutics was only applicable for literary interpretation. What's more, if the discipline was to be applied to a wider variety of communicative acts, a new representative paradigm of language was needed.

This led Schleiermacher to conclude that textual language was ill-suited to represent all forms of discourse due to the unique issues that arise in its transmission and reception. When interpreting a text, the exegete is often distanced from the socio-linguistic conditions from which a text derives. This brings about specific referential and translation problems that are not found in

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[62] Gadamer, 2002, p. 32.
[63] Klemm, 1983, p. 19.

other modes of discourse. These idiosyncrasies convinced Schleiermacher that textual discourse should be viewed as a particular (or niche) mode of communication, and that a more general paradigm was needed.

Schleiermacher thus turned to verbal communication, believing it to be the "purest" mode of discourse "where immediacy of meaning still reigns".[64] For, significantly more than with texts, speech embodied the dialogical 'to-and-fro' that characterises most communicative acts. This was because, with verbal exchanges, both speaker and listener tend to share the same geographic and linguistic context (at least prior to the 20th century). Not only did this reduce the possibility for misunderstanding, but the received meaning was both immediate and relative to the circumstances and context surrounding the dialogue. Schleiermacher was further drawn to the reduced emphasis that spoken language places on objective meaning. Because, in verbal communication, subjective interpretation is as important as the 'formal' meaning of the words used, Schleiermacher believed that he could instil in hermeneutics a balance between objective and subjective analysis.

By prioritising speech over writing, Schleiermacher's outlook thus succeeded in challenging the presumed objectivism of language, and allowed for hermeneutics to "uninhibitedly" focus on the processes of understanding.[65] It was this more balanced 'dialectic' vision of language that most influenced Ricoeur's hermeneutics.[66] As shall be observed in subsequent chapters, while Ricoeur would not see Schleiermacher's dialogical model as a viable solution in itself, he was swayed by his attempt to mediate the objective and subjective facets of discourse:

> With this aim of overcoming the cultural distance recognised by historical consciousness and of restoring immediacy of understanding through hermeneutical theory, Schleiermacher sets a theme that is carried on by his late-nineteenth-century successor, Wilhelm Dilthey, and then in the twentieth century in somewhat modified terms by Paul Ricoeur. What is

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[64] Ibid., p. 20.
[65] Ibid., p. 19-20.
[66] Ricoeur, 1976, p. 23.

> common in this line of theorists who work out exegetical principles is the desire to accept the legitimate result of radical forms of critique, while working beyond them to restore the fullness of meaning in what Ricoeur calls "second naïveté".[67]

The Dual Reference

For all its failings, therefore, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics succeeded in consolidating objective linguistic analysis with more individual or subjective considerations. Ricoeur notes that this dialectic engagement was in some ways representative of the Romantic outlook of the time, and in other ways quite different.

As earlier established, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics aimed to discern how personal thoughts are rendered into public expression. From this vantage point, language was seen to involve two movements: one internal (arising from the individual's consciousness) and the other external (utilising the agreed complex of signs and symbols within a given culture). Ricoeur observes that, on the surface, this characterisation of language appears to align itself with the dominant Romantic outlook of the time: "This theme is found in all Romantic thinkers: how can man be both universal and unique".[68]

Yet, the idea of a two-fold nature of discourse was not simply a naive 19th century assumption with little enduring influence. In presenting it as such, the tension between internal idea and external expression directly equated to the semantic and syntactic aspects of discourse. In this respect, Schleiermacher had carried out a radical reappraisal of the nature of language that would go on to inform the development of both structural linguistics and literary criticism:

> Schleiermacher's hermeneutics… lends itself to a universal methodology, a real theory of signs as presented in Augustine. In all cases (either biblical or classical, ancient or modern) philological techniques and comparative and inductive methods provide the elements of scientific rigour to be added to

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[67] Klemm, 1983, p. 20.
[68] Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 185.

> psychological interpretation. In the language of Schleiermacher, we can call all this the "mediation of the exterior and interior form" of discourse. This is the way we should proceed to outline a general theory of literary creation, which can serve as the basis for literary history.[69]

At the beginning of his third manuscript on hermeneutics (known as "The Compendium of 1819"), Schleiermacher proposes three basic tenets on the nature of speech *qua* discourse:

1. Every act of speech presupposes a given language.
2. Every act of speech is based on a thought.
3. "Accordingly, all individuals represent particular loci where a given language takes shape in a particular way and their speech can be understood in the context of the totality of language. But then they too, as people, are constantly developing spirits, whose speech can be understood as only one moment in this communal linguistic development."[70]

These premises advanced the idea that every speech-act relates to both "the totality of language and the totality of the speaker's thoughts".[71] Put another way, language is seen to arise through the confluence of the common and particular elements of language. In order to comprehend the speech of others, the interpreter must understand both aspects, as well as the way they relate (or "co-inhere") to one another.[72] Schleiermacher reasoned that the study of the two (internal and external) parts of language necessitated two discrete approaches. For this reason, he introduced the 'grammatical' and 'psychological' phases of analysis.

T. F. Torrance suggests that, quite apart from the merits of his interpretive model, Schleiermacher's understanding of the two-fold nature of discourse had a significant impact upon classical, text-based studies. By presenting the 'objective' linguistic meaning of words and sentences as just one consideration among others, a shift in focus occurred within the humanities. Where once attention was solely

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[69] Ricoeur, 1968, p. 23. (Translation mine)
[70] Schleiermacher, 1977, p. 98.
[71] Ibid., p. 97.
[72] Ibid., p. 98.

placed on the *translation* of foreign manuscripts, a new impetus to (re)interpret the seminal texts of the discipline took root. In particular, disciplines that heavily relied on exegesis (such as philology and biblical studies) began to look beyond the syntactic formulation of a given passage in order to discern the relationship between the original and contemporary receptions of the texts in question:

> In order to see how Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was oriented towards the New Testament we have to turn back to the distinction between external form and internal form. For Schleiermacher, that constitutes more than a distinction, for there is a real discrepancy between them, corresponding to the discrepancy between appearance and idea…It is because of such discrepancies that Schleiermacher held that hermeneutics is more than a science; it is an art. It does have a scientific aspect which is necessary for the investigation of the objective side of the text, but because much more lies behind language than can be conveyed in words, something more than philological, grammatical and literary disciplines is necessary. In order to penetrate into that other inner aspect on the other side of the discrepancy an act of divination is necessary which depends more on talent than on method.[73]

Along with altering the methodological processes at work in the established disciplines, Schleiermacher's two-fold structure of discourse anticipated key epistemological concerns within continental philosophy of language. Imbued as it was with this presumed dual "orientation of meaning", Schleiermacher's understanding of discourse raised questions surrounding the referentiality (or dual-referentiality) of discourse: "Since thought is expressed in discourse, the object of interpretation – the linguistic expression – has a two-fold reference: to the objective meaning in the context of the entire language and to the specific thought in the entire life of the author."[74]

For Ricoeur, then, an understated contribution of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was to highlight the "dialectic" between the "dual co-ordinates of meaning" within discourse.[75] Indeed, this tension between the code and expression of

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[73] Torrance, 1968, p. 261-263.
[74] Klemm, 1986, p. 57
[75] Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 185.

language would become prominent in 20th century theories of language, from the structural linguistics of de Saussure to the generative semantics of N. Chomsky.

The Rich Middle-Ground

While Ricoeur would neither endorse nor adopt Schleiermacher's two-part hermeneutical method as it was set out in the 1820s, his own project aimed to explore the universal notion of discourse outlined therein. In particular, he would appropriate three key concepts:

1. All discourse is *common* (and thus externally apprehensible) because it is founded on rules and conventions that are agreed upon by a linguistic community.
2. Discourse is a vehicle for individual thought and thus presents "features of singularity."[76]
3. The primary challenge of all acts of interpretation is to resolve the *tension* between the common and singular facets of language.[77]

Along with further developing Schleiermacher's two-part notion of discourse, Ricoeur believed that great insight could be gained from examining the shortcomings of his exegetical model. Ricoeur held that, by splitting the interpretation of discourse into two distinct phases of analysis (to account for its dual-referentiality), Schleiermacher had in effect created "two hermeneutics" that were broadly incompatible with one another. For Ricoeur, this methodological separation proved inadequate in several ways.

Firstly, the two stages of interpretation were seen to be lacking in rigour. The initial (grammatical) analysis involved determining the meaning of the words used by the speaker according to an agreed upon lexicon, while the second (psychological) phase involved weighing the language used against biographical

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[76] Ibid., p. 185.
[77] Ibid., p. 185: "It is the tension between the intention of saying something and the verbal vehicle which gives rise to the hermeneutical problem…So it is in discourse that the dialectic of the common and singular is to be found."

considerations. In Ricoeur's estimation, the former analysis was likely to offer little in the way of enduring linguistic insights, while the latter was speculative and potentially inexact.

Secondly, while theoretically it is possible to carry out an analysis of the common elements of discourse in one "grammatical" study, and the singular elements in a second "psychological" study, in practice this proves problematic. For Ricoeur, this approach allowed little scope for the one analysis to inform the other, as both only related to one another in so far as they presumably would arrive at (and thus corroborate) the same conclusions:

> Under [psychological interpretation] are placed the conditions of publication, the nature of genres, the originality of composition, themes and style; under the grammatical interpretation are classed the sense of words, synonyms, literal and figurative expressions, material and formal aspects. But where is the structural and thematic unity characteristic of a work to be placed, what is the sort of internal unity which governs composition? It is in part technical [i.e. psychological], as individual, and in part grammatical, as language considered in its connective capacity. So, everything that has to do with the individual structure of discourse floats between the two.[78]

Lastly, Schleiermacher's method was based on the problematic assumption that a clear separation was even possible between the so-called subjective and objective elements of discourse: "Schleiermacher never managed to distinguish clearly between these two possible orientations of technical interpretation: towards the idea which governs the work or towards the author considered as a psychological being. Between these two directions – pointing to the text and pointing to the author – hermeneutics hesitates."[79]

In his 1829 discussion on authorial style, Schleiermacher himself acknowledged that separating the objective elements of language from the subjective may not be as feasible (or at least insightful) as first assumed.[80] While he did not renounce his

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[78] Ibid., p. 187.
[79] Ibid., p. 188.
[80] The 1829 lecture is part of the "Academic Addresses" and was the penultimate publication of

two-part approach entirely, he did admit that some complex features of discourse could not be explained by comparing grammatical and psychological interpretations of the same text.[81] Specifically, the idiosyncratic way in which authors employ language could not be adequately explored using a standard form-content separation:

> Even in the initial conception of a work, an author is guided by the established form. Its power affects the arrangement and organisation of the works, and its particular laws close off certain areas of language and certain modifications of ideas, and open up others. Thus the power of the form modifies not only the expression, but also – and the two can never be separated – the content.[82]

Schleiermacher early lectures first conceded that his proposed method seemed inadequate to account for "stylistic" variances between authors.[83] He observed that as "thoughts and language are intertwined" a comprehensive interpretation of style can only be "approximated".[84] His later publication of 1828, went much further in concluding that a grammatical–psychological approach may well miss the "essential aspect of interpretation", namely, how linguistic forms are utilised by the author to express creative thought. Here, he recommends that all future hermeneutical approaches look to focus on the "middle ground" between thought and form:

> [That interpreter] cannot correctly understand the internal movement of the composition. Even less can he ascertain the author's true relation to the language and to its forms… And of the two kinds of authors he will not sufficiently appreciate the one who, rather than struggle with a form, is stimulated just as freely by an existing form as if he had just produced it himself.[85]

Schleiermacher's hermeneutical corpus.

[81] Schleiermacher, 1977, pp. 148-149.

[82] Ibid., pp. 188-189.

[83] See Schleiermacher's discussion on style in "The Aphorisms of 1805" and "The Compendium of 1819 and Marginal Notes of 1828".

[84] Schleiermacher, 1977, p. 189.

[85] Ibid., p. 189.

Ricoeur believed that, in his analysis of style, Schleiermacher had identified a critical flaw in his own exegetical model. By honing his interpretive method to account for the common and singular aspects of discourse, he had failed to explore how one relates to the other. Indeed, his later publication implicitly acknowledges these practical limitations, while asserting the need for a more integrated hermeneutical approach going forward:

> Schleiermacher did, in the idea of *style*, glimpse their profound unity [between text and author]. He was the first to perceive that style is not a matter of ornamentation; it marks the union of thought and language, the union of the common and the singular in an author's project. The style displays a singularity inside the common resources of language, and, above all, in the style the formal aspect of the work's structure is joined to the psychological aspect of the author's intention. [...] I would venture to think that this is Schleiermacher's most important idea, more noteworthy than psychological interpretation itself. Schleiermacher saw a level of articulation which provided for the continuity of the two hermeneutics.[86]

For Ricoeur, Schleiermacher's discussion on style should be seen as an integral part of his hermeneutics. If the seminal value of his earlier lectures was to identify the two "orientations" of discourse, his later lectures helped expose the dangers of analysing them in isolation from one another.

From his critique of Schleiermacher, therefore, Ricoeur came to realise that hermeneutics had not significantly advanced since the early 19th century. For all the innovations of Dilthey, Heidegger and others, the discipline still lacked a viable means of exploring the relationship *between* the common and singular elements of language.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered how Ricoeur's hermeneutical studies of the 1970s originated, first and foremost, as a critique of 19th century interpretative theory. It began by identifying the defining characteristics (and key inadequacies) of the

[86] Ibid., p. 188.

Romantic model that were carried forward into 20th century philosophical hermeneutics. However, as we've seen, Schleiermacher's inaugural lectures also provided Ricoeur with a foundation on which to base his future studies.

In Ricoeur's view, Schleiermacher did not simply establish the modern discipline while offering little in terms of enduring insights. In his universal notion of 'speech' (*Rede*), he provided a roadmap for the epistemological study of language, along with the post-Kantian precepts on which to build a contemporary text-based interpretive model. What's more, Schleiermacher succeeded in delineating the dual "co-ordinates of meaning" inherent within all discursive forms,[87] while also exposing the perils of assessing them in separate "phases".

A further feature that is highly relevant to the current study is Schleiermacher's assertion that any move to generalise the discipline must be followed by a subsequent step to "re-regionalise" it. This is to say that, once viable interpretive resources and methodologies are established, hermeneutics must again place its focus on specific acts of interpretation. In this way, the *general* principles of interpretation can be continuously reappraised in light of, and against, *particular* acts of communication. The upcoming chapters will demonstrate that, like Schleiermacher, Ricoeur believed that only through this back-and-forth movement between theory and practice can philosophical hermeneutics become a serviceable tool for the human sciences.

[87] Ricoeur, 1977a, p. 185.

Chapter 2

'The Double Privilege of Athens and Jerusalem'[1]

The preceding chapter suggested that, from Schleiermacher, Ricoeur adopted the belief that hermeneutics must nurture a mutually-informing relationship between *general* theories of interpretation and *regional* forms of discourse. It was further proposed that in Ricoeur's hermeneutical studies themselves, this back-and-forth movement took the form of a constructive dialogue between philosophical theories of language and biblical exegesis. It is noteworthy that this construal of Ricoeur's hermeneutics is wholly at odds with many contemporary commentaries and contradicts Ricoeur's own "strict rule of separation".[2]

This chapter therefore examines Ricoeur's lifelong struggle to reconcile his philosophical and religious interests, as well as ascertaining the role of hermeneutics in finally bringing the two together. In order to achieve this aim, we not only appeal to Ricoeur's publications from the 1970s, but also subsequent discussions on his *oeuvre*.

Between 1992 and 2004, Ricoeur released a collection of autobiographical publications considering his "dual orientation" towards philosophy and religion. Importantly, they also describe how his early decree not to "mix" philosophical and religious enquiry was ultimately brought into question through his engagement with hermeneutical theory. By reassessing his 1970s works in relation to these late autobiographical reflections, it can be established that, while Ricoeur would never renounce the belief that philosophy and religion derived from different "sources", he became convinced that a reconciliation of sorts could be forged through the study of language as discourse.

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[1] The material covered in this chapter was originally presented at the "Forum for European Philosophy Symposium on Ricoeur and Arendt" in Oxford, 2013. An extended draft was later published in *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. See: D'Angeli, 2017.
[2] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 13.

Part 1: A Methodological Separation

Already in his first publications from 1935, Christian subject matter figured prominently in Ricoeur's work.[3] During the initial period of his career (leading up to the mid-1960s) he published a number of isolated studies on the nature of Christianity within social and historical contexts. Due to his close association with the Christian philosopher Gabriel Marcel, it was hardly surprising that both his religious and non-religious writings regularly incorporated biblical passages as textual exemplars.

Despite his abiding interest in Christian anthropology and religious language, Ricoeur's major output during the first phase of his career was marked by forays into a number of, so called, secular subject areas and disciplines. While religious themes and biblical passages regularly appeared in his work, he tended not to conflate his Christian beliefs and his philosophical thought.[4] In his early corpus, biblical content was often presented as one *literary* example among many, and his engagement with biblical scholarship was muted. Furthermore, he appeared to eschew the possibility that his own examinations of language and literature might somehow inform a contemporary *theological* understanding of religious language. He regularly asserted that any contributions he made to the study of religion stemmed from his orientation as a philosopher and not as a theologian.[5]

Ricoeur's advancement into the sphere of biblical hermeneutics in the 1970s marked a watershed in the development of his thought. On the surface, this was a natural progression from his recently published work on primary religious symbolism from the early 1960s. Yet, in a break from his earlier stance, it also signalled an intention to explore the common ground between philosophy of language and biblical theology – an area of study that he had previously shunned.

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[3] Publications falling within the category of anthropology of religion include "L'appel de l'action. Réflexions d'un étudiant protestant" (1935a) and "*Un livre d'André Philippe : le christianisme et la paix*" (1935b).
[4] Paul Ricoeur, 1995a, pp. 13 & 25.
[5] See: Paul Ricoeur, 1977d, p. 228.

During this period, Ricoeur's textual hermeneutics evolved through a dialectic of general hermeneutical theory and biblical exegesis.[6] While his work was marked by an effort to explore the points of convergence between philosophical and theological domains, the distinctiveness of each discipline was maintained throughout. Publications in the 1970s tended to fall into three separate categories between these poles: structuralist examinations of discourse, metaphorical language and text (where few to no biblical sources or scholarship were cited); theological studies into the relationship between biblical hermeneutics and New Testament exegesis; and, inter-disciplinary analyses of the potential application of general hermeneutical resources (including critical theory, structuralist linguistics and ontology) to the study of religious language.

Notably, Ricoeur's 1970s corpus comprised the majority of Ricoeur's religious publications. As significantly, it appeared to situate these discussions within his philosophical framework of the time. This, on the surface, challenged the rigid rule of separation that he had maintained both prior to the 1970s, and indeed after. The about-turn in Ricoeur's methodological stance was noted and regularly queried by his colleagues and collaborators. It was, however, not until late in his career that Ricoeur discussed in any detail the underlying rationale that gave rise to this exceptional body of work.

Intellectual Memoirs and Recent Reception

Beginning in the 1990s, Ricoeur and his contemporaries set about to develop an intellectual history of his thought. The result was a mixed assortment of

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[6] Ricoeur's hermeneutical publications between 1968 and 1979 followed two paths. His 'philosophical' studies were geared towards the examination of discourse and the explication of meaning through text. These works can be understood as Ricoeur's 'general hermeneutical theory' and include the articles found in the following compilations: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981a); *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics* (1991a). The second facet of his hermeneutical project looked to characterise biblical language as a particular form of discourse. These works make up Ricoeur's 'regional hermeneutical theory'. The most expansive of these studies is the *Semeia* publication "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a). Many of Ricoeur's individual studies of biblical discourse from this period were compiled in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (Ricoeur, 1995f).

autobiographical works ranging from interviews and round-table discussions to journal articles. These publications (appearing between 1992 and 2004) centred on a common theme: the origins and development of Ricoeur's own philosophy. While rarely presented as such, this collection of five works can be seen to comprise Ricoeur's intellectual memoirs. They include the following: "Introduction: A Question of Selfhood" in *Oneself as Another* (1992b); "Paul Ricoeur: Intellectual Autobiography" in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (1995a); *Critique and Conviction* (1998); *On Paul Ricoeur: Owl of Minerva* (2004); and "Roundtable Discussion: Paul Ricoeur and Questioners" in *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God* (2004a). Of these works, "Paul Ricoeur: Intellectual Autobiography" is certainly the centrepiece, though the other four do provide important addendums.

While the subject matter covered in these publications is vast, there are key themes that Ricoeur regularly returns to. For instance, many of the works centre on: his late inclination towards philosophical study, how the social and academic pressures of post-war France affected the development of his philosophy and, finally, his life-long struggle to reconcile critical analysis and religious reflection. Since Ricoeur's death, these publications have provided scholars with a fuller picture of the intellectual climate and historical debates in which he operated at various points of his career. It is, however, his candid discussions on the "dual orientation" of his work – towards philosophy on the one hand and religion on the other – that have generated the greatest debate.

A principal theme that runs through many of the 1990s publications is the epistemological and hermeneutical differences between philosophical and religious 'discourse'. Ricoeur initiates the discussion by offering his personal observations on how he first perceived the tension between philosophical and theological study in his native France. He speaks of his early encounters with university faculties in the 1930s, and how he observed a long-standing predilection to keep

philosophical study *autonomous* from the influence of other disciplines.[7] He emphasises the tension that existed at the time between philosophical and theological disciplines in particular, characterizing their fraught relationship as a war of sorts, which as a young academic he was conscripted into: "It was in this way that I learned, during my years of apprenticeship at the University of Rennes…to conduct an internecine war, from one armistice to the next, between faith and reason, as we used to say then."[8]

Of particular interest to current scholarship are Ricoeur's accounts of having had his philosophical integrity questioned in his formative teaching years as a lecturer in Paris, due to the religious tenor of his work. Specifically, he recounts being branded a "crypto-theologian" by the philosophical academy in the early 1960s, as the general mood changed towards atheism and the religiosity of his work became less palatable.[9]

In his influential biography, *Paul Ricœur*, O. Mongin (1994) first postulates that the separation of philosophical and religious reflection in Ricoeur's corpus may have been influenced by the mixed reception he received in France. In particular, Mongin notes that, earlier in his career (from the 1930s to the 1960s), the religious elements of Ricoeur's studies provoked little backlash. This was because, immediately following the Second World War, Christian existentialism (typified by the works of Gabriel Marcel) was widely accepted. Owing to his keen interest in Kant's philosophy of religion, and the historical relationship existing between hermeneutics and biblical exegesis, Ricoeur was indifferent to the threat that his philosophy might, one day, be branded as excessively religious (or even apologetic). In this respect, Ricoeur did little to hide the Christian overtones in his philosophical writing. He became engaged with the, so called, Christian or

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[7] While the term "autonomous" can be interpreted in a variety of ways, Ricoeur is here suggesting that philosophy is an "independent" or "self-sustaining" modality of thought. (Ricoeur, 1995a, pp. 5-6) For further discussion on the relationship between faith and reason in the works of Paul Ricoeur, see: Stiver, 2001, pp. 220-234; Crump, 2002, pp. 178-181.

[8] Paul Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 6.

[9] Paul Ricoeur, 2014, p. 203.

Protestant philosophy of Roger Mehl and Pierre Thévenaz and, until the 1960s, maintained a close affiliation with popular theological publications (such as *Christianisme Social* and *Esprit*).[10]

Mongin however highlights that, in the late 1960s, the intellectual climate in France changed, and it became more common to couch critical debates in terms of opposing world-views (most notably Marxism and Christianity). Within this environment, the theological resonances of Ricoeur's earlier studies brought about a mixed reception ("réception violente"). On the one hand he was branded a "crypto-theologian" who should be cast out from "la communauté philosophique", and on the other a champion of "Christian philosophy" following in the reformed tradition.[11] Mongin argues that, as Ricoeur found neither characterisation palatable, he resolved to maintain a much clearer distinction between his disciplinary studies:

> Ricoeur separates more explicitly his personal religious commitments from his philosophical investigations, and even more his writings on Christianity or biblical hermeneutics from his philosophical texts. Certainly, the countless essays on biblical hermeneutics are an intrinsic part of his work, but Ricoeur – albeit never acknowledging it as such – rejected a "religious" image that hindered both the comprehension and reception of his philosophy.[12]

A number of contemporary scholars have not only adopted Mongin's argumentation, but have extrapolated from it the belief that social and academic pressures are the basis for Ricoeur's overarching methodology. Not only do they view the 1960s censure as a contributing factor, but see it as the decisive stimulus that compelled Ricoeur to de-theologise his philosophical output and, in the years that followed, embrace a dichotomous approach with regard to his hermeneutics.

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[10] Mongin, 1994, pp. 204-205.
[11] Ibid., p. 205.
[12] Ibid., pp. 205-206: "Ricoeur sépare plus explicitement engagement religieux et travail philosophique, et plus encore ses écrits touchant le christianisme ou l'herméneutique biblique et les textes philosophiques. Certes, les innombrables essais de l'herméneutique biblique ne sont pas sans lien avec l'ensemble de son travail, mais Ricoeur - il ne l'a cependant jamais dit sous cette forme - se défend contre une image "religieuse" qui pèse sur la compréhension et la réception de sa philosophie." (Translation mine)

They go on to suggest that, shortly before his death, Ricoeur denounced the "artificial" boundaries that he maintained between these two spheres of study.

In recent years, this perspective is most clearly presented in the works of D. Stiver:

> Even though Ricoeur was reticent about his own theological influences in philosophy, it is clear at this point that Ricoeur's philosophy is at least "friendly" to Christian theology; in his own words, it provides an "approximation" to theological reflection. Moreover, his own late remarks reveal some change of mind about the clear demarcation that he sought…This separation was likely related to his context in France where he had to fight to overcome a tendency to see his Christian commitments as undermining his reputation as a philosopher. As he puts it, however, in a later interview, "I no longer find such conceptual asceticism tenable".[13]

Stiver asserts that the friction between Ricoeur and his academic peers was the primary motive for adopting a "clear demarcation" between philosophical and theological thought. He further states that this segregation was reappraised, and ultimately rejected, by Ricoeur himself towards the end of his career. From the above excerpt, we see that Stiver's rationale hinges on Ricoeur's use of the phrase "conceptual asceticism" in his apparent renunciation of his earlier approach. For Stiver, the cryptic term is used by Ricoeur to describe his separation (or "demarcation") of the philosophical and theological spheres in response to academic censure.

This, however, is a rather loose interpretation of the original source material. In fact, Ricoeur's quotation above (in which the term "conceptual asceticism" is used) derives from an exchange with Richard Kearney (as published in the 2004 work *Owl of Minerva*). In this exchange, the subject under discussion is not Ricoeur's own analytic approach at all but, rather, the historical relationship between ontology and religion (and, more specifically, the blanket rejection of medieval "onto-theo-logy" by 20th century French philosophers):

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[13] Stiver, 2006, p.158.

> My thought here is not so removed from certain religious and biblical issues as my standard policy of "conceptual asceticism" might have been prepared to admit in the past. I am not sure about the absolute irreconcilability of the God of the Bible and the God of Being (understood with John Nabert as "primary affirmation" or with Spinoza as "substantia actuosa"). The tendency of modern French thought to eclipse the Middle Ages has prevented us from acknowledging the very rich attempts to think God and being in terms of each other. I no longer consider such conceptual asceticism tenable. [14]

While Ricoeur is here retracting a position that he had previously condoned, he is patently not discussing the evolution or composition of his *oeuvre*, but rather making a much more general point about the appreciable value of medieval "attempts to think God and being in terms of each other".

Despite a lack of reliable source material to substantiate Stiver's 'causal' argumentation, a similar position was recently taken by C. M. Gschwandtner in her 2013 publication.[15] In the discussion entitled "A Controlled Schizophrenia", Gschwandtner considers the shortcomings of Ricoeur's methodological division between philosophy and biblical studies. In particular, she argues that Ricoeur's dualistic approach deviates from the analytic methods routinely used in his philosophical investigations (where conceptual distinctions were successfully broken down "to allow for dialogue between opposing positions"). [16] Gschwandtner holds that, in Ricoeur's work up to the 1990s, philosophical and religious forms of discourse are held in perpetual opposition, with any potential crossover left unexplored. Indeed, his "artificial" separation is seen to be wholly inadequate to "resolve the dichotomy" between philosophical and religious discourse:[17]

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[14] Ricoeur & Kearney, 2004, p. 169.
[15] This reading is here defined as *causal* due to Stiver's intimations of a causal relationship (or 'causal chain'), whereby Ricoeur's "demarcation" of philosophical and religious thought is seen to relate directly to the sociological pressures he was under from the French philosophical establishment.
[16] Gschwandtner, 2013, p. 101.
[17] Ibid., p. 101.

> To some extent, the watertight division between Ricoeur's strictly philosophical work and his writings on biblical hermeneutics might well be artificial and misleading. One might suggest that the two discourses inform each other much more meaningfully than Ricoeur often admits.[18]

As seen with Stiver, Gschwandtner conducts her analysis of Ricoeur's 1970s works based entirely upon his late autobiographical publications (particularly *Critique and Conviction*). Like Stiver, she also assumes that Ricoeur's approach was put in place to defend his philosophical endeavours from the charge of a "crypto-theological reading" and that, in his later career, he came to recognise the stark "and in many ways false" opposition between philosophical analysis and theological reflection.[19]

Without delving too deeply into the merits of 'causal' analysis, we can observe that the interpretations adopted by Stiver, Gschwandtner et al., while initially compelling, begin to fray under close scrutiny. This is not least because they run contrary to the views regularly expressed by Ricoeur himself throughout his career, as well as in those autobiographical publications that they are appealing to.

Of the works that comprise Ricoeur's memoirs, the most comprehensive (and yet often least cited) is the "Paul Ricoeur: Intellectual Autobiography". Unlike the transcribed interviews and round-table discussions which have garnered much attention over the past decade, this 1995 work carefully considers both the benefits and limitations of the autobiographical genre. It also provides a detailed, chronological summary of the development of his thought throughout his professional career. What's more, on the subject of his methodological approach, it offers valuable insights.

Contra the causal reading outlined above, Ricoeur clarifies that his decision not to conflate philosophical and religious thought originated well before the academic censure of the 1960s. Indeed, he saw his path as having been determined decades

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[18] Ibid., p. 96.
[19] Ibid., p. 97. For discussion on the merits and limitations of Gschwandtner argumentations, see: D'Angeli, 2014, p. 242.

before (in the 1930s in fact) when, as a student, he was left unconvinced by the efforts of his contemporaries to amalgamate the study of philosophy and religion. Using the analogy of the "armistice", Ricoeur describes his nascent desire to explore the common ground between rationality and spirituality, while maintaining the theoretical integrity of each:

> Today I recognize the mark of one of these armistices in the master's thesis I wrote during the 1933-34 academic year on the *Problem of God in Lachelier and Lagneau*. I found it intellectually satisfying that thinkers so taken with rationality and so concerned with the autonomy of philosophical thinking had granted a place for the idea of God, as such, in their philosophy, while at the same time neither encouraged me to make any sort of amalgamation between philosophy and biblical faith. This is why I have spoken of an armistice rather than an alliance.[20]

In this work, Ricoeur regularly reflects on his resolution to not combine philosophical and biblical disciplines (also termed "sources" or "genres"). He characterises his "rule of strict separation"[21] as a basic imperative that he adopted early, and remained faithful to throughout his career. Indeed, he holds that while his research interests tended towards the confluence of philosophy and religion, when teaching in France during the 1950s and 1960s, he was never himself tempted to write a definitive work in this area:

> As for the poetics of Transcendence, this was never written, if by this title one expects something like a philosophy of religion, for lack of a theological philosophy. My primary concern, which has never wavered, not to mix genres together has instead drawn me closer to the notion of a philosophy without an absolute… Any reflection on the status of a subject who is summoned and called to self-scrutiny must, therefore, be sought in my efforts at biblical exegesis.[22]

Ricoeur clarifies that throughout his career he sought to avoid instances where theological paradigms might be construed either as a by-product of, or an appendix to, a given philosophical argumentation. He cites his late publication

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[20] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 6.
[21] Ibid., p. 25.
[22] Ibid., p. 13.

Oneself as Another (1992) as a clear example of where the final version was amended to avoid a "mixing" of the two disciplines: "I did not include these two [religious] lectures in *Oneself as Another*, in order to remain faithful to the old pact I had made that the non-philosophical sources of my conviction would not be mixed together with the arguments of my philosophical discourse."[23]

If, as Ricoeur suggests, his determination to maintain the distinctiveness of philosophy and theology was neither motivated by the norms of the French academy nor by the critical reception of his work, why was this "imperative" put in place? In the second part of our discussion, it is shown that Ricoeur's methodology derived from his long-standing belief that Western epistemology is founded on the convergence of two very different traditions: Hellenistic rationality and Hebraic faith. We further observe how Ricoeur tailored his analytic approach towards safely exploring the complex *hermeneutical* relationship that exists between these two separate modes of perceiving reality.

Part 2: Incidences Théologiques

Beginning in the 1950s, philosophy and religion were characterised in Ricoeur's work as separate epistemic traditions that derived from distinct geographical centres (Greece and the Near East respectively). Initially, at least, the distinction was presented in the most general terms, emphasising their different origins and defining features. Indeed, the two traditions were seen to relate to one another only in as much they represented the "dual-heritage" of Athens and Jerusalem, whose historic "encounter" had formed the foundation of Western thought.

> There are relations of "proximity" and "distance" that belong inescapably to the structure of our cultural memory. Hence, the privilege of "proximity" of Greek and Jewish cultures; these two cultures, which would contain nothing exceptional for an eye not situated anywhere in particular, constitute the first stratum of our philosophical memory. More precisely, the *encounter* of the Jewish source with the Greek origin is the fundamental

[23] Ibid., p. 50.

> intersection that founds our culture. The Jewish source is the first "other" of philosophy, its "nearest" other; the abstractly contingent fact of that encounter is the very fate of our occidental culture… This is why the history of the consciousness of fault in Greece and Israel will constantly be our central point of reference; it is our "nearest" origin, in the spiritual economy of distance. The rest follows from the double privilege of Athens and Jerusalem: everything that, step by step, has contributed to our spiritual genesis belongs to our investigation, but along the lines of motivation that are expressed by "near" and "far".[24]

In early publications, such as *Symbolism of Evil* (1955), Ricoeur asserted that it was the "coming together" of these cultural outlooks that had determined the direction of Western epistemology. Yet, he himself was mindful to highlight *which* tradition he was following in any given study. His publications from the 1940s to the 1960s were firmly situated in *either* the sphere of philosophy or theology, as he strove to adhere to the conventions that defined each epistemological strand. As previously noted, this segregation of the two disciplines was interpreted by critics as an attempt to maintain the purity of "philosophy *qua* philosophy", in line with the outlook of the French academy.[25] In his autobiographical works, however, Ricoeur states that he was equally, if not more, concerned with maintaining the integrity of the theological tradition: "If I defend my philosophical writings against the accusation of crypto-theology, I also refrain, with equal vigilance, from assigning to biblical faith a crypto-philosophical function, which would most certainly be the case if one were to expect from it some definitive solution to the aporias that philosophy produces in abundance…"[26]

While this underlying resolve to not "mix" would be tested in later years, Ricoeur would never fully abandon it. As H. I. Venema (2010) states, even when Ricoeur's outlook became more centred in language studies than epistemology, philosophy and religion would continue to be treated (from a methodological standpoint) as belonging to very different and, often, incompatible modes of thought: "For Ricoeur, philosophy and religion have always embodied two different styles or

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[24] Ricoeur, 1965, p. 20.
[25] Venema, 2010, p. 63.
[26] Ricoeur, 1992b, p. 24.

orientations of thinking, rooted in different texts that are subject to a hermeneutic of critical suspicion and affirmation."[27]

The late 1960s would see an easing of this rigid separation between the two orientations. Though Ricoeur would never renounce the belief that the disciplines originated from different sources (and should thus not be conflated), he increasingly sought to examine the relationship *between* their respective traditions.[28] Within the constraints of his self-imposed imperative, his work of the 1960s began to consider the points of overlap between philosophical and biblical subject matter.

Ricoeur's late autobiographical publications cite several reasons for this change in tack. Firstly, he believed that contemporary academia was failing to explore the rich middle ground between "rationality and spirituality", as he termed it. In dialogue with Richard Kearney, Ricoeur laments how the Judaeo-Christian tradition and Greek rationality were consistently held apart by 20th century thinkers in a "false dichotomy" of sorts.[29] While it was one thing to maintain the distinctions between philosophical and theological modes of study, it was quite another to ignore the historic association that had developed between the two traditions.

In Ricoeur's view, 20th century scholarship needed to redress this anti-religious bent, whereby theological study was systematically marginalised from so called

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[27] Venema, 2010, p. 64.

[28] The term "sources" in Ricoeur's work is clearly appropriated from Paul Tillich's usage. It designates on the one side the dogmatic interpretation of biblical writing and on the other the non-dogmatic interpretation of human experience. Ricoeur would employ this term in two capacities within his 1970s publications. Firstly, as discussed here, it is used to differentiate between the Hebraic and Hellenistic epistemological traditions. Secondly, it identifies the internal tension within religion itself – between the more static ecclesiastical (or magisterial) interpretation of scripture and the more variable interpretation of religious texts and religious experience held by an individual: "It is well known that Paul Tillich initiated this model with his method of *correlation*. For my part I readily assume this concept, if it only designates the formal task of relating the two "sources" of theological discourse (the meanings displayed by religious texts as interpreted in one of the great Christian traditions *and* the meanings displayed by ordinary human experience) to one another." (Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 131.)

[29] Kearney, 2004, p. 116.

'rational' disciplines. Specifically, new "models of reconciliation" were needed in order to establish how religious reflection related to other disciplines within the contemporary academic landscape.[30] "Model of reconciliation", as used here by Ricoeur, likely denotes a shared academic field (or subject area) practically situated between the two disciplines. By considering the ways in which philosophy and theology could individually contribute to a shared field of study, Ricoeur believed that the long-standing divisions between the two spheres could be overcome. In this view, the study of language (with its syntax, literary structures and modes of reception) was seen to be a point of convergence, where religious inquiry and philosophical rationality could inform one another:

> What becomes apparent through all these diverse writings is the idea of an analysis of biblical language that ties together the diversity of the ways of naming God with that of the literary "genres" employed in the biblical canon. In this way, remaining faithful to my rule of strict separation, I directed my undistracted attention to the understanding belonging to faith, in an intimate dialogue between "philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics".[31]

Though it was initially through his examinations of structural linguistics and literary theory that Ricoeur came to identify language's reconciliatory potential, he quickly determined that hermeneutics (rather than linguistics) was the more suitable field of study. Modern linguistics was, for Ricoeur, far too concerned with the *internal* relationships between signs and structures, as opposed to how language relates to objects and actions in the real world. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, with its prioritisation on traditions of interpretation and the reception of written texts, was a much more philosophical enterprise that had the added benefit of sharing many of the concerns of biblical studies:

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[30] Ibid, p. 116: "From the eleventh century onwards we find models of reconciling reason and religion – in Anselm, for example – and the Renaissance confirms this primary synthesis of rationality and spirituality. If it is true that the rationality of scientific positivism has divorced itself from spirituality, there are many signs today that we are searching for new forms of connection."

[31] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 25.

> The fact that I relate to things by means of signs is already the first stage of the hermeneutical relation. This explains why there has been a surge of renewed interest among modern scholars in respect of the term hermeneutics; this happened because they found that the term exhibits the twofold significance of: a) being tightly linked to exegesis in a technical sense; b) working towards the integration of the particular problem studied by exegesis within the general theory of language, significance, or signs.[32]

In placing the focus of his hermeneutical research on the interaction between a philosophical understanding of discourse and biblical textuality, Ricoeur was not proposing a new area of study as such. Rather, he was reviving a rich line of inquiry that, until the early 20th century, had been the basis for all hermeneutical study. In this respect, Ricoeur sought to contextualise his research within earlier hermeneutical debates, ranging from patristic to Romantic philosophy. As noted in Chapter 2, in the lectures of Schleiermacher, in particular, Ricoeur identified a rich repertoire of resources that he believed contemporary hermeneutical scholars could build upon.[33]

In 1968, Ricoeur published his first, exploratory, interdisciplinary study in the field, entitled: *Les incidences théologiques des recherches actuelles concernant le langage*. The significance of this publication, both for Ricoeur scholarship and the wider study of hermeneutics, is manifold. Firstly, it offered a blueprint for how the philosophical study of language relates to biblical exegesis (by mapping the key points where general hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics had historically overlapped).

Perhaps more importantly, Ricoeur also established the two topics that would form the basis of his *own* hermeneutical project throughout the 1970s. On the one

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[32] Ricoeur, 1968, p. 19: "Le fait que je sois en relation avec les choses par le moyen de signes, c'est déjà la relation herméneutique première. Ce qui explique que les modernes aient eu le goût de reprendre ce terme herméneutique, c'est qu'ils avaient un mot qui avait cette double portée : a – un sens technique qui le rattache plus étroitement à l'exégèse. b – cette visée de rattacher le problème particulier de l'exégèse à la théorie générale du langage, de la signification ou du signe." (Translation mine)

[33] Ibid., p. 19–24. Ricoeur observes how linguistic concerns figure prominently in early biblical studies of the patristics (such as Augustine), as well as within medieval scholarship. It is however the work of Schleiermacher and the Romantics in the 19th century which was seen to have instigated a more comprehensive dialogue between philosophy of language and biblical studies.

hand, he signalled an intention to advance his earlier philosophical investigations of symbolism in the direction of 19th and 20th century hermeneutical theory, focusing specifically on the relationship between text and meaning. On the other hand, he indicated a separate move towards demonstrating how biblical studies could be enriched by a hermeneutical understanding of discourse.

This little-known, but seminal, text therefore introduced two separate, but interrelated, questions that Ricoeur's entire 1970s corpus would strive to answer:

1. Can the philosophical study of language *qua* discourse offer a basis for the study of all texts?
2. To what extent is religious (and specifically biblical) discourse unique?

The importance of Ricoeur's 1968 text is not only that it anticipates a split focus in his later work – on the one hand towards philosophical hermeneutics and, on the other, towards biblical discourse. In a break from his earlier stance, this publication acknowledges that it *is* possible to conduct concurrent, and at times comparative, analyses of philosophical and religious subject matters, so long as they are focused around a central and unifying hermeneutical theme. Put another way, more so than in any previous work, Ricoeur presupposes that the separate traditions of philosophy and religion can stimulate and inform one another:

> By choosing this topic for debate, one is likewise placed at a point of confrontation that lends itself to making proper use of the method of biblical theology. This relies to a large extent on the interpretation of such key words as covenant, flesh, sin, grace, etc. and also this key word around which the whole of hermeneutics somehow gravitates: the very word "God" itself keeps demanding a thorough re-organization of any other key word. So precisely identified, the subject matter is situated at the junction of *parole* hermeneutics with *mot* semantics: the speech of words.[34]

[34] Ricoeur, 1968, p. 7: "En choisissant ce champ de confrontation, on se place en même temps à un niveau qui se prête bien à discussion avec la méthode de la théologie biblique, qui est pour une large part une interprétation des mots-clés : alliance, chair, péché, grâce, etc.… et aussi ce mot-clé autour duquel gravite en quelque sorte toute herméneutique, le mot même de Dieu qui, à chaque moment, requiert une réorganisation entière de tous les mots-clés. Le sujet s'est précisé ;

Les incidences théologiques set the groundwork for many of Ricoeur's later studies from this period, where general (or non-religious) hermeneutical approaches are used to better understand biblical language. The specific relevance of this work can be observed in his early discussions of the Catholic theologian M.D. Chenu (in Part 1). Here, Ricoeur notes that, in the 1950s, Chenu had postulated that, early in its development, biblical language came to harness the semantic abundance of symbols in a way unique to other literary forms. This is commonly seen in how many biblical symbols (such as father, water, kingdom etc.) maintain a variety of significations at the same time. While a multiplicity of meanings can often obfuscate one's interpretation of a text, Chenu importantly observed that this was not the case with scripture and that, indeed, the Bible's inherent polysemy appears to greatly enrich the text:

> In an example drawn from the chapter on symbolism in Father Chenu's *Théologie au XII siècle*, the author demonstrates that the great symbols of Western culture originating from Hebraism are certainly tied to a universal kind of symbolism. But beyond that, one immediately recognizes that…we are confronted with a flourishing of sense, whereby anything can be representative of anything else… [These symbols] worked their way into biblical tradition to signify, for example, the threat of chaos, destruction, the diabolism latent in human nature, because biblical narrative supplied an effective means to harness semantic multiplicity. This multiplicity of sense or polysemy – the kind of flourishing polysemy of wild symbolism – needs to be suppressed and limited and, following such limiting, it becomes functional.[35]

Ricoeur's 1970s hermeneutics would incorporate from Chenu the conviction that, firstly, the polysemy of symbolic language was a defining characteristic of biblical

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il se trouve situé au point de croisement de l'herméneutique de la parole et de la sémantique du mot : la parole des mots." (Translation mine)

[35] Ricoeur, 1968, p. 10: "Un exemple tiré de la "Théologie au XXII' siècle" du P. Chenu, (chap. sur le symbolisme) où il montre que les grands symboles de la culture occidentale, symboles d'origine hébraïque, reposent certes sur un symbolisme universel mais tout de suite…nous nous trouvons en face de tout un foisonnement de sens, où tout peut signifier tout et n'importe quoi ; les mêmes symboles…ont pu être repris dans la tradition biblique pour signifier par exemple menace de chaos, destruction, diabolisme latent de la condition humaine parce qu'ils ont été pris dans le récitatif biblique comme étant le moyen de maîtriser une multiplicité sémantique. Par conséquent, la multiplicité de sens, la polysémie, cette polysémie foisonnante du symbolisme sauvage doit être maîtrisée et limitée et par le moyen de cette limitation va devenir fonctionnelle." (Translation mine)

discourse, and, secondly, the semantic abundance of biblical symbols is "made operative within the economy of sense" that scripture provides.[36] As explored in Chapters 8 and 9 of the thesis, these notions become a seminal facet of Ricoeur's understanding of metaphorical language.

Philosophical and Biblical Discourse

A key work from the 1970s that sought to expound on the themes from *Les incidences théologiques* is "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a). This work moves away from simply identifying which general hermeneutical resources *could* be used to augment the understanding of biblical textuality and, instead, provides a context for Ricoeur's own interdisciplinary studies. This is initially accomplished by exploring the historical interaction between philosophical and religious forms of discourse.

In line with Schleiermacher's outlook, "Biblical Hermeneutics" contends that *any* viable notion of discourse needs to account for the tension between 'general' forms of discourse (typified by philosophical discourse) and regional or 'particular' forms of discourse (typified by biblical discourse).[37] In this way, hermeneutics as a discipline can successfully mediate between the two poles of language. What's more, Ricoeur held that, far from developing in isolation from one another, each of these explorations must be permitted to influence the development of the other.

To exemplify this point, Ricoeur once again returned to the analogy of Athens and Jerusalem from his earlier writing. In stark contrast to his position from the 1950s however (where only the differences between the two epistemic outlooks were considered) he here argued that the encounter between Hellenistic and Hebraic cultures had led to a cross-fertilisation of sorts between the two forms of

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[36] Ibid., p. 7.

[37] Philosophical discourse as a meta-discourse (or 'discourse about discourse') is seen as the general form. Biblical discourse with its distinctive hermeneutical rules and conventions is understood by Ricoeur as a particular form.

discourse. In particular, he proposed that elements of philosophical discourse had been transferred into the make-up and interpretation of religious writing. These characteristics, in turn, became defining features of biblical interpretation: "It is a contingent situation transformed into fate that the Judaeo-Christian culture occurred on the borders of the Greek world and to a certain extent within its zone of influence."[38]

Shedding the generalisations from earlier works, such as *Symbolism of Evil*, Ricoeur presented an in-depth examination of the ways in which religious writing shows the influence of classical Greek conceptuality. The first of these is seen in the way articulations of religious beliefs in scripture came to use philosophical terms and modes of expression. Basic religious tenets (such as the fundamental expressions of covenant in Judaism and salvation in Christianity) began to be articulated in conventional philosophical terms, with earlier Hebraic texts becoming re-interpreted through a lens of philosophical paradigms:

> Christianity borrowed from Hellenism its forms of argumentation, and even its fundamental semantics. Such words as sin, grace, redemption, atonement, eternal life, etc. received their meaning through the mediation of philosophical concepts at the time and above all under the influence of some prominent problematics in the cultural world of the day; the concern for eternity in Neo-Platonic spirituality, for example.[39]

Another distinctive characteristic of biblical discourse, which Ricoeur ascribed to the influence of Hellenism, is the necessary shift from *figurative* to *conceptual* interpretation. Appropriating a pattern common in Hellenistic thought, it became the norm for the interpretation of religious writing to encompass two steps. Scripture would continue to be initially written and read (as with the earlier Hebraic texts) using highly figurative or symbolic language. The interpretation of those passages, however, would then go through a secondary process, whereby the original text was understood and relayed in the more easily accessible form of

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[38] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 129.
[39] Ibid., p. 129.

a "concept".[40] For Ricoeur, this movement from figurative language to theological concept was not an indigenous feature of early Hebraic exegesis. Rather, through the dissemination and adoption of Hellenistic rationality, it came to be a defining trait of biblical discourse:

> Religious language itself requires the transposition from "images" or rather "figurative modes" to "conceptual modes" of expression… At first sight this transposition may seem to be merely an *extrinsic* change, I mean, one superimposed from the outside. Figurative language seems compelled to take the route of the concept for a reason which is peculiar to Western culture. In this culture, religious language has always been exposed to another language, that of philosophy, which is the conceptual language *par excellence*… This explains why so many writings in both the Old and the New Testament express a certain influence of Hellenism. And it explains above all why the Christian Church was unable to elaborate a theological discourse without the help of Greek conceptuality.[41]

Ricoeur intimates that on the basis of textual evidence, the adoption of philosophical rhetorical patterns became more pronounced in the centuries leading up to the establishment of the Christian Church. This is evident by comparing the literary differences between the two Testaments within Christian scripture. Moving from the Old Testament to the New Testament, figurative language becomes supplanted as the dominant mode of expression. Though the *Biblia Hebraica* employs a number of rhetorical forms for the transmission of meaning, narrative is most prevalent.

As we move into New Testament writing, and particularly when considering the letters of Paul, conceptual discussions overtake figurative formulations (such as psalms or narrative) as the dominant mode of expounding and exploring religious principles. What's more, as the abstract formulations of Greek prose are introduced into scripture, conceptual dialogue becomes an increasingly common attribute of biblical writing. This is particularly evident when comparing the first

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[40] It is unclear to what extent Ricoeur was involved with the 1970s debates on the viability of the so called 'classical theory of concepts'. Within the parameters of this discussion, therefore, it shall be assumed that the term "concept" for Ricoeur implies a definitional structure of lexical terms.
[41] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 129.

Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible in the 3rd century BCE, with the ratified works of the New Testament canon in, or around, the 4th century CE.

For Ricoeur, the incursion of philosophical constructs affected the Christian Church much more than Second Temple Judaism. Early Christian readings were not as insulated by the traditions of interpretation that had been passed down through the rabbinic school. Due to this, Christian prose tended to be more engaged with conceptual discussion concerning the interpretation of the gospels as well as their relationship to Old Testament writings.[42]

This not to say that every facet of religious expression can be reformulated in conceptual form. Ricoeur notes that key terms within scripture (for instance, the ones denoting the divine) are hallmarks of the earlier Hebraic tradition, where the terms designate a multitude of significations referring to yet more significations (as earlier noted by Chenu). The variable nature of terms, such as "God", is reminiscent of an earlier form of cultural symbol. Their "density of meaning" hinders the process of conceptual reduction and, thus, allows for the polysemic meaning to flourish. Within the framework of biblical discourse, which is comprised of a variety of literary genres rooted in different socio-political contexts, Ricoeur stresses that these *loaded* religious terms can only be understood through their (variable) usage throughout the expanse of the biblical canon. Due to this, religious language requires a variety of modes of reading to account for both the more conceptual and more figurative passages:

> Thus the word God in Biblical texts receives its meaning from the *convergence* of several modes of discourse (narratives and prophecies, legislative texts and wisdom literature, proverbs and hymns) – as both the intersection point and the horizon which escapes each and every form – that had to be absorbed in the conceptual space, to be reinterpreted in terms of the philosophical Absolute, as prime mover, first cause, *Actus Essendi,* Perfect Being, etc. Hence our concept of God belongs to an onto-theology, within which it keeps organizing the entire constellation of the

[42] Ibid., pp. 129-130.

keywords of theological semantics, but within a framework of meanings prescribed by metaphysics.[43]

Conclusion

Though Ricoeur's late autobiographical publications have stimulated considerable debate in recent years, a close reading offers insight into one of the richest, and least explored, periods of his *oeuvre*. Throughout his career, Ricoeur maintained a rigid methodological separation between his philosophical and religious writings. However, via the hermeneutical exploration of language and discourse, these two driving interests became aligned. Beginning in 1968, with the publication of *Les incidences théologiques des recherches actuelles concernant le langage*, through to the end of the 1970s, Ricoeur set out to explore the complex, "conflictual-consensual" relationship between philosophical and religious discourse. His studies of these contrasting "forms" of discourse would underpin his groundbreaking work in the 1970s on textual hermeneutical theory and biblical theology and, in the 1980s, on narrative and historiography.

A foundation of his hermeneutical understanding already present in the 1968 publication was that figurative, or symbolic, language requires a different ("longer") route of interpretation to non-figurative language. To appeal immediately to the explicit meaning of figurative language – and to reduce the symbolism used within it to a conceptual derivative – was to short-circuit the interpretative process.

This principle would inform his explorations into the semantics of metaphor,[44] and his critique of Heideggerian/Gadamerian ontological hermeneutics.[45] Within his more religious explorations of this period,[46] this notion underpinned his argument that the interpretation of biblical discourse relies upon a network of

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[43] Ibid., p. 130.
[44] See Chapter 5-7.
[45] See, Chapter 8 (Part 2).
[46] See Ricoeur, 1977c, pp. 1-37; Ricoeur, 1978a, pp. 321-339; Ricoeur, 1979a, pp. 215–227.

meaning forged through the intertextual bonds between different biblical genres. It should lastly be noted that, through the study of biblical discourse, Ricoeur came to understand that the surplus of meaning created by figurative language was not an obstacle for interpretation but, rather, a hermeneutical tool that greatly enriches 'poetic' works.[47]

[47] See Chapter 8 (Parts 2 & 3).

Chapter 3

A Hermeneutical Understanding of Philosophy and Religion

With the publication of "Biblical Hermeneutics" in 1975, Ricoeur's interests would veer away from how philosophy and religion interacted historically in terms of separate epistemological traditions. Indeed, by the mid-1970s, Ricoeur would abandon the term "Athens and Jerusalem" entirely, deciding that this classical formulation had become overly problematic for use within contemporary hermeneutical studies.

The first problem that he identified related to the general tendency to keep the Greek and Hebraic traditions apart within academic institutions. As earlier observed, Ricoeur took exception to the notion that Western epistemology should be uncompromisingly separated into rational and spiritual branches (as it had long been in France) on the grounds that it derived from different cultural and geographical sources. In his view, this trend had muted many of the "rich attempts" by theorists to understand the relationship between philosophical and theological thinking.[1] The Athens-Jerusalem formulation was seen by Ricoeur to have played a role in perpetuating this unhealthy split:

> Our Western religiosity of Judaeo-Christianity has always functioned in the philosophical climate of Greek and Latin rationality. I have always objected to the simplistic opposition of Jerusalem and Athens, to those thinkers who declare that true spirituality can only be found in monotheism; or try to drive a wedge between Greek and Hebraic culture, defining the former as a thought of the cosmos and the latter as a thought of transcendence and so on. [2]

For Ricoeur, contemporary studies that primarily looked at the epistemic, rather than linguistic, differences between philosophy and religion risked being drawn

[1] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 25.
[2] Ricoeur & Kearney, 2004, p. 169. (Originally published in Kearney, 1984, p. 35.)

into a debate on onto-theology.[3] His work from this period therefore sought to move the focus away from well-trodden ontological issues and, instead, cultivate a constructive dialogue based around the common study of language.

Consequently, Ricoeur's analyses proceeded along a 'hermeneutical' path initiated by the simple question of *if* and *how* a contemporary study of religious experience could be augmented by a post-Kantian approach to language.[4] But how was he to combat the long-standing view within the academic domain that philosophy and theology incorporated distinctive schools of thought (with their own methods, theorists and bodies of transferred knowledge) and were therefore irreconcilable? Indeed, Ricoeur himself had held concerns regarding the viability of philosophical investigations of religion, characterising past attempts (such as those of Marcel) as broadly uninspiring.[5] If the breach was to be traversed, a fresh approach was required.

The first step to "amalgamate" the traditions was to note that,[6] beyond existing as distinct intellectual disciplines (with set institutional conventions), philosophy and religion were also separate, though closely related, forms of discourse with their own linguistic traits and "claims to meaningfulness".[7] It was by considering their similarities and differences at *this* level that an interdisciplinary dialogue could be achieved. A further advantage was that, by adopting a hermeneutical approach

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[3] In "Biblical Hermeneutics", Ricoeur notes that the ontological world-view that had, since the beginning of the Common Era, been shared by philosophy and theology had all but disappeared in the previous two centuries (because of the advancements in Kantian critical reasoning, as well as the onset of ideologies of suspicion). While remnants of their classical association could still be discerned, the separation of critical and dogmatic outlooks had, in the view of many theorists of the time – including Ricoeur – made it no longer essential to think of human existence as related to the existence, and providence, of God. Formulations such as Athens-Jerusalem recalled a classical, but now defunct, world-view where philosophical and spiritual perspectives were connected by a common ontological framework. (Ricoeur, 1975a, pp. 129-130.)

[4] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 130: "This external pressure exerted on religious experience and discourse by philosophy is no less evident when the onto-theology collapses under the blows of the Kantian critique, Marxist metacritique, nihilism in the Nietzschean sense, psychoanalysis, and the human sciences… It is now with an anti-ontological conceptuality that theology has to come to grips."

[5] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 6.

[6] Ibid., p. 6.

[7] Ricoeur, 1974a, p. 72.

based on the study of discursive *forms*, philosophy's rigorous methodology could be safely applied to religious subject matter:

> The philosopher, even the Christian one, has a distinct task; I am not inclined to say that he brackets what he has heard and what he believes, for how could he philosophize in such a state of abstraction with respect to what is essential? But neither am I of the opinion that he should subordinate his philosophy to theology, in an ancillary relation. Between abstention and capitulation, there is the autonomous way which I have located under the heading "the philosophical approach." …I understand by this the incessant work of philosophical discourse to put itself into a relation of proximity with kerygmatic and theological discourse.[8]

Let us pause for a moment to consider what Ricoeur here intends with the terms philosophical and theological "forms" of discourse.

Part 1: Forms of Discourse

For Ricoeur, discourse signifies the act of "someone saying something to someone else" in a fixed context.[9] In this respect, the act of "saying" is intended in the broadest possible sense, and was not at all restricted to one particular mode of communication. As noted in Chapter 1, discourse could, in Ricoeur's view, take the form of spoken language, written text, artistic expression etc.

In seeking to identify the idiosyncrasies and functions that differentiate one mode (or "type") of discourse from another,[10] he initially emphasised the differences between two modes in particular: 'textual' discourse and 'spoken' discourse.[11] On this conceptual level, Ricoeur concluded that the prominence of spoken discourse had overshadowed the particular abilities and functions of textual discourse (due

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[8] Ricoeur, 1974d, p. 403.
[9] This definition is perhaps most clearly set out in "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation": "…the fundamental and first trait of discourse [is], namely, that discourse is constituted by an ensemble of sentences where someone says something to someone about something." (Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 139.)
[10] In Ricoeur's hermeneutical corpus, the terms "mode" or "type" of discourse are used interchangeably to denote the medium of communication. In this thesis, the term "mode" will be exclusively used in this respect.
[11] Ricoeur, 1973c, pp. 130-134.

in large part to the influence of Schleiermacher's dialogical model).[12] Because our understanding of communication had become increasingly associated with the act of one person speaking to another, we had come to ignore the unique attributes of texts – specifically, their ability to transmit historical articulations and representations of reality. Furthermore, as textual discourse relies on a close association between authorship, narrative and temporality, our lack of textual awareness had negatively impacted our *general* understanding of discourse.

Identifying the differences between the varying modes of discourse was, however, only the first phase of a two-part hermeneutical project. In his own search for the "fullness of language" Ricoeur sought to extend his conceptual understanding of discourse into a variety of disciplines throughout the breadth of the human sciences.[13] As Pellauer (2014) observes, the upshot of Ricoeur's theory of language is that instances of discourse can be "catalogued" in terms of genres (be they legal, political etc.):

> Hence a theory of discourse needs to attend to these different forms and what accounts for their specificity as a form of discourse. Of course, it also needs to acknowledge that any instance of extended discourse within such a genre is unique in its own way; it has a style that individualizes it which also needs investigation. And genres of discourse can overlap, intersect, and even be intermingled, complicating the act of interpreting their meaning.[14]

Ricoeur utilised a variety of interchangeable terms when discussing these different manifestations of discourse (e.g. forms, genres etc.). As with the term "modes of discourse", in the interest of clarity we will henceforth restrict the terminology to the formulation used most frequently in Ricoeur's publications, namely, "forms of discourse". Ricoeur's exploration of discursive forms, then, was predicated on the

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[12] See Chapter 1 for discussion.

[13] To recall, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was defined by its attempt to account for the "totality of language". Ricoeur's use of the similar term "fullness of language" in relation to his own work, originally appears in *Symbolism of Evil* (Ricoeur, 1965, p. 357). It is also a primary theme explored in Pellauer's (2013) conference paper entitled "Ricoeur's Own Linguistic Turn" (see note 15 below).

[14] Pellauer, 2014, p. 119.

simple belief that, while the more technical, linguistic facets of hermeneutical study offered a theoretical framework for the human sciences, this knowledge had to be practically applied to discursive forms. This movement from general theory to regional exegesis would help expose the linguistic relationships between disciplines, as well as the limits of hermeneutical analysis. In this respect, Ricoeur initially identified six different "forms of discourse" (though this was by no means intended as an exhaustive list):

> Ricoeur recognized six forms of extended discourse although in no case, except perhaps for narrative, can his characterization be said to be anything like complete. There are: poetic discourse, narrative discourse, religious discourse, political discourse, legal discourse and, most problematically, philosophical discourse.[15]

It can thus be said that Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the 1970s was deployed along two axes. On the one hand, under the heading of *modes* (or "types") of discourse, he conducted technical linguistic examinations of the various ways in which a message is transmitted (be it textual, verbal or otherwise). This investigation began with his critique of de Saussure's structural linguistics and moved on to consider the significance of textual discourse. The 'poles' of the first area of enquiry were, thus, marked by the contrast between written and spoken language.[16]

On the other hand, Ricoeur's hermeneutics also focused on the variances between the different genres of human communication. This second axis was centred on the, so called, *forms* of discourse, and addressed the question of the practicality of hermeneutical theory for the purposes of exegesis. As alluded to in the discussion

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[15] Pellauer, 2013. Pellauer's publication "Ricoeur's Own Linguistic Turn" was first presented at the Society for Ricoeur Studies Conference (University of Oregon, 2013) and later that year at the 2013 conference at the *Institut Protestant de Théologie*, Paris: *Centenaire Paul Ricoeur*. The citation above is from the latter conference proceeding, as compiled by the Fond Ricoeur.

[16] Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 134 (originally published in Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 131): "However, in thus accentuating the eventful character of discourse, we have brought out only one of the two constitutive poles of discourse. Now we must clarify the second pole, that of meaning. For it is the tension between the poles [event and meaning] which gives rise to the production of discourse as a work, the dialectic of speaking and writing, and all the other features of the text which enrich the notion of distanciation."

in Chapter 2, this second facet of Ricoeur's hermeneutics likewise employed a dialectic between two poles.

Philosophical Discourse and Biblical Discourse

Between the 1970s and 1990s, Ricoeur would explore a variety of the forms of discourse identified above (particularly: poetic discourse, narrative discourse, and political discourse). As noted by Pellauer, Ricoeur's interest in narrative, beginning in the late 1970s, would give rise to his most comprehensive study of a specific form (as set out in *Time and Narrative*, Vols. 1-3). However, the focus of his initial studies on the forms of discourse was not centred on one single form but, rather, on the differences between two forms: philosophical discourse and religious discourse. Indeed, from 1968 to 1979, Ricoeur provided eight separate studies exploring the relation between the two: *Les Incidences théologiques des recherches actuelles concernant le langage* (1968); "Preface to Bultmann" (1968);[17] "Philosophy and Religious Language" (1974a); "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a); "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics" (1975b); [18] "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics" (1977a); "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" (1977c); and, "Naming God" (1979a).

A much-neglected question at the centre of Ricoeur scholarship is why Ricoeur turned his attention to these two forms of discourse, in particular, at the very point he was honing his two-part hermeneutical outlook. Put another way, what is it about the relationship between the philosophical and religious forms of discourse that warrants such attention? From our discussion in Chapter 2, one response would be that Ricoeur had long harboured an interest in the relationship between philosophy and religion, and saw hermeneutics as a viable means of conducting a philosophical analysis of religious subject matter.

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[17] Here, cited as Ricoeur, 1980c. See Chapter 8 (note 102) for clarification of this source.
[18] An amended version of this article was later published 1978 under the title "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics" (1978a). See Chapter 8 (note 61) of this thesis for discussion.

While this may well be the case, to appeal only to this rationale ignores the systematic composition of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. In much the same way as Schleiermacher separated his interpretation theory into a 'general' and 'regional' hermeneutics, Ricoeur divided the forms of discourse into general and regional classifications. This began with the recognition that some forms of discourse tend to investigate the subject matter and linguistic conventions of *other* forms. These more *general* forms do not express a fixed or consistent message as such, but provide universal tools and methodologies for a global understanding of language. This contrasts with the function of the more *regional* forms of discourse that appeal only to a specific set of messages, while employing "particular" hermeneutical processes that only aid in their interpretation.

Ricoeur had earlier suggested that philosophy and religion "came to" language by different means.[19] Within his hermeneutics, he would take this claim further and situate the two discourses at the extremes of a general-regional dialectic. In this light, philosophical discourse was seen as a meta-discourse (i.e. a discourse about discourse) used for the critical examination of *all* aspects of language, including the varying modes and forms of discourse themselves. Indeed, it was depicted as the general, reflexive form *par excellence*, in that it allows theorists to dispassionately examine all ways in which communication is manifested. When Ricoeur stated that religion can (perhaps only) be "autonomously" examined by bringing "philosophical discourse… into a relation of proximity with… theological discourse",[20] it is because philosophical discourse reflexively critiques itself as well as the objects under scrutiny:

> Philosophical discourse is finally the most problematic form…because it is the discourse that formulates his theory of discourse. Hence, it runs into all the problems that find their analogues on the side of analytic philosophy regarding sets that include themselves – or the still water question whether

[19] Ricoeur, 1974a, p. 72. For further discussion on Ricoeur's notion of how different epistemological traditions "come to language", see: Sohn, 2016, p. 101; Ricoeur, 1976, p. 61.
[20] Ricoeur, 1974d, p. 403.

> a language can contain its own meta-language. Ricoeur suggests two things about philosophical discourse that are worth noting. First, it is characterized by reflexivity. Philosophical discourse can be discourse about discourse. Ricoeur understands this problem of reflexivity in a larger sense than simply a question of how language allows us to use language to talk about language. We can see this in those places where he invokes his allegiance to the French tradition of a reflexive philosophy.[21]

Religious discourse (or, as Ricoeur often terms it, "biblical discourse")[22] operates at the other end of the hermeneutical spectrum. This form of discourse is primarily defined by its claims to particularity. Both in terms of the content of its message and the modes of discourse principally used, biblical discourse establishes hierarchies of importance. This, along with its repeated assertions of uniqueness, sets it apart from all other forms of discourse and, specifically, philosophical discourse:

> The route which we have followed thus far is that of the application of a general hermeneutical category to the biblical hermeneutic seen as a regional hermeneutic. My thesis is that this route is the only one at whose end we can recognize the specificity of the biblical "issue"… One of the traits which makes for the specificity of biblical discourse, as we all know, is the central place of God-reference in it…In this sense, the word "God" does not function as a philosophical concept, whether this be being either in the medieval or the Heideggerian sense of being. Even if one is tempted to say in the theological meta-language of all these pre-theological languages that "God" is the religious name for being, still the word "God" says more: it presupposes the total context constituted by the whole space of gravitation of stories, prophesies, laws, hymns, and so forth.[23]

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[21] Pellauer, 2013.

[22] Ricoeur tends to use the terms "religious discourse" and "biblical discourse" interchangeably. While this is clearly problematic on several counts, it is important to note that Ricoeur's analysis is wholly centred on the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition in which he saw the "religious word" to be synonymous with the "biblical word": "Nevertheless, Barth and Ricoeur both share a commitment to the subject matter of the biblical texts as the basic source for Christian theological reflection, and a related hermeneutical method for interpreting the church's texts and doctrines." (Wallace, 1986, p. 2.)

[23] Ricoeur, 1974a, p. 83.

Part 2: General and Particular Orientations

This chapter has established some key concepts regarding the composition of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Firstly, throughout the 1970s, Ricoeur formulated a philosophy of language based on the examination of the *modes* and *forms* of discourse. While Ricoeur's study of modes was focused primarily on the characteristics and functions of textual discourse and how it differed from the dialogical understanding of spoken language, his examination of forms sought to delineate the elements that define one genre of discourse from another.

In terms of this second facet of Ricoeur's project, it was seen that six different forms of discourse were initially identified. Utilising Schleiermacher's broad division of *general* and *regional* hermeneutics, Ricoeur proceeded to classify the forms by their different 'orientations'. Meta-discourses were considered *general* forms, whereas more insular or regional forms were termed "particular". In this respect, the philosophical and religious forms of discourse immediately assumed a prominent role in his analyses. Of the six forms identified, philosophical discourse exhibited the most qualities of a general (or meta) discourse; religious or "biblical" discourse on the other hand was an example of regional forms, due to the unique importance it attributed to the "God reference".[24]

As regards Ricoeur's hermeneutical methodology, comparative analysis was most commonly used. Ricoeur would typically juxtapose two forms of discourse (for instance: philosophical discourse and biblical discourse, or narrative discourse and biblical discourse). Alternatively, he would examine a specific form in relation to the mode of transmission with which it exhibited the most affinity. This second approach is explored in greater depth in Chapters 9, where we review Ricoeur's attempt to correlate the *meaning* of revelation to its textual mode of transmission in scripture.

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[24] Ibid., p. 83. In later years, Ricoeur's focus would turn to the study of narrative discourse, though much of this body of work falls outside the confines of this study (as it was published post 1980).

In identifying the bipartite construction of Ricoeur's 1970s hermeneutics, two key questions arose:

1. What is the relationship between the two facets of Ricoeur's hermeneutics? Specifically, how do his formal analyses of modes relate to his genre-based studies of forms?

2. Why did philosophical and biblical discourse warrant special treatment (i.e. what broad hermeneutical significance do they convey)?

From our discussion thus far, we can deduce that these questions are in fact interrelated. Scholarship often presents Ricoeur's explorations of forms of discourse as having evolved from his study of modes of discourse. This belief, however widespread, is inaccurate. Ricoeur's study of forms *qua* genres pre-dates his application of structural linguistics and, consequently, modes of discourse. As discussed in the last chapter, between 1940 and 1970, Ricoeur held an abiding interest in the different ways of articulating meaning, particularly with reference to philosophy and religion. During this period, he regularly discussed the prospect (and challenges) of fashioning an interdisciplinary bond between the two spheres, though he did not attempt it himself until the late 1960s.

It would therefore be more accurate to suggest that Ricoeur's shift from modes to forms was an attempt to demonstrate the interdisciplinary potential of discourse theory itself. From 1968 onwards, his hermeneutics would proceed from the belief that discourse was the *common* phenomenon at the centre of all human sciences.[25] Proving that hermeneutics could bridge the gap between two disciplines as seemingly incompatible as philosophy and religion would have asserted its potential beyond doubt.[26] But, if Ricoeur's interest in philosophical and religious discourse began as a digression from his more technical linguistic studies on modes of discourse, it soon became an essential aspect of his hermeneutics. Through the course of his work in the early 1970s, the philosophical and biblical

[25] Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 65. This paper was originally published in *Démythisation et idéologie* (1973) as "Herméneutique et critique des idéologies".
[26] Ricoeur, 1974d, p. 403.

forms came to signify the theoretical and practical extremes of his entire hermeneutical project.

He recognised that, unlike more regional forms of discourse, philosophical discourse explored *how* human articulations were constructed and received. It further offered guiding principles to identify the characteristics and functions of the various modes. Besides being the analytic form *par excellence*, philosophical discourse was well placed to shape, and give expression to, hermeneutical analyses themselves. In this way, philosophical discourse became recognised as the definitive meta-discourse. Within Ricoeur's publications, the terms "philosophical discourse", "philosophical hermeneutics" and "hermeneutics" became synonymous with one another. All three came to denote the study of *how* a message is transmitted, and the specific codes that are commonly used: "It is the task of hermeneutics to identify the individual discourse (the 'message') through the modes of discourse, (the 'codes') which generate it as a work of discourse."[27]

Biblical discourse, on the other hand, was for Ricoeur the exemplar of a regional hermeneutical form. As a form directed solely at the transmission of a specific kerygmatic purpose,[28] it was uniquely "particular". It, therefore, offered the most challenging application for general hermeneutical theory. In short, for Ricoeur, the principles of philosophical discourse could only be truly confirmed as theories of "universal linguality"[29] once they had been applied to the most distinctive body of human articulations, namely, the language of religious faith:

> The first task of any hermeneutic is to identify the originary modes of discourse through which the religious faith of a community comes to language. To serve this purpose a philosophical hermeneutics will prove certain specific methodological tools, aimed at the clarification of the notion of modes of discourse. It will first consider discourse as such, and describe its main traits, at least those which undergo a specific change

[27] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 70.
[28] Ricoeur, 1974d, p. 403.
[29] Ricoeur, 1981a, pp. 62, 65.

> when they are resumed and reshaped by the modes of discourse which we describe as narratives, proverbs, hymns and so forth.[30]

In later years, Ricoeur would go so far as to state that philosophical and biblical hermeneutics operate for and against one another in, what he significantly termed, "a conflictual-consensual relation".[31] As we proceed in the thesis, it is therefore necessary to recognise that philosophical and biblical forms, while opposing one another in orientation, give shape to Ricoeur's entire hermeneutical project. Philosophical discourse denotes the total repertoire of discourse theory at the disposal of the human sciences, while the biblical form epitomises the most particular – and therefore challenging – object of study.

[30] Ricoeur, 1974a, p. 73.
[31] Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 53.

Chapter 4

Critique and Conviction: A Re-appraisal of Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Method

Thus far in the thesis, we have focused on Ricoeur's publications from the 1970s, as well as those secondary sources commenting on this period. If it is now apparent that Ricoeur's hermeneutics oscillated between an understanding of the *modes* and *forms* of discourse, this was not so evident at the time. Indeed, the question of how Ricoeur's various hermeneutical studies interrelated was rarely raised in 1970s scholarship, least of all by Ricoeur himself. In his 1980 publication "Reply to Lewis S. Mudge", he acknowledged being unable to provide a coherent sketch of his own hermeneutical vision, beyond suggesting that it was centred on a "multidimensional" understanding of language as discourse:

> Lewis S. Mudge [here] attempts to provide the reader with a coherent overview of my writings… I am unable to draw such a sketch on my own, both because I am always drawn forward by a new problem to wrestle with and because, when I happen to look backward to my work, I am more struck by the discontinuities of my wanderings than by the cumulative character of my work. I tend to see each work as a self-contained whole generated by a specific challenge and the next one as proceeding from the unresolved problems yielded as a residue by the preceding work… In *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays on Hermeneutics*, I tried to enlarge the debate and to deal, in a non-eclectic, dialectical way, with the problems raised by a multidimensional hermeneutic. More recently *The Rule of Metaphor* tackled the two problems of the emergence of new meanings in language and of the referential claims raised by such non-descriptive languages as poetic discourse. In a sense these two problems were implicit at the very start of my inquiry into symbolic forms of discourse, but they could be acknowledged only as the outcome of the hermeneutical discussion.[1]

It was only much later in his career that Ricoeur was able to evaluate how his initial explorations might comprise a coherent hermeneutics. In this respect, his intellectual memoirs (or, as we've termed it here, "late autobiographical works")

[1] Ricoeur, 1980b, p. 41.

offered a much-awaited analysis of his 1970s hermeneutics.[2] As noted in Chapter 2, these reflective writings tended to focus on his influences, as well as the general trajectory and evolution of his thought. Of relevance to the current study, they also include a detailed re-appraisal of philosophical and biblical forms of discourse, and their role in structuring his "multidimensional" vision.

It was earlier established that Ricoeur's late autobiographical works offer a means to resolve certain long-standing misapprehensions. As seen in Chapter 2, they helped to clarify the relationship between the primary facets of Ricoeur's *oeuvre*, by debunking the notion that the philosophical and theological facets of his research were kept apart due to institutional pressure. Rather, it was clarified that, prior to 1968, Ricoeur had harboured doubts about the suitability of applying a rigorous philosophical methodology to religious subject matter.

It was furthermore noted in Chapter 2 that these concerns were allayed in the 1970s. As Ricoeur embraced a hermeneutical theory predicated on a two-part understanding of discourse, he came to believe that a *rapprochement* between the two spheres was now possible. In this vein, his 1970s publications were preliminary studies that looked to test if philosophy and religion could be brought together by way of their respective positions as 'general' and 'regional' forms *par excellence*.

In his late autobiographical publications, Ricoeur revisits the relationship between the two. Now freed from the academic burden of demonstrating the basic feasibility of his interdisciplinary approach, these works provide a forthright examination of the compatibility between philosophical and biblical forms of discourse, while also confirming their importance to his 1970s corpus. This chapter therefore appeals to the same autobiographical sources as a means of re-

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[2] As defined in Chapter 2, Ricoeur's late autobiographical publications are seen here to comprise five separate works: "Introduction: A Question of Selfhood" in *Oneself as Another* (1992b); "Paul Ricoeur: Intellectual Autobiography" in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (1995a); *Critique and Conviction* (1998); *Owl of Minerva* (2004); and "Roundtable Discussion: Paul Ricoeur and Questioners" in *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God* (2004a).

appraising Ricoeur's hermeneutical methodology of the 1970s, as well as the interdisciplinary dialogue that it subsequently gave rise to.

Part 1: A Constructed Opposition

A principal challenge when exploring the relationship between Ricoeur's publications from the 1970s and his later critiques from the 1990s is the variation in terminology used. As we've seen, throughout his career, Ricoeur favoured the use of, so called, dichotomies for the purpose of devising a coherent theory of interpretation. The "Athens and Jerusalem" formulation from his early writing gave rise to the distinction between philosophical and biblical forms of discourse and, later, to the one between philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics (both of which were founded on yet another division between general and regional forms of discourse). In all cases, however, the object of study remained same, namely: the hermeneutical variation between philosophical and religious outlooks, and its implications for a global interpretation theory.

As with Ricoeur, contemporary scholarship often favours the term "dialectic" to describe the method of juxtaposition that Ricoeur employed in his studies.[3] Indeed, on account of the similarities between Schleiermacher's *dialectic* model of interpretation and Ricoeur's bi-partite understanding of discourse, the term has to this point been used in the thesis as well. However, it must now be highlighted that the term "dialectic" does not wholly represent Ricoeur's approach, and may well lead to inaccurate conclusions.

In her 1988 study, M. Joy intimated that Ricoeur's unconventional approach of "intricately" appropriating and positioning theoretical concepts into poles did not

[3] Kaplan, 2003, p. 169: "Too often Ricoeur takes over these dichotomies if only to link them dialectically, as he does with methodological explanation and historical understanding." (See also: Joy, 1988, p. 518, Moloney, 1992, p. 124., Pellauer, 2007, p. 52.) As noted at the outset of the chapter, Ricoeur (1980, p. 41) himself employs the term "dialectic" to describe his methodological approach.

necessarily equate to a traditional dialectic method.[4] Indeed, within any given study Ricoeur sets up a variety of these conceptual divisions. As we've thus far observed, the concepts contrasted within each division need not necessarily conflict with one another beyond the boundaries of a given study (or even consistently within the same study). This is because they are used for the purpose of detecting the salient features of each concept. Were Ricoeur's method dialectical, we would expect to see inherent discordances (or even contradictions) between the concepts. The fluidity with which different concepts are regularly compared, and/or opposed, suggests that his method is more akin to a 'constructed opposition' than dialectical relationship.[5]

Ricoeur's autobiographical works introduced yet another conceptual division. In his 1992 text "A Question of Selfhood",[6] he puts forward the formulation: *critique and conviction*. While not appearing in his earlier writings, this new constructed opposition would feature in many of his autobiographical publications. Indeed, it was so central to this body of work that it became the title for one of the primary studies from this period: *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay* (1998).

The critique and conviction division draws upon much of Ricoeur's earlier understanding of philosophical and religious forms of discourse. Within his autobiographical works, "critique" represents the *general* orientation of philosophical discourse, while "conviction" characterises the *particularity* of religious discourse. As the Athens-Jerusalem dichotomy was deemed inadequate to express the key differences between philosophical and religious "ways" of interpreting the world, the critique and conviction division is put forward as a viable alternative.

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[4] Joy, 1998, p. 518: "The cohesion of these theories is, at times, questionable and needs further critical discussion than the scope of this paper allows."

[5] See Jeffries (2010, pp. 29-54) for discussion on constructed oppositions as "one-off" or "contextual" oppositional relationships.

[6] As noted in Chapter 2, this work takes the form of a personalised preface to the major publication (namely, *Oneself as Another*), and is the earliest of Ricoeur's five autobiographical works.

In Ricoeur's view, this new phraseology offers a simple and accessible means of articulating the extremes of general and particular forms of discourse,[7] by "more precisely" marking the boundaries between disciplines, and allowing for more integration between their respective modes of "expression". What's more, unlike the way in which "Athens and Jerusalem" was anchored in ancient epistemology, the new formulation also takes into account the present-day sociological factors that inter-connect with hermeneutic philosophy:

> In the course of my reflections, I have given a number of formulations, perhaps the most precise of these, the one I prefer today, is expressed by the relation between conviction and critique – to which I ascribe, moreover, a very strong political sense, from the perspective of democratic life: we form a culture which has always had strong convictions, intertwined with certain moments of critique. But this is only one manner of expressing the polarity of conviction and critique, for philosophy is not simply critical, it too belongs to the order of conviction. And religious conviction itself possesses an internal, critical dimension.[8]

This is not to say that the critique and conviction formulation simply restates or repackages Ricoeur's 1970s hermeneutical theory. Rather, it draws our attention to the distinctive associations that exist between 'forms' of discourse and 'modes' of discourse, in particular highlighting the different relationships that philosophical and religious forms have with the textual mode.

Part 2: A Hermeneutical Understanding of 'Critique' as the Critical Moment

The term "critique", as used in Ricoeur's autobiographical works, appears on the surface to carry little potential for misunderstanding. In philosophical circles, the term evokes strong Kantian resonances and implies a focus on the structures and

[7] Ricoeur, 1998, p. 139.
[8] Ibid., p. 139.

boundaries of reason.[9] Yet, here, Ricoeur intends the term in a hermeneutical sense as a means of embodying the general applicability of philosophical discourse. As such, it neither conforms to this conventional meaning, nor its wider usage within Ricoeur's more philosophical publications.

Throughout his corpus, Ricoeur regularly employs the term critique as an action (i.e. "to critique"), or as a noun intimating a distinctive or self-contained study (i.e. "a critique").[10] His autobiographical publications, however, shun both denotations. Instead, the term is given an abstract hermeneutical significance, denoting an outlook or attitude common to certain forms of discourse. Using language reminiscent of Schleiermacher's grammatical stage of interpretation, Ricoeur regularly refers to the presence of a "moment" or "phase" of critique. He likewise suggests that, while these moments may appear in any form of discourse, they are most typically associated with philosophical discourse.

If we are to accept that discourse is the process of someone saying something to someone else in a set context then, for Ricoeur, critique is the objectified manner in which we appraise those articulations (be they spoken or written). While moments of critique may certainly feature in, for instance, legal or biblical discourse, Ricoeur sees the presence of a "critical moment" as a necessary condition for all philosophical interpretations. This is to say that critique is the staple approach employed by philosophical discourse when considering other linguistic forms.

Yet, how do we *practically* conceptualise these moments of critique? For this, we must turn to Ricoeur's earlier publications on literary reception. In his 1973 work "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology", the critical moment is identified as the point at which an objective, structural analysis of a piece of writing takes place.

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[9] For discussion on the importance of Kant's critical outlook to Ricoeur's philosophical writings up to the 1970s, see Anderson, 1993.

[10] For an example of the former, see *The Course of Recognition* (Ricoeur, 2005, p. 24). For examples of the latter, see Ricoeur's use of the terms "literary critique" and "historical critique" in *The Rule of Metaphor* (Ricoeur, 1977b, pp. 69, 83 and 115).

Ricoeur specifies that this phase (or "moment") occurs when a text has been "decontextualised" from its psychological and sociological conditions and becomes, as he terms it, an "emancipated" or "autonomous" work.[11] From this definition, critique implies the point where discourse is severed from its authorial or contextual reference, and examined dispassionately in relation to agreed upon criteria. In short, it indicates a rigorous qualitative analysis similar to Schleiermacher's first phase of interpretation.

It should perhaps be highlighted that the 1973 study in question is looking at how the processes of critical examination occur within *written* works.[12] It is, therefore, prudent to question to what extent this 'textual' definition of the critical moment can inform a broader understanding of the concept. Put another way, is the phase of critique only found in the interpretation of texts, or can it be applied to all modes of discourse (spoken, artistic etc.)?

Certainly, Ricoeur's 1970s hermeneutical writings tend to focus on the particularities of written discourse, and its relationship to critical methodologies. At no point, however, does Ricoeur suggest that the phase of critique is exclusively linked to the interpretation of textual discourse. Indeed, within his discussions, the reverse is implied.

In comparing the various modes of discourse, writing is viewed by Ricoeur as easier to decontextualise than, say, spoken language. For the purpose of his studies, then, textual interpretation better exemplifies how moments of critique operate within philosophical discourse. This is because of the temporal and spatial distance between the text and the author. As reviewed in Chapter 1 of the thesis, in spoken language, meaning is more firmly embedded within its original social context, necessitating the use of ostensive references that are not available to later

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[11] Ricoeur, 1981b, pp. 91-92: "The emancipation of the text constitutes the most fundamental condition for the recognition of a critical instance at the heart of interpretation; for distanciation now belongs to the mediation itself".

[12] As in many of the publications of this period dealing with modes of discourse, Ricoeur's attention is directed at identifying the particularities of written text vis-à-vis spoken dialogue.

audiences.[13] The process of decontextualisation, while certainly possible with speech, thus involves variable amounts of effort. Textual discourse, on the other hand, is often seen to be both meaningful and coherent beyond the time and place in which the text was generated. For Ricoeur, then, writing is simply *more* amenable to the process of decontextualisation and therefore critical examination. From a hermeneutical perspective, however, the process of critique is equally applicable to *all* modes of discourse.

In terms of gaining an accurate depiction of Ricoeur's overall hermeneutic project, this last point is important to highlight. Scholarly opinion tends to present Ricoeur's interpretation theory in terms of a 'textual' hermeneutics. Yet, as established throughout Part 1 of the thesis, Ricoeur's hermeneutics both evolved from and appropriated Schleiermacher's universal outlook. It therefore follows that, while Ricoeur's interests tended towards the textual mode in particular, the precepts of discourse that he employs can be more broadly applied to all modes and forms of expression.

Self-Critical Reflection

It can thus be said that, for Ricoeur, the "critical moment" equates to the stage of interpretation where any instance of discourse is no longer treated as a by-product of its social setting, nor of the author's intention. It is when the interpreter proceeds "along the route of objectification" with a view to exposing a deeper semantic meaning.[14] Put in other terms, it is the explanatory stage of interpretation

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[13] Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 34-37.

[14] Ricoeur, 1981b, pp. 92-93. O. Abel likewise holds that Ricoeur's use of the term *moment critique* (critical moment) stems from his encounters with Romantic hermeneutics and specifically from readings of Schleiermacher: "… 'considérer la langue commune, c'est oublier l'écrivain ; comprendre un auteur singulier c'est oublier sa langue qui est seulement traverse', commente Ricoeur, en notant que le programme herméneutique de Schleiermacher porte la double marque de l'esprit critique et de l'esprit romantique. C'est peut–être l'espace spécifique du problème herméneutique. Mais il ne faut pas considérer le moment critique comme le moment le moins "mystique" : pour comprendre, il faut d'abord se vider des mécompréhensions, et pour se faire véritablement 'auditeur' d'un auteur lointain et presque imperceptible il faut bien commencer par imiter Schleiermacher qui craignait 'de ne pas même être un individu'." (Abel, 2003b.)

where discourse (written, spoken or otherwise) is studied in terms of its linguistic structure, form and genre.

This exegetical, though perhaps also limited, definition of *critique* has been extended in recent years by one of Ricoeur's colleagues from his time at the University of Chicago. In his 2008 paper "Philosophy and Kerygma: Ricoeur as Reader of the Bible", David Klemm offers his own interpretation of critique. In it, he shifts the focus away from the autonomy of the text and towards the semantic associations existing within language.

He asserts that the critical process of interpretation commences with one's understanding of their contextual environment. As the interpreter comes to recognise the world of signs and symbols that they inhabit – as well as how those signs and symbols relate to one another – they are able to create an objective distance between themselves and the work. From this vantage point, the critical moment occurs when the "self-aware" interpreter suspends the initial connotations that come to mind and, instead, seeks to "question the standing connections between the signs, sense, and reference" of those assertions.[15]

For Klemm, then, the critical moment entails looking beyond the "givenness" (or contextual significance) of language and towards the rich semiotic relationships that are forged in the work. For him, it is only through conscious "self-critical reflection" that discourse can become decontextualised. This, in turn, allows for a deeper semiotic meaning to be revealed.

In sum, for Ricoeur the process of critique involves the uncoupling of discourse from its original environment whereas, for Klemm, it necessitates the interpreter looking beyond the immediate connotation of what is said. It should be emphasised, though, that there are more points of agreement than disagreement between these respective outlooks. For both, critique is a hermeneutical "attitude" assumed when carrying out philosophical interpretations of language. Both also

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[15] Klemm, 2008, p. 51.

assert that the approach involves a phase where one decontextualises (or depersonalises) the interpretative process. Lastly, both agree that the critical 'moment' is when the interpreter looks beyond the immediately apprehensible interpretation and, instead, considers how the language used leverages different symbolic and semiotic forms to convey its meaning.

As shall be seen in Part 2 of the thesis, these two interpretations of *critique* are highly relevant to Ricoeur's hermeneutics. In Chapter 8, in particular, we observe that its dual-orientation (on the one hand towards objective structural analysis that arises through the severing of a work from its context and, on the other, towards the self-awareness of the interpreter) becomes the conceptual basis for Ricoeur's understanding of 'poetic discourse'.

Returning to the issue at hand, one may well ask what relevance this interpretation of critique (as "the critical moment") has to the distinction between philosophical and religious forms of discourse. For Ricoeur, philosophical discourse is a *general* form precisely because it prioritises the critical examination of syntax and semantics over and above contextual meaning. What's more, in terms of various modes of transmission (spoken, textual etc.), philosophical discourse has no preference. Though the textual mode is the focus of many of Ricoeur's studies of the 1970s, it is perceived by philosophical hermeneutics as one mode among many.

In moving to consider the second facet of Ricoeur's formulation (i.e. conviction), we shall see that religious discourse deviates from this *general* orientation in several ways. In particular, it assigns a higher level of importance to the provenance and historical context of language, as well as to one mode of transmission in particular: the written word.

Part 3: 'Conviction' as Biblical Reading

Let us begin our analysis of Ricoeur's hermeneutical understanding of conviction by considering some similarities with his definition of critique discussed above.

Firstly, both terms are seen to encapsulate the central 'approach' of a specific form of discourse. Whereas philosophical discourse is contingent upon *critical* interpretations, religious discourse is, for Ricoeur, heavily reliant upon *conviction*. Secondly, in both cases the terminology takes on a significance different from its customary associations. Inasmuch as Ricoeur's understanding of critique diverges from a rigid Kantian interpretation, the meaning he assigns to conviction is distinct from its usage in academic theology or religious praxis. Here, conviction doesn't designate a dogmatic (or personal) pronouncement of faith, nor does it align with conventional religious doctrines or beliefs. In the *hermeneutical* sense employed by Ricoeur, conviction is the principal process by which religious meaning is transmitted and received. [16]

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, religious understanding takes place when "professions of faith" are transmitted to a religious community. [17] Unlike philosophical discourse, religious interpretation does not place all modes of discourse on an equal footing but, instead, gives prominence to textual transmission. This is regularly seen in how the founding assertions of a given religion are established, interpreted and internalised through religious textuality. In this respect, *conviction* is for Ricoeur the "mediation of language and scripture".[18]

This unconventional rendering of the term may lead some to assume that Ricoeur favours a secular (or literary) interpretation of a patently religious concept. Certainly, his hermeneutical interpretation 'de-theologises' the notion of *conviction* in as much as he had earlier 'de-philosophised' the notion of *critique*. On the other hand, by recasting both terms along practical, communicative lines, the intricate associations between forms and modes of discourse are exposed. If critique and

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[16] The recasting of this familiar terminology is an example of a practice noted by L. S. Mudge in his introduction to Ricoeur's "Essays on Biblical Interpretation". In this text, he argues that a recurrent feature of Ricoeur's analytic approach – particularly when discussing the relationship between discourse theory and biblical interpretation – is to appropriate common terminology and invest it with new meaning: "In developing his ideas Ricoeur has a habit at first disconcerting but in the end helpful: he constantly reoccupies familiar ground with new conceptualizations and terminologies". (Mudge, 1980, p. 17.)

[17] Ricoeur, 1998, pp. 142-145.

[18] Ricoeur, 1998, p. 140.

conviction are to be seen as the defining interpretative "approaches" of Western philosophy and Western religion respectively, they also must be seen to operate for, and in tandem with, the subject matter being explored.

This was earlier seen when considering the practical usage of critical methodologies within philosophical discourse. The essential features of critique are its objective outlook and adaptability. Indeed, these characteristics are specifically suited to the many, varied objects of study in the social and natural world that fall within the ambit of philosophical investigation. It is, thus, not the prevalence of critique that makes it the defining approach of philosophical discourse, but rather its suitability to the many different objects of study that philosophy purports to explore. In short, the general 'approach' of philosophy wholly conforms to its application in the world. This *practical* association is mirrored in the relationship between conviction and religious discourse.

The Particularity of Religious Discourse

To fully understand the practical function of "convictional" reading, we must begin by reviewing the broader significance of text and textuality to religious thought. As earlier intimated, one characteristic that sets religion apart from general forms, such as philosophical discourse, is what Ricoeur terms its 'particularity'. Philosophical discourse is seen to be the 'general' form *par excellence* because of its openness to all communicative acts, ideas and interpretations of the world. In contrast, religious discourse is both regional and insular. Its hermeneutical focus is directed solely at the interpretation of a select group of articulations, comprising mainly historical documents that have been systematically identified, assembled and ratified over a period of time by a community of faith.

While this characterisation of religious discourse as text-based is seen throughout Ricoeur's writings of the 1970s, his autobiographical works offer far greater insight into what he intends by this claim. Specifically in *Critique and Conviction* (1998), he reviews why it is hermeneutically significant that biblical articulations

are, in the main, preserved and transmitted through writing. Bringing to mind the phrase "the religion of the book", Ricoeur holds that religious discourse is firstly defined by the reception and internalisation of a written testament. The professions of faith found in religious discourse are not simply mediated by language, but language in a textual form.

In this light, religious interpretation and biblical interpretation are synonymous: both imply the "assenting" to an earlier written word.[19] This perhaps explains why Ricoeur uses the terms "religious discourse" and "biblical discourse" interchangeably in his corpus. An important implication of this outlook, though, is that one's reading of scripture is informed by the interpretations of the community of faith to which they belong. In this way, individual and communal readings are connected to the founding texts in what Ricoeur likens to a self-contained hermeneutical circle:

> What seems to be constitutive of the religious is, therefore, the fact of crediting a word in accordance with a certain code and within the limits of a canon. I would willingly propose, in order to develop this point, the idea of a series of hermeneutical "circles": I know this word because it is written, this writing because it is received and read; and this reading is accepted by a community, which, as a result, accepts to be deciphered by its founding texts; and it is this community that reads them. So, in a certain manner, to be a religious subject is to agree to enter or to have already entered into this vast circuit involving a founding word, mediating texts, and traditions of interpretation.[20]

The "particularity" of religious discourse is therefore firstly observed in how it prioritises one mode of transmission (i.e. textual) and one genre of writing (i.e. scriptural).

This is not to say that religious discourse can exclusively be conveyed in a textual mode. In his 1970s publications, Ricoeur stresses that the primacy of texts at the

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[19] Ricoeur, 1998, pp. 139-140: This prioritisation of writing over all other communicative mediums is exemplified by how the terms *religious discourse* and *biblical discourse* appear synonymous throughout Ricoeur's corpus. Likewise, the terms *religious conviction*, *biblical thought* and *kerygmatic reading* appear interchangeable in Ricoeur's post 1990s publications.
[20] Ricoeur, 1998, p. 145

core of religious discourse operates in a "foundational" capacity, without wholly excluding other forms of transmission. Indeed, the close association with preaching demonstrates that biblical textuality often operates in tandem with other modes:

> Witnesses and the interpretation of witnesses already contain the elements of distanciation that make the writing possible…The upshot of this hermeneutical situation of Christianity is that the relation between speech and writing is constitutive of what we term proclamation, kerygma, preaching. What appears to be primary is the series speech-writing-speech, or else writing-speech-writing, in which at times speech mediates between two writings, as does the word of Jesus between two Testaments, and at times writing mediates between two forms of speech, as the gospel does between the preaching of the early church and all contemporary preaching. This chain is the condition of the possibility of tradition as such in the fundamental sense of the transmission of the message.[21]

Two Ways of "Reading"

The particularity of religious discourse is, however, not only seen in how text and the interpretation of text have an elevated status, nor how religious discourse links with other modes of discourse, such as the spoken word. Rather, biblical discourse also presents certain idiosyncrasies (or, as Ricoeur terms it, "excentricities")[22] that set it apart from other forms of discourse. To read and interpret scripture is to acknowledge an apparent contradiction at its core. On the one hand, the biblical reader must distinguish and navigate between the many diverse literary forms that make up scripture; on the other, they must recognise that scripture's meaning, and claim to authority, derive from its thematic coherence as a singular unified testimony.

The tension between the two interpretive approaches is a prominent theme in *Critique and Conviction*. In the chapter entitled "Biblical Readings and Meditations", Ricoeur stresses that biblical discourse encompasses (and indeed oscillates

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[21] Ricoeur, 1991a, p. 91. (Originally published in Ricoeur, 1978a, pp. 328-329.)
[22] Ricoeur, 1991a, p. 90. (Originally rendered into English as "eccentric character" - Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 322.)

between) these two seemingly opposing "intentions". Far from advocating one over the other, he holds that biblical interpretation must include both *diverse* and *unified* readings in order to come to terms with the dual literary-kerygmatic nature of the Bible.

As concerns the first of the two elements (i.e. the Bible's literary configuration), exegetical explorations tend to focus on the specific linguistic formulations used in the text as well as their conformity (or not) to the Bible's established literary genres. It is widely accepted that the incongruities, and at times contradictions, between its diverse sub-forms give biblical discourse its richness. It is also what opens it up to other disciplines. As it is imperative, when investigating the formal aspects of biblical writing, to apply all analytic faculties at hand, this is the part of biblical hermeneutics that is most amenable to collaboration with other text-based disciplines (such as literary studies or law), as well those social sciences that focus on pertinent historical periods (e.g. archaeology, anthropology etc.). It is also at this clastic level of interpretation that religious discourse is most *critically* engaged. The biblical interpreter is here like the philosopher in that they must appropriate all pertinent intellectual resources, whether or not they are traditionally seen to be compatible. What's more, they must allow their findings to inform one another:

> It is indispensable, when one enters into this universe of Biblical interpretation, to distinguish clearly between the different types of reading and of approach... Each type of reading, and hence of interpretation, serves different objectives and begins from presuppositions which are not only separate but often even opposite. A historical reading must not be encumbered with dogmatic prejudices any more than the official reading of the church should be content to remain blissfully ignorant of what is brought to light by archaeological work, such as the deciphering of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The philosophical reading of Biblical texts must not, in its turn, ignore the confessional side or the historical and philological investigations.[23]

However, biblical interpretation cannot forever remain at the level of, what Schleiermacher would call, "grammatical analysis". Ultimately, it is the

[23] Ricoeur, 1998, p. 139.

consolidated form of scripture that constitutes its claim to authority by religious communities. Treating the Bible as merely a collection of isolated literary constructions would be to ignore its significance as a living document, as well its importance to all past communities for whom scripture was a spiritual point of reference. It is for this reason that biblical hermeneutics must invariably move its focus beyond the Bible's constituent literary parts and include a second stage of interpretation where the separate writings are presumed to cohere thematically:

> The closure of the canon becomes the major phenomenon that separates from the other texts those that stand as *authoritative* for communities, which, in turn, understand themselves in light of these founding texts, distinguished from all other texts, as well as from the most faithful commentaries. The nonphilosophical moment is here, in this recognition of the authority of canonical texts worthy of guiding the kerygmatic interpretations of the theologies of this profession of faith. I agree with those exegete theologians who say that these texts are said to be inspired because they stand as authoritative, and not the reverse.[24]

As noted by Ricoeur, the closing of the biblical canon signalled the point where biblical exegesis ceased to be an exclusively literary-philosophical enterprise. By ratifying a "final version" of scripture, the Church established which texts among its contemporary writings would stand as authoritative for present and future communities of faith.[25] In this respect, the Bible (as a "closed" document) is a tacit recognition of the authority of one set of texts over all others. It also prompts the question of what overarching world-view (*Weltanschauung*) these assertions present that others do not.

Conducting this second phase of biblical interpretation involves, what Ricoeur terms, "kerygmatic reading". The Bible is here not seen as a piece of literature as such, but a confessional account (or 'testament') of God's very real interaction in human history.[26] This phase of analysis also illustrates why biblical interpretation can never be wholly comparable, nor compatible, with 'critique'. In this phase of

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[24] Ibid., p. 143.
[25] Ibid., p. 143.
[26] See the analysis of the narrative modality of revelation (in Chapter 8) for further discussion of the Bible as a "confessional account". For primary source discussion see: Ricoeur, 1977c, pp. 6-7.

the interpretive process, the religious reader is seen to submit to a word that comes "from farther and from higher" than themselves in an attempt to understand its wider import.[27] This significantly contrasts with the philosophical approach, in which it is always assumed that transferred knowledge has a critical basis.

It is further worth highlighting that, in Ricoeur's understanding, religious interpretation places uncommon emphasis on both temporality and a text's initial reception. As we have seen, biblical reading prioritises an "earlier word" that has been passed down through generations. Contrary to the critical approach, it is common in the biblical exegetical tradition to *re-contextualise* (as opposed to de-contextualise) a text or passage. This is because, in biblical exegesis, the social and historical context matters. The emphasis is consequently placed on re-establishing the original dialogical situation between the speaker/writer and their audience. This, again, presents a sharp contrast with the de-contextualising and de-personalising practices of philosophical discourse:

> It is with the kerygmatic readings - or if you wish, with the theologies of professions of faith - that the opposition between Jerusalem and Athens is the sharpest. Now it must be understood that the kerygmatic interpretations are also multiple, always partial (in both senses of the word), varying according to the expectations of the public, itself shaped by a cultural environment bearing the imprint of the epoch.[28]

Conclusion

Ricoeur's intellectual memoirs, and particularly *Critique and Conviction* (1998), provide a variety of important insights regarding his earlier hermeneutical studies. In particular, they identify three defining characteristics that set biblical discourse apart from other forms, namely: "the anteriority of a founding word, the

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[27] Ricoeur, 1998, p. 144: "In the philosophical domain, even in a Platonic perspective, even if the world of ideas precedes us, it is nevertheless by a critical act that we appropriate the reminiscence that takes on the sense of a pre-existence."
[28] Ibid., p. 144.

mediation of writing, and the history of an interpretation".[29] Ricoeur also convincingly argues that biblical hermeneutics pivots between structural and kerygmatic interpretations of the Bible in order to account for the "particularity" of its message. While this more detailed representation of biblical discourse came to light relatively late in Ricoeur's career, this chapter has sought to demonstrate the extent to which it derives from, and is consistent with, his earlier hermeneutical writings.

Indeed, in the 1970s, Ricoeur went to great lengths to characterise religious textuality not as a repertoire of "revealed truths" but as a form of discourse that operated contra more general forms.[30] During this period, the particularity of religious discourse was a prominent (though underdeveloped) theme. In this respect, his late autobiographical publications provide a more nuanced understanding of the general-regional dichotomy. Presented more in terms of a constructed opposition than a dialectic relationship, these studies depict biblical interpretation as distinct from (though at times also incorporating) the critical methodology of philosophical discourse. In terms of the specific argumentation put forward in this thesis, Ricoeur's clarification of general and particular forms of discourse helps to establish a clearer affinity with Schleiermacher's general-regional hermeneutical vision.

As regards the upcoming discussions in Part 2 of the thesis, there are several pertinent observations worth highlighting from this chapter. Firstly, for Ricoeur, biblical interpretation involves the coming together of two kinds of "reading". While a critical examination of the Bible's diverse literary forms is of course essential, biblical hermeneutics must also consider scripture as a living document with a coherent, unified meaning. Exploring how this 'kerygmatic' phase of interpretation can be practically realised is a primary aim of our upcoming discussion of models and root-metaphors in Chapter 7. Secondly, from a methodological standpoint, it is important to note the way in which the terms

[29] Ibid., p. 146.
[30] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 2.

critique and conviction were re-interpreted 'hermeneutically' to emphasise their broader communicative properties. In Chapters 8 of the thesis, we again see Ricoeur appropriating a loaded religious term (*revelation*) as a means of defining 'poetic language'.

PART 2

Ricoeur's Integrated Hermeneutical Studies

In Part 1 of the thesis, Ricoeur's hermeneutics was presented as an interdisciplinary experiment in which the philosophical study of discourse was brought into a "relation of proximity" with biblical exegesis. It was suggested that, by exposing the points of interaction between philosophical and biblical forms, Ricoeur attempted to uncover the "hermeneutical circularity" existing between *general* theories of language and *regional* interpretation.

Part 2 of the thesis shifts the focus away from Ricoeur's overarching vision and towards the distinct investigations that he carried out during the 1970s. The first such "episodic" excursion to be considered is Ricoeur's analysis of metaphorical language. In this respect, Chapters 5 to 7 show that his study of metaphor evolved through an exchange between semantics and contemporary New Testament scholarship to produce a highly influential understanding of "semantic innovation". The final chapter of the thesis (Chapter 8) looks beyond Ricoeur's investigations of metaphorical language to consider his most overtly interdisciplinary work (1977c), in which 'poetic' and 'biblical' notions of literary reception are brought together.

By focusing on the relationship *between* Ricoeur's secular and religious publications from the 1970s, Part 2 aims to show how many of Ricoeur's contributions to contemporary hermeneutics arose through a 'constructed dialogue' between philosophical and biblical forms of discourse.

Chapter 5

Rule of Metaphor

One of the primary challenges in the following chapters is to identify Ricoeur's particular contributions to the various scholarly debates that he took part in. This is no easy task because of Ricoeur's characteristic approach of juxtaposing (as well as appropriating) various theoretical outlooks within a given area of study.

While all of Ricoeur's hermeneutical writings from the 1970s employed a highly collaborative approach, his method of synthesising and revising various scholarly outlooks is most evident in his explorations of metaphorical language. As noted by M. Gerhart, these publications in particular were presented as a set of "dialogues" in which he initially aimed to determine a contemporary understanding of what metaphors are and how they operate:

> The first kind of dialogue takes the form of appropriation of a part of another theorist's work, often of a distinction which enables Ricoeur to clarify some problem in the tradition. In the second kind of dialogue, Ricoeur engages a major theorist on the topic of his investigation… In both kinds of dialogue Ricoeur's method is dialectical: i.e., each position is used to limit or extend another.[1]

In line with what was established in Part 1 of the thesis, Ricoeur would then look to "test" this *general* theoretical understanding of metaphor by applying it to *particular* acts of interpretation.

While Ricoeur's studies of metaphorical language had wide-ranging implications for a number of fields of study, commentaries from the 1980s onwards tended to focus only on their significance for biblical hermeneutics. The following chapters will certainly outline how Ricoeur's 'tensional' theory of metaphor incorporated (and contributed to) New Testament scholarship; however, they will also consider how it led to a comprehensive understanding of 'poetic works'.

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[1] Gerhart, 1995, pp. 222-223.

Part 1: Metaphor in Classical Rhetoric

Ricoeur's theory of metaphor proceeded from the belief that metaphorical language produces unique propositions whose meaning cannot be rephrased in literal terms. While, on the surface, this may appear an unremarkable claim, at the time of publication (in the 1970s) this directly challenged the dominant view that had endured since antiquity.

From Aristotle's early discussions in *Rhetoric*, metaphors had been commonly understood as stylistic ornaments created through the substitution of one lexical term for another. By placing the focus on the syntactic construction of a metaphoric sentence (and, particularly, on the choice of words used within that sentence), rhetoricians came to conceive of metaphors as instances where, for poetic effect, unconventional wordings were chosen over and above more conventional ones.

In this classical rhetorical outlook, a metaphor was formed when a "borrowed" word was given the place of the absent "proper word".[2] Using the example "Achilles is a lion", the noun lion is seen to have taken the place of a seemingly more appropriate word or phrase. It was thus assumed that the root meaning of the metaphor could be exposed by simply replacing the deviant (or "alien") word with a more literal choice (e.g. courageous). In this classical perception, the metaphorical expression "Achilles is a lion" was thought to be wholly synonymous with the more literal rendering "Achilles is courageous".[3]

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[2] Ricoeur, 1977b, pp.45-46.

[3] There is some debate as to whether, for Aristotle, the transformation (also termed "reduction") of a metaphoric statement to a literal one entails a one or two step process. Kjärgaard (1986, pp. 67-70.) argues that the classical rhetorical model necessitated a two-step transformation from a figurative expression to a literal one because, in his understanding of Aristotle, one would need to do more than simply replace the alien terms. To fully convert the original expression, the metaphorical sentence would need to be expanded further into a simile (e.g. "Achilles is courageous like a lion"). However, here Kjärgaard's reading of Aristotle differs from that of Ricoeur (1977b, pp. 24-26).

For Ricoeur, a primary consequence of this substitutional outlook was that all metaphorical expressions were seen as stylistic alternatives.[4] If metaphors could be translated (or "reduced") into a more conventional formulation simply by replacing the figurative term with a literal one, then it followed that they were purely cosmetic constructions that had little capacity to transmit new information:

> [Aristotle] tends to assimilate three distinct ideas: the idea of a *deviation* from ordinary usage; the idea of *borrowing* from an original domain; and the idea of *substitution* for an absent but available ordinary word…It is the idea of substitution that appears to bear the greatest consequence: for if the metaphorical term is really a substituted term, it carries no new information, since the absent term (if one exists) can be brought back in; and if there is no [new] information conveyed, the metaphor has only an ornamental, decorative value.[5]

Ricoeur's theory of metaphor rejected this classical rhetorical outlook. In his initial critique, he proclaimed that the *sense* (or meaning) of two assertions cannot be equal if they do not share the same "truth value". The rendering of the *literal* statement "Achilles is courageous" can be deemed either true or false, whereas the *metaphorical* expression "Achilles is a lion" cannot, in so far as it is "logically absurd".[6] Put more simply still, if a literal "reduction" has a different truth value to the initial metaphor itself then the meaning of one cannot possibly equate to the meaning of the other.

On this basis, Ricoeur concluded that metaphors were in effect "irreducible" and, therefore, bring to language unique meanings.[7]As we shall see in the upcoming discussions, this compelling insight motivated his comprehensive study of metaphorical language in the 1970s, as well as his narrative theory of the 1980s.

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[4] Ricoeur attributes the identification of the classical "substitutional" model to I.A. Richards. For further discussion see: Richards, 1935, pp. 89-114.
[5] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 20.
[6] Ricoeur, 1978c, p. 143. (Originally published in Ricoeur, 1978b, pp. 145.)
[7] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 87.

Part 2: The Semantics of Metaphor

If the basis for a metaphorical construction cannot be found in the substitutions of terms, as the classical rhetoricians supposed, then what is a metaphor? Ricoeur held that in order to arrive at a viable theory of metaphor a foundational understanding was needed. Approaching the problem from a structuralist position, scholars in the 1960s made key advances in the field. Ricoeur highlights the works of Max Black, in particular, as providing a theoretical framework on which to build a contemporary understanding.

Beginning in the 1950s, Black put forward the supposition that metaphors were in fact complex semantic constructions. He asserted that the primary shortcoming of Aristotle's rhetorical outlook was that it prioritised individual lexical units (or words) and only considered how the alien phrasing distorted the, so-called, true meaning of the sentence. For Black, the practice of singling out and substituting individual words failed to expose the internal processes that define a metaphor. In this respect, his 1962 publication *Models and Metaphors* popularised the belief that the source of metaphorical meaning was the semantic "interaction" occurring between the different lexical units:[8]

> Black's work marks decisive progress in clarifying the field… Before being able to introduce the distinction and criticize it, one must begin with this point: an entire statement constitutes the metaphor, yet attention focuses on a particular word, the presence of which constitutes the grounds for considering the statement metaphorical. This balance of meaning between the statement and the word is the condition of its principal feature, the contrast within a single statement between one word that is taken metaphorically and another that is not… We shall say then that metaphor is "a sentence or another expression in which *some* words are used metaphorically while the remainder are used non-metaphorically".[9]

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[8] Back's 1962 publication *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* is viewed by many, including Ricoeur, as Black's definitive study of metaphor. It is however worth noting that Black's initial contribution to the field of study is found in the 1954 proceedings from the Aristotelian Society, entitled: "Metaphor".

[9] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 84.

Ricoeur characterises Black's insight as a watershed moment in the study of metaphorical language, as it laid bare the flawed assumption that the meaning of a sentence equated to the aggregate meaning of each word within the sentence. Indeed, this conformed to the outlook of prominent linguists of the time, such as Émile Benveniste. From their 'structuralist' perspective, a single word understood as a lexeme (i.e. part of the lexical code) does not contain a meaning as such; rather, it is through the interaction with other lexemes that meaning is generated: "The sentence is realized in words, but the words are not simply segments of it. A sentence constitutes a whole which is not reducible to the sum of its parts; the meaning inherent in this whole is distributed over the ensemble of the constituents."[10]

Black's interaction theory of metaphor applied this basic structuralist principle. It argued that as a sentence is the smallest possible unit of meaning and should therefore be the starting point for any study of metaphor.[11] Indeed, from this perspective, what differentiated metaphors from literal statements were their distinctive mode of "predication":

> The bearer of the metaphorical meaning is no longer the word but the sentence as a whole. The interaction process does not merely consist of the substitution of a word for a word, of a name for a name – which, strictly speaking, defines only metonymy – but in an interaction between a logical subject and a predicate.[12]

Black's influence, however, went beyond merely shifting the focus away from the seemingly separate lexical units in a metaphorical statement to its internal semantic structure. He also offered a basic framework in which to understand "the very functioning of the interactions" themselves.[13] For Black, metaphors were *intentionally* discordant linguistic constructions that impel the reader to connect two distinct, and often incompatible, ideas.

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[10] Benveniste, 1966, p. 105 (in Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 67).
[11] Benveniste, 1966, p. 111 (in Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 69): "It is in discourse, realized in sentences, that language is formed and takes shape. There language begins."
[12] Ricoeur, 1978c, p. 143. (Originally published in Ricoeur, 1978b, pp. 145.)
[13] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 87.

This process can be exemplified by comparing the two sentences: (Rousseau's statement) "man is born free" and (Black's metaphorical example) "man is a wolf". Both are simple sentences in that they consist of one clause. This suggests that, with the two, a process of predication occurs between the subject ("man") and their respective complements ("born free" and "wolf").[14]

In the case of Rousseau's declaration, one's understanding of "born free" is attributed to the subject, and a logical predication is thus achieved. With the metaphorical statement "man is wolf", however, there is an added tension created at the predicative level, in that one's general understanding of wolf does not regularly (or logically) transfer to the subject, man. This leaves the hearer or reader with the task of choosing which associations of the complement can apply to subject: "A suitable hearer will be led by the wolf-system of implications to construct a corresponding system of implications about the principal subject. But these implications will *not* be those comprised in the common-places *normally* associated with man."[15] For Black, then, the process of speaking about one thing "in terms of another" initiates a transference of "associated common-places", where the characteristics of the complements are projected upon the subjects.

However, Black's model of semantic predication goes yet further. He holds that, in the act of correlating the two notions ("man" and "wolf"), it is not only the associations of the complement that are transferred to the subject. Rather, the flow of influence goes both ways, with one's understanding of the complement (i.e. "wolf") being modified by its association with the subject (i.e. "man"). In effect, the act of predication allows for all associations and preconceptions of the various concepts to become affiliated with the other.

Ricoeur credits Black with demonstrating that the simple juxtaposition of incompatible terms, placed within a logical system "governed by syntactic and

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[14] As with Richards, Ricoeur here uses the terms "tenor" and "vehicle" in place of "subject" and "complement".
[15] Black, 1981, p. 73.

semantic rules", allows for the exchange of associations.[16] Contrary to the rhetorical model, the meaning generated by the metaphorical sentence is both irreducible and untranslatable. What's more, the total meaning of the sentence exceeds the literal sum of its lexical parts. In the interaction model, therefore, metaphorical meaning is seen to be produced through a system of creating and resolving 'tensions', whereby language appropriate to one concept provides a lens for seeing another:

> To call a man a wolf is to evoke the lupine system of associated commonplaces. One speaks then of the man in "wolf-language." Acting as a filter or screen, "the wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others – in short, organizes our view of man." In this way metaphor confers an insight. Organizing a principal subject by applying a subsidiary subject to it constitutes, in effect, an irreducible intellectual operation, which informs and clarifies in a way that is beyond the scope of the paraphrase.[17]

This basic understanding of the mechanics of metaphor was augmented by the work of M. Beardsley. Coming at metaphorical language from the vantage point of literary criticism, Beardsley firstly highlights that all the elements of discourse (be they words, sentences, or full texts) have two significations: a primary, explicit, meaning and a secondary, implicit one. In this view, the primary significance is what the sentence 'states' and the secondary is what the sentence 'suggests'. Beardsley observed that in most instances of discourses (e.g. routine conversations or non-fictional writing) the primary meaning is accentuated while secondary meanings are screened away through word selection: "In ordinary language, any particular context never brings a whole 'range of connotation' of the word. In certain contexts, the other words eliminate the undesirable connotations of a given word; such is the case with respect to the technical and scientific language, where everything is explicit."[18]

The priority given to the primary signification does, however, not occur with all forms of discourse. In the case of poetry or fiction, for instance, the secondary

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[16] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 87.
[17] Ibid., pp. 87-88.
[18] Ibid., p. 91.

connotative meanings are often as important as the primary *denotative* ones. Significantly, Beardsley found that (as with poetry) a metaphor's connotations are thrust into the foreground. This was seen to occur because metaphors put forward a "logically empty attribution" that has no coherent primary meaning.[19] In the void left by this collapse of logical significance, the full range of implicit connotations becomes both relevant and meaningful. This defining characteristic of metaphor is defined in Beardsley's work as the semantic "clash" or "metaphorical twist".[20]

On the surface, Beardsley's work has much in common with that of Black. Both position their understanding of metaphor in opposition to Aristotle's rhetorical model, while focusing on the interaction between semantic units.[21] Likewise, both promote the understanding that metaphor is predicated on the tension between the literal meaning of the individual words and the figurative meaning of the entire sentence.[22] However, in Ricoeur's estimation, Beardsley's studies offered a more exact understanding of the semantic processes occurring in metaphors. By using the less ambiguous terminology of "connotation" and "denotation" (over Black's "system of associated common-places"), he further illustrated how metaphors operate to free the latent, secondary meaning in language.

To this point, we have seen how the structuralist notion of irregular predication challenged the established rhetorical model of metaphor. While Ricoeur identified this as a seminal advancement in the field, he did not believe that it provided, in itself, a complete understanding of the semantics of metaphor. Indeed, his own contributions arose from his selective acceptance or rejection of various aspects of the structuralist interpretations (of Max Black et al.). In the following section, we

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[19] Ibid., p. 95.
[20] Beardsley, 1962, p. 294: "When a predicate is metaphorically adjoined, the predicate loses its ordinary extension, because it acquires a new intention – perhaps one that it has in no other context. And this twist of meaning is forced by inherent tensions, or oppositions, within the metaphor itself."
[21] Study 3 of *Rule of Metaphor* argues that the similarities between Black and Beardsley can be traced to the shared influence of I.A. Richards' 1930s studies on metaphor.
[22] This, in Ricoeur's work, is described as the tension between "the undivided meaning of the statement and the focused meaning of the word". (Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 85.)

consider how Ricoeur built upon Beardsley's 'literary-critical' approach with a view to constructing a more comprehensive (or wide-ranging) understanding of metaphorical language.

Part 3: Creativity and Metaphor

Part 1 of the chapter identified how the 'interaction theory' of structuralists (such as Max Black) was situated in opposition to Aristotle's substitutional model. The classical outlook proposed that metaphors were constructed through the placement of incompatible words within otherwise cogent sentences; structuralists, however, argued that this understanding failed to account for the interaction occurring at the semantic level between the various words (*qua* lexemes).

In his critique of the interaction theory,[23] Ricoeur notes that the differences between the classical and structuralist outlooks are perhaps not as stark as they may first appear. In the classical model, the interpretation of metaphor involved replacing the incompatible, or "alien", term with an appropriate one, whereas for the structuralists it entailed appraising how the connotations of the figurative (or metaphorical) terms influenced the interpretation of the more literal terms. In both instances, however, the interpretation of metaphor hinges on the interpreter having a preset understanding of what each term means, and re-applying that understanding elsewhere in the sentence. In this light, a metaphor's "semantic clash" equates to a simple redistribution of established associations. As Ricoeur puts it, "the major difficulty (which, by the way, Black himself recognizes) is that to return to a system of associated common-places is to address oneself to connotations that are already established."[24]

[23] Ricoeur's most detailed discussion on 20th century advancement in metaphorical theory, which culminated in the interaction outlook, can be found in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1977b), "Studies" 1-3.
[24] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 88.

It can thus be said that, despite the many apparent differences between the interaction and rhetorical models, the structuralists simply exchanged one mode of substitution (semantic) for another (lexical):

> Is not this system [of associated common-places] something dead, or at least something already established?… The potential range of connotations does not say more than the system of associated common-places… We keep linking the creative process of metaphor-forming to a non-creative aspect of language.[25]

It is in this respect that Ricoeur's theory of metaphor departs from both outlooks. He holds that, by presenting the workings of metaphor in terms of an "exchange" of any kind, the capacity of metaphor to create *novel* meaning is left unexplored:

> The aspect of semantic novelty, which, I believe, is the fundamental problem of metaphor remains unexplained in a substitution theory that covers both cases. Furthermore, the theory is unable to explain the process itself by which the meaning of a word is extended beyond its common usage. What Beardsley called the "metaphorical twist" remains an enigma.[26]

Ricoeur's first contribution to the study of metaphor was thus to emphasise the *emerging* metaphorical meaning that comes from the association of discordant ideas. For, in Ricoeur's view, a metaphor presents a *new* situation where several semantic fields "intersect".[27] When confronted with a metaphor, the hearer does not only access a repertoire of preset denotations and connotations, but creatively invents a new network of semantic associations that override the established ones:

> We do not merely apply existing connotations, we create a new framework of connotations which exists only in the actual act of predication. In other words, a novel metaphor does not merely actualize a potential connotation, it creates it. It is a semantic innovation, an emergent meaning. From these metaphors we may see that no paraphrase can exhaust them. They are untranslatable. They say what they say, and what they say cannot be said in another way.[28]

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[25] Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 102.
[26] Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 97.
[27] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 98.
[28] Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 107.

Seen from this perspective, a metaphor is best described as a "category-mistake" or "calculated error".[29] At its most basic discursive level (that of a sentence) a contradiction is created between the syntactic and semantic compositions. As earlier seen, the classical metaphorical trope is defined by the syntactic structure of 'A is B' (or subject/noun followed by the copula-verb 'to be' followed by a complement). This standard construction is exemplified in Ricoeur's work by the metaphor "nature is a temple".[30] Ricoeur argues that this sentence creates an inherent paradox in the 'copula' by concurrently implying that something (syntactically) *is* and (logically) *is not* something else.

From this perspective, a metaphor's emergent meaning surfaces as the interpreter's creative faculties strive to extract a clear significance from the literally "absurd" expression.[31] Put another way, once a literal sense is deemed impossible – and should the interpreter still believe the expression to be meaningful – one suspends traditional channels of interpretation and *invents* new ones: "[Metaphor] consists in assimilating things which do not go together. But precisely by means of this calculated error, metaphor discloses a relationship of meaning hitherto unnoticed between terms which were prevented from communicating in a former classification."[32]

Ricoeur asserts that, as the metaphorical sentence both "assimilates" discordant ideas and suspends rational associations, the hearer is able to establish new logical boundaries and devise new associations between the subject and predicate.[33] The initial literal interpretation breaks down (or rather co-exists) in tension with the

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[29] Ricoeur, 1977b, pp. 21-22.
[30] Ricoeur, 1977b, pp. 167, 171, 247: The example of a metaphorical trope that Ricoeur here employs is taken from the first lines of Baudelaire's poem *Correspondences*.
[31] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 90-100.
[32] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 79.
[33] Ricoeur uses Frege's 'sense/reference' distinction to articulate this process. He holds that the new meaning which a metaphor engenders does not only occur at the level of a proposition's 'sense'; rather, a new *reference* is created as well. Some of the problems associated with Ricoeur's use of Frege in this way are discussed below.

novel interpretation: "The function of a metaphor is to make sense [of] nonsense, to transform a self-contradictory statement into a significant self-contradiction."[34]

This productive function of metaphors is defined by Ricoeur as "semantic impertinence". While often attributed to Ricoeur himself, this well-known term was coined by the French theorist Jean Cohen as a way of articulating intentional absurdity within language.[35] Throughout the 1970s, Ricoeur uses the term "semantic impertinence" (or "impertinent predication") as a way of emphasising metaphor's tactical use of contradiction.

Sense and Reference

Ricoeur's studies of metaphor were underpinned by the belief that impertinent predication is at the root of metaphor's productive function.[36] For Ricoeur, the metaphorical statement "man is a wolf" offers a *novel* meaning in relation to any literal rendering (such as "men are as vicious as wolves"). While this position was intimated by structuralists, the interaction model (of Black et al.) failed to provide a sufficient justification for why this was the case. Ricoeur's study of metaphorical language therefore sought to offer a theoretical framework that explained the novelty of metaphors. For this, Ricoeur initially appealed to Gottlob Frege's 19th century analysis of the *sense* and *reference* of language.

Introduced in 1892, the 'sense-reference' distinction was developed by Frege for the purpose of examining the use of names (i.e. proper nouns) within a sentence.[37] He argued that, contra the position of theorists such as John Stuart Mill, there often existed a different *cognitive value* between two similar sentences using the same names. To exemplify this point, Frege employed the now famous comparison between the statements "the Morning Star is the Evening Star" and "the Morning Star is the Morning Star".

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[34] Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 106.
[35] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 84; Ricoeur, 1977b, pp. 193-194.
[36] See: Whitehouse, 2002, pp. 166-167.
[37] Beaney, 1996, p. 192.

Assuming our knowledge that the terms "morning star" and "evening star" refer to the same object (namely, the planet Venus) Frege argued that there was a notable difference in the meaning between the two statements. On the surface, the first sentence (following an A = B formulation) conveys the same meaning as the second sentence (following an A = A formulation). This is however not the case: while the first sentence expresses genuine knowledge, the second is a tautology that only conveys a trivial analytic truth. Frege concluded, therefore, that while the names Evening Star and Morning Star *refer* to the same object, they also possess a different *sense* within the construction of the sentence:

> Frege makes the distinction between the intentional meaning, the *sense* (Sinn) which a name expresses and the extensional meaning, the *designatum* (Bedeutung) which the name denotes or designates…The sense of the expression is its linguistic meaning, the meaning that is known to anyone familiar with the language, and for which no knowledge of extra-linguistic fact is required; the sense is what we have grasped when we are said to understand an expression. On the other hand the *designatum* of an expression often requires to be discovered by empirical evidence or other considerations in addition to the knowledge of the language.[38]

Beginning in his 1974 text, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics", Ricoeur employed Frege's distinction as a means of exploring the divergent aspects of, what he terms, "metaphorical *discourse*".[39] As described in Part 1 of the thesis, Ricoeur understood discourse in terms of someone saying something about something to someone else. In Frege's sense-reference formulation Ricoeur believed he had found an elegant way of articulating the two central aspects of discourse, namely: its subject (or what is being spoken about) and its predicate (what is meaningfully said about that subject):

> Discourse, mainly as sentence, implies the polarity of sense and reference, that is, the possibility to distinguish between what is said, by the sentence as a whole and by the words as parts of the sentence, and about what something is said… I shall try to connect the problems of explanation to the dimension of "sense", that is to the immanent design of the discourse – and the problem of interpretation to the dimension of "reference"

[38] Church, 1943, p. 301.
[39] Ricoeur, 1977b, pp. 301-302, 346 (note 54).

> understood as the power of discourse to apply to an extra-linguistic reality about which it says what it says.[40]

In order to apply Frege's insight to the study of metaphorical language, Ricoeur argued that the basic distinction between sense and reference did not only apply (as Frege intended) to referring expressions using proper nouns; rather, it held true to all acts of discourse, and subject-predicate propositions in particular:[41]

> The distinction between sense and reference is a necessary and pervasive characteristic of discourse, and collides head-on with the axiom of the immanence of language. There is no reference problem in language: signs refer to other signs *within* the same system. In the phenomenon of the sentence, language passes outside itself; reference is the mark of the self-transcendence of language.[42]

While Ricoeur does not elaborate on his rationale for using Frege's theory, there are logical grounds to assume that it could be viably applied to the study of discourse and, more particularly, the metaphorical formulation. Firstly, there exist conspicuous parallels, on a syntactic level, between the 'referring expressions' examined by Frege and that of the metaphorical trope. Namely, both employ an A = B syntactic form. What's more, as examined in Part 1 of the thesis, discourse for Ricoeur is characterised as much by its reference to the real world as it is by its grammatical and lexical units. In Frege's theory, Ricoeur presumably saw a viable avenue by which to explore the *ontological* link between language and perceptions of reality. This second supposition is supported by Joy (1988): "For Ricoeur, the final referent of a metaphoric expression is then not so much the novel meaning encapsulated in the expression but the impact of this expression on a person's worldview. It is in this connection that Ricoeur will say that a living metaphor has the capacity to change the world."[43]

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[40] Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 98.
[41] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 186.
[42] Ibid., p. 74.
[43] Joy, 1988, p. 520. Gerhart presents an alternative view, namely, that Frege's distinction appeals to Ricoeur on the grounds that it "clarifies the distinction between the semiotic and semantic and shows that the one is irreducible to the other". (Gerhart, 1995, p. 223)

Frege's distinction was employed in all but one of Ricoeur's metaphorical studies as a means to situate the specific "problem" of metaphorical language within a more general discussion on the referentiality of discourse.[44] In terms of his metaphor theory itself, Ricoeur used the sense-reference distinction to highlight key weaknesses in the prevailing structuralist approach. In particular, it was seen to expose the extent to which the referential aspect of metaphorical language had been ignored by scholarship. By emphasising intra-linguistic sense over reference,[45] contemporary theories had continued to see metaphors as rhetorical devices with little or no re-descriptive power:

> What must never be lost sight of is that the question of sense is separated in advance from that of reference; and that the sort of purely verbal intelligibility that can be granted metaphor… proceeds from suppressing, and perhaps from forgetting… the power of metaphor to project and to reveal a world.[46]

Ricoeur's use of Fregean theory was the subject of sustained criticism in the years following the publication of *La Métaphore Vive* (1975). This censure took two forms. Firstly, it was argued that, by according such a prominent role to Frege's distinction, Ricoeur had incorporated a theoretical outlook wholly at odds with his own hermeneutics. In particular, a number of scholars questioned the wisdom of tying his philosophy to the "naïve realism of Frege's epistemology".[47] In this view, Ricoeur appropriated Frege's "rather stringent and restrictive conception of truth"[48] and, in so doing, "affiliated his work with that of someone who would be a better foe than friend".[49]

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[44] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 81: "The extension of Frege's distinction to the whole of discourse implies a conception of the whole of language close to that of Humboldt and Cassirer, for whom the function of language is to articulate our experience of the world, to give form to this experience."
[45] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 92: "Following Frege, we have claimed with equal force that it is possible, with respect to every statement, to distinguish its purely immanent sense from its reference, that is, from its transcending motion towards an extra-linguistic 'outside.' In spontaneous discourse, understanding does not stop at the sense, but passes by sense towards reference."
[46] Ibid., p. 92-93.
[47] Gerhart, 1995, p. 223. See also: Fodor, 1995, p. 150-153; Soskice, 1985, pp. 86-90.
[48] Fodor, 1995, p. 151.
[49] Gerhart, 1995, p. 223.

Beyond questions of general compatibility, however, there were also concerns over Ricoeur's *application* of Frege's distinction. Some doubted whether a theory initially developed by Frege to explore the function of proper nouns could be viably used to shed light on the intricacies of subject-predicate sentences (or, indeed, extended forms of discourse). Of the scholars charging Ricoeur with misappropriation, Soskice (1985) was the most severe in her criticism. In her view, Ricoeur not only misused Frege's theory by inappropriately generalising its rigid application, but also moved away from his basic understanding in order to substantiate Beardsley's literary-metaphorical outlook:

> [Ricoeur's] working hypothesis is that the Fregean distinction between sense and reference, applied by Frege most strictly to proper names, should hold in principle for all discourse. So he moves from the sense and reference of proper names, to sense and reference of propositions ("The sense is what the proposition states; the reference or denotation is that *about which* the sense is stated."), to discourse in general where "what is intended by discourse (*l'intente*) points to an extra-linguistic reality which is its referent". Having established this very broad use of the terms "sense" and "reference", he proposes what he takes to be the Fregean tenet "the question of reference is always open by that of sense". But he wishes to go further than Frege, for whereas Frege suggests that fictional terms have sense without having reference, Ricoeur wishes to formulate for the literary work a second postulate of reference…[50]

In the 1995 publication "Reply to Mary Gerhart", Ricoeur responds to many of these criticisms by conceding to having unfairly appropriated Frege's model in an attempt to identify the ontological referent that arises from within metaphorical language.[51] He, however, points out that this shortcoming in his early studies (where a "lacuna" existed between linguistic and ontological considerations) was corrected in his later exploration of narrative, where more attention was given to the "role of the reader".[52]

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[50] Soskice, 1985, p. 87. For further discussion on Ricoeur's application of Frege's distinction, see: Kjärgaard, 1986, pp. 78-83.
[51] Ricoeur, 1995b, p. 235: "I went outside the bounds of Frege's logical semantics in my haste to proclaim the ontological vehemence of language".
[52] Ibid., pp. 234-235.

It can thus be said that, while Frege's sense-reference distinction did not become an established theoretical resource for the study of metaphor, Ricoeur was successful in drawing attention to the neglected "extra-linguistic" meaning that a metaphor conveys. In the following chapters, we observe that delineating the limits of metaphorical referentiality became a primary aim of Ricoeur's hermeneutical project.

Metaphor and Literary Theory

The third and final deficiency of the interaction theory that Ricoeur looked to address concerned the perception that metaphors are semantic constructions that only occur at the level of a sentence. To this point we have mainly considered metaphors in terms of the subject-copula-complement trope. This designation was initially adopted by classical Greek rhetoricians and remained prevalent to the 1970s. Indeed, the studies of Richards (and later Black) further substantiated the belief that metaphorical meaning was inextricably linked to the semantic incompatibility between grammatical subjects and predicative complements.

There are of course advantages to presenting metaphors in basic syntactic terms. At the sentence level, the grammatical subject and predicate often match the semantic subject and predicate. In other words, the noun operating as the subject of the sentence tends to correspond with what the sentence is logically *about*. What's more, viewing the concepts at play in terms of individual lexemes makes it more straightforward to gauge whether a sentence's predication is conventional or "impertinent".

While it is decidedly easier to identify a metaphor at the level of a sentence, Ricoeur believed that the structuralist approach failed to adequately consider what other forms (if any) a metaphor could take. This shortcoming only became evident following the contributions of Beardsley. As metaphors became scrutinised from the perspective of literary theory, the focus moved away from a metaphor's "grammatical processes" and towards its characteristic mode of *explication*. What Beardsley uncovered was that the metaphoric process of

communicating through discordance was a common enough device in a number of literary forms (e.g. poetry, essays and fiction):

> The somewhat oblique manner in which Beardsley introduces the problem of metaphor is in itself interesting. The explication of metaphor is to serve as a test-case for a larger problem, that of the method of explication that is to be applied to the work itself, taken as a whole. To put it another way, the metaphor is taken as a *poem in miniature.*[53]

There were two notable implications arising from this literary approach. The first was that it presumed the semantic concept of impertinent predication could be employed beyond the level of the sentence. If metaphors are defined in terms of the interaction between the subject and predicate, could this understanding not be extended to far more elaborate constructions, such as narratives? Following on from Beardsley, Ricoeur looked to identify the broader (non-grammatical) *subject* of literary works, as well as the extent to which those subjects were explicated 'metaphorically'. As shall be explored in greater depth in the following chapter, it soon became clear that literary works employed their own version of semantic impertinence, and should thus be considered metaphors in their own right: "The proposed working hypothesis is that if a satisfactory account can be given of what is implied in [metaphor being] the kernel of poetic meaning, it must be possible equally to extend the same explication to large entities, such as an entire poem."[54]

The second implication of the literary approach was that it shifted attention away from metaphors, as such, and towards the 'metaphoricity' of language. As it became clear that metaphors were not the only constructions that employed logical absurdity to reveal latent meaning, what was left to be ascertained was how this discursive pattern functioned at the compositional level:

> Beardsley's contribution differs appreciably from that of Max Black, as regards the positive role assigned to logical absurdity at the level of primary meaning, functioning as a means of liberating the secondary meaning. Metaphor is just one tactic within a general strategy, which is to suggest

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[53] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 94.
[54] Ibid., p. 94.

> something other than what is stated… In all the tactics within this strategy, the trick consists in giving indicators that point towards the second level of meaning; an "in poetry the chief tactic for obtaining this result is that of logical absurdity".[55]

Conclusion

Ricoeur's contribution to the study of metaphor developed from his critique of both classical and contemporary theories. To begin with, he noted that 20th century structuralism added much to our understanding of the semantic of metaphor. Specifically, it clarified that metaphors rely on the *tensions* between subject and predicate, and between their literal and figurative meanings. Yet, despite advancing our understanding of the 'logical grammar' of metaphor, the structuralist approach upheld three classical misconceptions associated with the use, interpretation and classification of metaphors:

1. Metaphors rely on a process of substituting linguistic constructs (be they syntactic or semantic units).
2. The interpretation of metaphor rely upon one's preconceived understanding of lexical terms (as well as the denotations and connotations associated with them).
3. Metaphors are syntactic tropes solely confined to the level of the sentence.

Ricoeur's initial studies of metaphorical language debunked these ingrained beliefs by revealing that, in effect, metaphors are deviant discursive devices which, through their use of logical absurdity, expose a latent 'secondary' meaning in language that cannot be articulated otherwise. What's more, he promoted the belief that the subject-predicate sentence was not the only formulation a metaphor could take. Rather, it was just one example of a more general metaphorical-semantic "strategy".

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[55] Ibid., p. 95.

Having outlined Ricoeur's contributions to 20th century metaphorical theory, the following chapters look to demonstrate the broader implications to philosophical hermeneutics. As we continue our discussion, however, it is important to retain two key claims that emerged (albeit in an incipient form) from Ricoeur's preliminary studies of metaphorical language. Firstly, for Ricoeur, metaphors are not only irreducible, but also produce *new* meaning beyond the sum of their lexical parts. Secondly, through semantic impertinence, metaphorical language has the capacity to re-describe, or refigure, our ontological perceptions of reality.

Chapter 6

Metaphor and the Bible

In the previous chapter, some important distinctions were made between the structuralist 'interaction' theory of metaphor and Ricoeur's more nuanced 'tensional' understanding. For the purpose of clarity, it also presented Ricoeur's exploration of metaphorical language as a singular, coherent theory. In fact, this 'synchronic' approach has been favoured by Ricoeur scholars since the 1970s,[1] as it provides a necessary overview of the debates he was involved in, as well as his personal contributions to the field of study. In order to appreciate the broader implications of his investigations of metaphor, however, it is important to also consider his research as a succession of independent publications, each with its own aims, parameters, and intended readerships. This 'diachronic' approach exposes how Ricoeur's understanding of metaphorical language evolved throughout the 1970s to become a point of mediation between general and regional hermeneutics.

In Part 1 of the thesis, it was proposed that Ricoeur's broad hermeneutical vision entailed a move from general theory to particular acts interpretation. While his initial intent was to demonstrate the feasibility of discourse-based studies of language, his further aim was to test any newly honed 'philosophical' theories against textual examples. Ricoeur's publications on metaphor exemplify this shift from theory to practice. Where his initial works from the early 1970s focused on the nature and boundaries of metaphors as such, later studies explored the implications for literary interpretation and, in particular, biblical exegesis.

In order to consider the applicability of metaphorical theory, this chapter offers a detailed examination of Ricoeur's first three publications on metaphor. The aim is

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[1] Specifically, see: Lechner, 1977, pp. 409-467; Dauenhauer, 1983; Vanhoozer, 1990, pp. 56-85; Stiver, 2001, pp. 105-113.

to demonstrate how Ricoeur's research progressed from a seemingly peripheral investigation of lexical polysemy, to become a highly influential study of the ontological function of biblical language.

Part 1: Polysemy and Semantic Innovation

Over a five-year period from 1973 to 1978, Ricoeur published five principal studies on metaphor in English. These were: "Creativity in Language: Word, Polysemy, Metaphor" (1973), [2] "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics" (1974),[3] "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a), *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (1977b) [4] and "The Metaphorical Process of Cognition, Imagination and Feeling" (1978).[5] Of these works, *The Rule of Metaphor* is widely considered to be Ricoeur's definitive publication on the subject, as it offers a comprehensive overview of the history of classical and contemporary theories of metaphor. However, his first publication "Creativity in Language: Word, Polysemy, Metaphor" (1973) clearly shows that, far from beginning as a critique of the different outlooks of Aristotle, Black and Beardsley, Ricoeur's initial exploration of metaphorical language focused on the role and function of 'polysemy'.

It was noted in Chapter 1 that the 19th and early 20th century 'founders' of modern hermeneutics identified ambiguity as one of the greatest challenges for the new discipline. From Schleiermacher's earliest examinations of legal and biblical texts in the 1820s, it became accepted that the intended meaning of the author is often misconstrued because of the unpredictable way that language is received. For both

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[2] This work was first presented as a conference paper in April, 1972. (See Valdés, 1991, p. x.)
[3] The original French version of this publication also appeared in 1972.
[4] The original French version of this publication appeared in 1975.
[5] In addition, there are a number of studies from this period which examine the emergence of new meanings in biblical discourse that have not here been classified as part of Ricoeur's metaphorical corpus. While these works reference key findings from his studies of metaphor, they are exclusively centred on the nature of biblical discourse and are thus considered part of Ricoeur's, so called, biblical theology. These publications include: "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a); "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" (1977c); "Manifestation and Proclamation" (1978d); "Naming God" (1979a); "The Bible and the Imagination" (1981f).

him and subsequent hermeneutical philosophers (such as Dilthey), lexical 'polysemy' was seen as the primary cause of ambiguity.

While the term polysemy is generally understood to denote the capacity of words to have "multiple meanings", in "Creativity in Language: Word, Polysemy, Metaphor" Ricoeur appeals to Stephan Ulmann's more detailed classification in which polysemy is defined as instances where specific lexical units have multiple "senses" attached to them.[6] In this study, Ricoeur also departs from the traditional Romantic outlook and proclaims that there are clear distinctions between ambiguity and polysemy. Far from seeing polysemy as an undesirable quirk of language that disrupts the transmission of meaning, Ricoeur proposes that it plays an essential role in how language evolves.

To demonstrate this, Ricoeur initially sets out the "functional traits" of polysemy, highlighting that, from a purely "economic" standpoint, all languages must be to some extent polysemic. For, if a language were to assign a different lexical unit to every conceivable sense, it would be either wholly unwieldy or vastly reductive: "Polysemic language satisfies the most elementary requirement of a natural language… A lexicon which would be based on the opposite principle of total univocity… that is to say, on the principle of only one sense for one name, would be infinite if it were destined to convey from one person to another the richness of concrete and qualitative experience."[7]

Yet, if the primary function of polysemy is to offer a wide range of 'senses' within a manageable number of lexical units, its second trait is to limit (or "counteract") any misunderstanding that may arise due to the plurality of meanings that it generates. One can therefore conclude that the more polysemic a language, the more sensitive it is to the context in which it is used (both in terms of its immediate linguistic situation and its social environment):[8]

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[6] Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 101.
[7] Ibid., p. 101.
[8] Ricoeur clarified what is intended by the social context in which language is transmitted: "By

> Such are the two functional traits of a polysemic language, economy at the level of the code, contextual dependence at the level of the message. This dialectics of economy and novelty foreshadows the dialectics of finite means and infinite use… The simplest message conveyed by means of natural language has to be interpreted because all the words are polysemic and take their actual meaning from the connection with a given context and a given audience against the background of a given situation.[9]

While Ricoeur accepts that "unchecked" polysemy can certainly lead to ambiguity, he stresses that this is rarely the case with routine discourse and, in particular, verbal exchanges.[10] This is because most natural languages have evolved to restrict ambiguity as much as possible through word choice, context, and questions and answers. These strategies are routinely used by speakers to "screen" the intended meaning of each word from other conceivable connotations. In this way, the polysemic meaning of lexical terms is controlled in everyday speech to ensure the clear transmission of meaning.[11]

Ricoeur highlights two common types (or categories) of language that are particularly successful in reducing polysemy in this way, namely: "ordinary language" and "scientific language". Ordinary language is defined as language used within one's day-to-day life, its primary purpose being to communicate in the most clear and transparent way possible. Scientific language, on the other hand, is geared towards argumentation (rather than communication), and tends to establish uniformity within discourse. As precision is the intended aim of both types, they share the ability to effectively screen out polysemic interpretations.

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context, we mean…[also] the speaker and hearer's behavior, the situation common to both, and finally the horizon of reality surrounding the speech situation". (Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 101.)

[9] Ibid., p. 101.

[10] Vanhoozer, 1990, p. 59.

[11] Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 103: "In order to make sense together words must have a mutual appropriateness, a semantic pertinence. The rule of semantic pertinence requires that when we speak, only a part of the semantic field of a word is used. The remainder is excluded or rather repressed by the process of mutual selection exerted by the sentence as a whole and by the context of discourse on its parts… Finally it is the function of the exchange of questions and answers within the dialogue or conversation to allow the hearer to check the semantic choice of the speaker and to allow the speaker to verify that the message has been correctly decoded by the hearer. The speaker's utterance must provide the hearer's interpretation with some specific clues or guidelines for the screening of polysemy."

For Ricoeur, it is this aptitude to accurately describe that which is known (or empirically verifiable) that has led to these two types becoming the basis for the majority of spoken and written exchanges. However, a problem has arisen due to the pervasiveness of these two 'practical' types of discourse. Because their intent is univocity – where meaning is tied to one established signifier – both are ill-suited to describe new knowledge or experiences. As observed by Vanhoozer, in a world progressively dominated by univocal discourse, the primary challenge for language is not ambiguity but, rather, loss of meaningfulness: "In Ricoeur's view of the contemporary situation, polysemy seems more the solution than the problem".[12]

It is because of this limitation in everyday language that metaphors have such an important role to play. If ordinary and scientific types of discourse are defined by how they promote literal interpretations (and reduce polysemy), then metaphors are their antithesis. This is because metaphors inherently suppress explicit meaning (or denotations) and promote unconventional connotations: "When we receive a metaphorical statement as meaningful, we perceive both the literal meaning which is bound by the semantic incongruity and the new meaning which makes sense in the present context. Metaphor is a clear case where polysemy is preserved instead of being screened."[13]

In this respect, metaphors provide a blueprint for a third type of discourse: poetic language.[14] This broad discursive category encapsulates all regional forms of discourse that are predicated on semantic innovation. Indeed, for Ricoeur, all 'poetic' forms of discourse are linked by their particular "heuristic" function,[15] in that they transmit what is unknown through more familiar, or recognisable,

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[12] Vanhoozer, 1990, p. 60.
[13] Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 110.
[14] As discussed at various points in this thesis, in his 1970s corpus, Ricoeur also employs the term "poetic discourse". It is noteworthy that the notion of "poetic language" (particularly as distinct from "ordinary language") predates Ricoeur's 1970 studies, with the term being used in the works of Heidegger. For discussion, see: Jeanrond, 1991, p. 6; Gosetti-Ferencei, 2004.
[15] Ricoeur, 1973b, pp. 110-111.

linguistic structures: "[The metaphorical function] is to describe an unknown thing in terms of a better known thing thanks to a similarity of structure."[16]

In sum, the emergence of secondary meanings in language occurs most readily when an individual is confronted with a metaphor and is forced to uncover the similarities between two seemingly dissimilar notions, beliefs or perceptions.[17] Metaphors invite the individual to re-assess their fossilised understandings and form new connotative associations of the subject or subject-matter. If widely accepted, these associations can "be added to the new polysemy of the word" and, in so doing, further enrich the language.[18] The central claim of Ricoeur's first study of metaphor, then, is that metaphorical language not only utilises polysemy but is one of the principal means by which polysemy itself is generated:

> The novel metaphor creates a new semantic association… We do not merely apply already existing connotations, we create a new framework of connotations which exists only in the actual act of predication. In other words, a novel metaphor does not merely actualize a potential connotation, it creates it. It is a semantic innovation, an emergent meaning.[19]

From this perspective, metaphors are not only intentional, rhetorical "category mistakes", as defined in the last chapter,[20] but ones that have the ability to affect one's ontological outlook.[21] By compelling the listener or reader to re-consider relations that they long held to be true or false, a cognitive restructuring of associations takes place. In this way, metaphors not only challenge our preset assumptions, but also generate new *ways* of seeing the world. To use the language of Austin, metaphors are not "constative" assertions, but rather "performative acts" that challenge the listener to re-consider their beliefs and develop new ones.

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[16] Ibid., p. 110.
[17] Ibid., pp. 109-110: "Metaphor would be the place in discourse where the emergence [of conceptual meaning] may be detected because sameness and difference are in conflict… Metaphor helps us to detect this process because it works against the previous categorization at the level of rhetoric. It cleverly bypasses given categories in order to reveal unnoticed similarities in the field of our experiences."
[18] Ibid., p. 110.
[19] Ibid., p. 107.
[20] See: Chapter 5, Part 2.
[21] Ricoeur, 1973b, p. 108.

It is important to stress that, for Ricoeur, not all figurative expressions should be viewed as metaphors. Indeed, the more commonplace and accepted a metaphor becomes, the less it operates as a *true* metaphor: "[There is] a difference between a bad metaphor, like the leg of a chair, and a novel metaphor, like the poetic verse, '*La Terre est bleue comme une orange*,' or 'time is a beggar".[22] As Ricoeur here states, the most familiar constructions (e.g. figurative idiomatic expressions) fail to elicit a cognitive re-appraisal, and only operate on a linguistic rather than ontological level. In his 1970s corpus, Ricoeur terms these linguistic constructions "bad", "trivial" or "dead" metaphors. Unlike "living" metaphors, they do not open up new polysemic possibilities for the hearer or reader, but simply reinforce established ones. As shall be explored in greater depth in the following chapter, this distinction between "dead" and "living" metaphors is highly relevant to the evolution of Ricoeur's understanding of discourse.

From Sentence to Work

Ricoeur's second publication on metaphor to be considered here, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics" (1974), shifts the focus away from polysemy and, instead, considers if literary 'works' can be classified as metaphors in their own right:

> To what extent may the hermeneutical problem of text-interpretation be considered as a large-scale expansion of the problems condensed in the explication of a local metaphor in a given text? Is a metaphor a work in miniature? May a work – say, a poem – be considered as an expanded metaphor? The answer to the first question relies on the general properties belonging to *discourse*, since both text and metaphor, work and word, fall under one and the same category, that of discourse.[23]

This study begins by clearly outlining what is intended by a textual (or literary) work. Because 'works' are seen to comprise many types of writing, from short poetic sentences (such as proverbs or aphorisms) to expansive literary compilations, Ricoeur simply defines them as self-standing textual compositions:

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[22] Ibid., p. 104.
[23] Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 97.

"I shall call *work* the closed sequence of discourse which may be considered as a text."[24]

With this broad definition in mind, he proposes that there are conspicuous similarities between the symbolic function of literary works and those of metaphors. Indeed, a metaphor's distinctive mode of explication (where new meaning is communicated through semantic innovation) serves "as a paradigm" for the interpretation of works.[25] To substantiate this, he defers to specific elements of Black and Beardsley's 'interaction' theory.

Using Black's now famous example "man is wolf", Ricoeur reviews how sentence-level metaphors employ unconventional predication. To recall, for Black, statements are understood as metaphorical on the grounds that their syntactic subjects are placed in unusual lexical settings.[26] This novel re-contextualising of the subject creates a sense of logical absurdity that, in turn, allows for new associations to be built. In effect, for Black, the "metaphorical twist" stems from the process of re-planting *familiar* lexical terms in *unfamiliar* linguistic contexts:

> In the statement "man is wolf," the principal subject is qualified by one of the traits of the animal which belong to the "wolf-system of related commonplaces"; this implication system works as a filter or a screen; it does not select, but brings forward aspects of the principal subject. What may we think of this explication in the light of our description of metaphor as a word occurring in a new context?"[27]

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[24] Ibid., p. 96.

[25] Though this claim is initially introduced on p. 101, it is perhaps most clearly stated shortly after in the same work: "Such is the fundamental feature of the explication of metaphor which makes of it a paradigm for the explanation of a literary work. We construct the meaning of a text in a way which is similar to the way in which we make sense of all of the terms of a metaphorical statement." (Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 103)

[26] It is worth noting that, for Ricoeur, it is wrong to see the metaphorical tension arising from a semantic clash as an isolated language "event", as is suggested by Black's example "man is wolf". Indeed, when considering their historical usage within literary works (and society as a whole), Ricoeur notes that metaphors tend to appear in "clusters": "One calls for another and altogether they remain alive thanks to their mutual tension and the power of each to evoke the network." Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 94.

[27] Ibid., p. 101.

Yet, while metaphors are constructed through logical absurdity, they cannot be truly deemed metaphors until they are *received* as such. Citing Beardsley's observations (from his 1958 *Aesthetics*), Ricoeur reminds us that not every logically absurd statement communicates a definitive meaning; rather, it only creates an interpretative "dilemma". When confronted with a logically absurd statement, the interpreter must decide whether to reject the statement outright as nonsense, or modify their own beliefs to accommodate it. Because the logically absurd notion has been brought into being through language, and can no longer be altered, the onus is placed on the listener (or reader) to exhibit flexibility and assign a cogent meaning to it:

> Logical absurdity creates a situation in which we have the choice between preserving the literal sense of both the subject and modifier and concluding to the meaninglessness of the whole sentence – or attributing a new meaning to the modifier such as the whole sentence makes sense… When I say "man is a fox" (the fox has chased the wolf), I must shift from a literal to a metaphorical attribution *if* I want to save the sentence.[28]

Thus, from Black and Beardsley, Ricoeur highlights two defining characteristics of metaphorical expressions, namely:

1. metaphors are constructed by recontextualising the linguistic subject
2. the logical absurdity created by metaphors must in some way be received by the listener as having a cogent meaning

For Ricoeur, these distinguishing traits are not just relevant to the metaphorical trope, but apply to literary works as well. Like metaphors, the subject under discussion in literature is often presented in original or unfamiliar terms. The difference, in this respect, solely lies in the formulation (or, rather, concision) of the semantic subject. Whereas the 'subject' of the metaphorical trope is one and the same with its syntactic subject (i.e. noun), in literature the 'subject-matter' is spread over the breadth of the composition.[29]

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[28] Ibid., p. 102.

[29] See Chapter 8 for discussion on how Ricoeur's belief that the novel exposition of poetic

Most of the 1974 study, however, focuses on how the 'reception' of literary works parallels that of metaphors. Ricoeur notes that, as literary works lack the to-and-fro of spoken dialogue, the reader is encouraged to actively "construct" the meaning of what they read, along similar lines to the *active* interpretation of metaphorical statements: "*Why* have we to 'construct' the meaning of a text? First because it is a *written* thing: in the asymmetric relation of the text and the reader, only one of the partners speaks for two. Bringing a text to speech is always something else than hearing somebody and listening to his words."[30]

In this light, the process of literary interpretation is analogous to metaphorical interpretation. When reading, each segment of text becomes the basis for all subsequent interpretations within the work. As with metaphors, literary interpretations rely on the creation of an inter-connected framework of meaning, or, in Ricoeur's words, "a closed chain of meaning".[31] This hermeneutical process is indicative of how the interpreter of a metaphor is impelled to move out of their comfort zone and construct a system of understanding that allows the metaphor to "make-sense":

> A text is not only a *written* thing, but a work, that is, a closed chain of meaning. Now a work has to be constructed because a text – especially if it is a literary work – is more than a linear succession of sentences. It is a cumulative, holistic process…It is at that stage that the pole of text understanding is homologous to the understanding of a metaphorical statement.[32]

In focusing on the particular way that metaphors are constructed and received, Ricoeur's 1974 publication both tested and confirmed Beardsley's assertion that metaphors offer a paradigmatic understanding of literary interpretation: "I want to explore the following hypothesis. From one standpoint, the process of understanding a metaphor is the key for that of understanding larger texts, say, literary works… But, from one other standpoint, it is the understanding of a work

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language both draws a reader to a text, and prompts them to continue reading.
[30] Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 104.
[31] Ibid., p. 104.
[32] Ibid., p. 104.

as a whole which gives the key to metaphor."[33] It could be said, in fact, that Ricoeur's work succeeded in going one step further. By equating the 'heuristic' function of metaphors with the capacity of literature to affect the ontological perceptions of reader, Ricoeur established that the notion of semantic innovation could be applied more broadly to literary works. Indeed, for Pellauer (2014), Ricoeur's success in demonstrating the shared semantic "strategy" between metaphors and poetic forms of discourse was one of the major contributions of his 1970s research:[34] "Metaphors can extend beyond the length of a single sentence, as can any instance of discourse. Hence the symbolic function and possibility of semantic innovation at work in metaphor may carry over to examples of extended discourse, discourse that involves more than a single sentence."[35]

His second study of metaphor also had a palpable effect on the trajectory of Ricoeur's own hermeneutical project. By establishing that the syntactic structure of metaphorical predication could act as a paradigm for literary interpretation, Ricoeur succeeded in reconciling the (formal) syntactic and (individual) semantic aspects of language. As noted in Chapter 1, this was the point where Schleiermacher's 'universal' hermeneutics began to fray. In extending his 'tensional' theory of metaphor to literary works, on the basis of a shared ontological strategy, Ricoeur proved that a discourse-based study could simultaneously assess the different internal and external facets of language. His future hermeneutical studies would likewise employ an approach in which objective elements of discourse were considered in relation to reader reception.

Importantly, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics" also bridged Ricoeur's theoretical and exegetical explorations of metaphor. By broadening the significance of the interaction theory to include literary works, this study paved

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[33] Ibid., p. 100.
[34] Chapters 7 and 8 consider the extent to which Ricoeur's studies of discourse and narrative (from the 1970s and 1980s) are underpinned by a foundational belief that semantic innovation is the basis for poetic language.
[35] Pellauer, 2014, p. 118.

the way for his exegetical examinations of poetic language. As Pellauer notes, Ricoeur's later studies on metaphor would be less centred on metaphor as such, and more concerned with the creative capacity of text to generate meaning. In particular, he would look to identify the hallmarks of semantic innovation in specific forms of poetic discourse:

> The next step in Ricoeur's exploration of language as discourse, therefore, was to turn to this idea of extended discourse, where such extended discourse may carry the re-descriptive capacity found in a live metaphor. Most discourse in fact is plurivocal (not univocal), but not for all that unintelligible... But, [the fact] that there may always be a contextual factor to consider is not what is most important about what Ricoeur says about discourse… What is important for understanding the fullness of meaningful discourse is that the forms of extended discourse can be catalogued in terms of different *genre* or types of extended discourse. Hence, a theory of discourse needs to attend to these different forms and what accounts for their specificity as a form of discourse.[36]

In the concluding remarks of "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics", Ricoeur affirms Pellauer's observations and suggests that his future work would no longer be limited to the metaphorical trope. Rather, he would look to explore how metaphorical explication (i.e. semantic innovation) is utilised within a myriad of works and forms as a means of generating novel interpretations:

> If we are right, we may now say something about the power of metaphor. I say here the "power", and no longer the "structure", no longer even the "process of metaphors"… Could we not say that the feature of metaphor that we put above all other features – its nascent and emerging character – is related to the function of poetry as a creative imitation of reality? Why should we invent novel meanings, meanings which exist only in the instance of discourse, if it were not for the sake of the *poiesis* in the *mimesis*?[37]

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[36] Ibid., p. 119.
[37] Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 109.

Part 2: Biblical Hermeneutics

A year after the release of "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics", Ricoeur published a major (120 page) study entitled "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a). This initiated a new phase in his research, in which he sought to gauge the implications of 'general' metaphorical theory to a 'particular' hermeneutics (namely, biblical hermeneutics). In a break from his earlier publications on metaphor, he also looked to explore if and how contemporary metaphorical theory could contribute to the exegetical study of the Bible. Indeed, the broader significance of this publication lay in that it was the first practical test of Ricoeur's own 'general-regional' hermeneutical vision, in which the philosophical study of discourse would inform, and be informed by, particular acts of interpretation.

Before considering the particularities of the 1975 study itself, it is important to ask why, of all the forms of textual discourse, biblical (and particularly New Testament) writings were selected. In his 1981 publication "Paul Ricoeur and the Specificity of Religious Language", Pellauer suggests that the transition from his embryonic understanding of metaphor and poetic language to the study of biblical discourse was a logical one.

To recall from Part 1 of the chapter, the term 'poetic language' was used by Ricoeur to delineate any form of discourse that, in contrast to 'ordinary' and 'scientific' language, utilises semantic innovation to promote new meaning. Rather than being a 'form' of discourse in itself, poetic language was used as an umbrella term that encompasses a number of individual text-based forms (such as biblical discourse).[38] In order to explore the exegetical implication of contemporary metaphorical theory for poetic language, a singular literary "test-case" was

[38] Pellauer, 1981, p. 277: "[Poetic language] is how we discover and become who we are beyond the critique of the ego initiated by the hermeneutics of suspicion. So poetic language is not itself a genre. Rather it is a way of characterizing the overall functioning of every literary genre. It is "the power of making the redescription of reality correspond with the power of bringing the fictions of the imagination to speech," where fiction is "the privileged path to the redescription of reality."

required.[39] Biblical discourse was seen as an ideal choice in this respect, as it exemplified for Ricoeur many of the characteristics of poetic language:

> The metaphoric process, we have said, is based on a tension interpretation that leads to a semantic innovation. In particular, it leads to a split reference that redescribes reality. On the level of extended forms of religious discourse or texts, this process may be seen as operating analogously to open the closure of the narrative form toward the world of the text-and beyond it toward God-by means of the tension introduced into our vision of reality. Hence there is a kind of double opening at work here that affects both poles of our subject-object model for organizing and interpreting our experience. On the object side, religious language points to the world of the text and beyond it to God. On the subject side, it points to our limit-experiences in and through this world. Religious language, in other words, represents an intensification of the metaphorical process that takes it to its limit, whether it be a matter of our limit-experiences or their wholly other limit-referent.[40]

As Pellauer here observes, biblical discourse is as much an 'exemplar' of poetic language for Ricoeur as it is an example of it. Not only do biblical texts communicate through a heuristic framework, as is the case with all poetic forms, but their capacity to affect the ontological world-view of readers has been well established over the centuries. From this vantage point, biblical discourse provides philosophical hermeneutics with a means of extending, or expanding, its initial understanding of the metaphorical function. In particular, it illustrates how poetic language looks beyond familiar objects or events and seeks to *refigure* our integrated understanding of the social and natural world.[41]

Metaphor and Parable

The stated aim of "Biblical Hermeneutics" was to demonstrate that certain biblical works – namely, the New Testament parables – are "the conjunction of a

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[39] The term "test-case" derives from David Tracy's 1978a publication, "Metaphor and Religion: The Test Case of Christian Texts", and is not used in Pellauer's 1981 study. Pellauer, however, echoes Tracy's belief that religious discourse provides a practical example of symbolic language. (Pellauer, 1981, pp. 264-269.)
[40] Pellauer, 1981, 277.
[41] Ibid., 278.

narrative and metaphorical process".[42] This highly specific focus gave Ricoeur the scope to explore the role of 'semantic innovation' in biblical textuality. It was perhaps also assumed that it would shed light on the ontological function of poetic language as a whole. In this respect, his study was structured in three parts: "The Narrative Form", "The Metaphorical Process" and "The Specificity of Religious Language".

Part 1 employed a structuralist analysis to establish the extent to which the New Testament parables differ from other forms of narrative, such as folktales. This discussion highlighted that, while parables are indeed examples of poetic language,[43] they have distinctive properties. Notably, they place an emphasis on "why" events occur as they do within the narrative. This contrasts with other literary forms which tend to be driven by the need to know what happens next (i.e. the sequential development of events):

> The temporal structure [of parables] is ruled by the "plot," particularly by a kind of *causality* which overcomes the mere chronological succession of events. We do not ask "And then?" but "Why? ... In this sense the story as told is the "surface" of the text and the combination between the two structures [comedy and tragedy] rules the "deeper structures" of the text.[44]

Despite Ricoeur's claim at the outset that there exists a close affiliation between metaphors and parables, Part 2 of his study warns against the "hasty transposition from a theory of metaphor to parabolic discourse".[45] He instead suggests that, while the biblical parables exhibit "metaphor-like qualities", one must not immediately conclude that they are simply "extended" or "expanded" metaphors. Indeed, to accurately assess the potential implications of contemporary metaphorical theory for biblical exegesis, one must begin by noting the key distinctions between parables and sentence-level metaphors.

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[42] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 30.
[43] Ibid., p. 37. In *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension,* Via describes parables as autonomous, fictional works: "[Parables are] an organically and inwardly unified form that keeps the beholder's attention moving from one part of the work to another and not to the outside." (Via, 1967, p. 76.)
[44] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 38.
[45] Ibid., p. 93.

The first of these that Ricoeur focuses on pertains to the temporal limitations of metaphors. It was earlier established that, as transient events of discourse, metaphors rely on an "active" semantic clash between literal and figurative interpretations. When metaphors become overly familiar, they "become trivial and die as metaphors".[46] Ricoeur therefore reasoned that, if the parables were simply long metaphors, we would have expected the same fate to have befallen them long ago. They have, after all, been retold over thousands of years with little to no variation, and are often intimately familiar to the biblical reader. An interesting characteristic of the parables, however, is that they resist this natural transition towards triviality (or, as we shall call it here, 'ossification') that befalls traditional metaphors.

Ricoeur initially suggested that this may be because the parables rely on a different mode of metaphorical 'tension' to the (subject-copula-complement) metaphorical trope. Comparatively speaking, the semantic tension of traditional metaphorical sentences is easily identifiable. As we know what words mean, one is able to judge when their accepted meaning (or 'sense') is being "twisted":[47]

> Metaphors – as tension metaphors – have an instantaneous existence. They last as long as the semantic clash is perceived between the words… It seems that according to the theory of tension, *traditional* figurative stories should be dead metaphors. Of course this may be the case. Nevertheless, they do not seem to die in the same way… They seem to rely on some other kind of "tension" than the tenor/vehicle tension of Richards and others.[48]

Unlike traditional metaphors, parables do not rely on subverting the established denotations of individual lexical terms: "The parable displays none of the tension described above. We cannot say that in a parable some words are taken literally and some metaphorically. On the contrary, the whole narrative is told at the level of ordinary life events."[49] Indeed, as narratives, they do not have a predetermined

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[46] Ibid., p. 93.
[47] Ibid., p. 76.
[48] Ibid., p. 93.
[49] Ibid., p. 93.

'sense' assigned to them at all, and yet they succeed in being semantically innovative.

A key observation was therefore that, while the parables employ conventional (or non-metaphorical) language in terms of literal and figurative speech, they find a way to challenge the reader's ontological outlook nonetheless through elements of their literary structure.[50] In Part 2 of "Biblical Hermeneutics", Ricoeur identified three distinct 'strategies' that the parables use to generate, and maintain, their innovative semantic function.

Paradox and Hyperbole

Citing research on the 'proverbial formulae' from the 1960s and 1970s,[51] Ricoeur found that the metaphorical tension of the parables is firstly tied to how their vision of the world differs from that of the reader. As with other biblical forms, such as proverbs, parables utilise a schema of "re-orientation by disorientation", where the inclusion of the "unfathomable" suspends the logic of the narrative and elicits new ways of interpreting reality.[52] This conforms to the outlook of the biblical scholar J.D. Crossan, who suggests that the world-view from which the reader comes to a parable is first shattered by the narrative and then reformed.[53]

For both Crossan and Ricoeur, the parable's ability to "shatter" world-views is closely tied to its use of contradiction. By presenting a sequence of incompatible assertions and intimations, parables succeed in subverting the expectations of the

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[50] Ibid., p. 95: "This is the kind of tension which can be found in the parables which offer no inner tension between tenor and vehicle because of the normalcy of the narrative and little tension between literal and metaphorical interpretation of the message itself. The "tension" is entirely on the side of the vision of reality between the insight displayed by the fiction and our ordinary way of looking at things."

[51] Much of Ricoeur's analysis of the New Testament parables builds upon the foundational studies of R.W. Funk (1966), N. Perrin (1967), D.O. Via (1967), and J.D. Crossan (1973). Specifically, Ricoeur seeks to demonstrate that these earlier explorations of the semantic structure of biblical forms (e.g. proverbs) can be applied to the study of the parables. See: Ricoeur, 1975a, pp. 112-122.

[52] The term "re-orientation by disorientation" is found in Ricoeur's 1975a (p. 114); however, he attributes the notion to the 1966 study of R. Funk.

[53] Crossan, 1973, p. 76.

reader. An initial example of this can be found in the, so-called, 'kingdom of God' parables, where the "plain and trivial" language, characters and contexts are wholly at odds with the weighty introductory phrase, 'The kingdom of God is like…': "On the one hand, these stories are – as a critic said – narratives of normalcy – but on the other hand, it is the kingdom of God that is said to be like this. The paradox is that the *extraordinary* is *like* the *ordinary*."[54] This mixing of contrasting expectations creates a sense of "oddness" that, as with traditional metaphors, functions to destabilise the reader: "I call [it] the extravagance of the narrative because the presence of the extraordinary within the ordinary makes the structure itself unstable and even inconsistent."[55]

What Ricoeur terms the "extravagant" structure of the parables is, however, not limited to the mixing of (ordinary) language and (extra-ordinary) literary context. Within the plots themselves, we observe the repeated use of paradox and hyperbole, where unrealistic actions are incorporated into narratives typified by their staunch realism. In, for instance, the *Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen*, the *Parable of the Great Feast* and the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*, the outlandish or eccentric behaviour of the characters jars with "the superbly peaceful action of the narrative":[56]

> Consider the extravagance of the landlord…who after having sent his servants, sends his son….Or what can be said about the host…who looks for substitute guests in the streets? Would we not say that was unusual? And in the "Parable of the Prodigal Son," does not the father overstep all bounds in greeting his son?[57]

The *Parables of Growth* present a similar exaggerated (or "hyperbolic") sequencing of events. In this collection of narratives, however, these are found in the odd behaviour of the natural world. In the *Parable of the Leaven*, for instance, a small amount of leaven yields an unrealistic amount of flour, while within *The Parable of*

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[54] Ricoeur, 1995e, p. 239.
[55] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 99.
[56] Ibid., p. 118.
[57] Ibid., p. 115.

the Sower huge trees grow from small seeds, and plants multiply exponentially. Ricoeur observes that the hyperbole of these parables operates in a similar manner to the *Kingdom of God* parables: "The *Parables of Growth* are no less implausible... If [*The Parable of the Grower*] points to eschatological plenitude, it is because the yield of grain in the story surpasses by far all reality."[58]

It can thus be said that, in one form or another, all parables describe exaggerated events that clash with the reader's own experiences of the social and natural world. Though not operating on a lexical level, these works nonetheless employ a metaphorical schema whereby absurd formulations provoke a re-examination of the subject-matter.[59] Along the lines of Beardsley's two earlier studies of the Proverbs, Ricoeur concluded that the use of biblical hyperbole leads to an "intensification" of the customary metaphorical process:[60] "Here… it is not so much the metaphorical function as such which constitutes religious language as it is a certain intensification of the metaphorical function…".

Limit-Expressions

It should lastly be noted that scripture's extravagant and hyperbolic language was seen to have a specific function within biblical textuality; namely, it presents to the reader a world "without limits". For Ricoeur, the exaggerated textual world described by the parables initiates a process of "orient-disorient-reorient" in the reader, whereby they are motivated "to call into question" their personal beliefs

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[58] Ibid., p. 116.

[59] Ibid., p. 103: "Parables are stories given as fictions. But what they *mean* is the same: the course of ordinary life is broken, the surprise bursts out. The unexpected happens; the audience is questioned and brought to think about the unthinkable."

[60] Ibid., pp. 107-119: Ricoeur attributes the notion of an "intensified" metaphorical process operating within specific forms of religious writing (namely, proverbs) to earlier studies by Beardsley and N. Perrin. In "Biblical Hermeneutics", he argues that this notion can be extended to include narrative forms within the Bible, such as the parables: "The sort of internal subversion which affects the apocalyptic sayings can perhaps be further clarified if we bring them together with a comparable phenomenon which we can see at work in the proverbial sayings. I mean that trait which William A. Beardsley (1970a, 1970b) has emphasized, and whose conclusions Norman Perrin has used in his own work. Beardsley calls this trait "intensification" and I want to place it in relation to the preceding trait of surpassing the traditional eschatological framework in the proclamatory sayings." (Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 112.)

and perceptions.[61] His study further found that 'limit-language' is common to a variety of biblical genres (such as proverbs, eschatological sayings and parables) and could, as such, be seen as a defining feature of biblical discourse.

This heuristic function of scripture is clearly distinct from other instructional forms of discourse. Rather than providing set prescriptions on how to live, as is the case with legal or political discourse for instance, the Bible's exaggerated language and plot sequences function to expand the limits of one's existential beliefs (rather than simply transmit established ones).[62] In this respect, the ability of biblical textuality to challenge human experiences and perceptions differentiates it from other forms of discourse:[63]

> What religious language does is to *redescribe*; what it redescribes is human experience. In this sense we must say that the ultimate referent of the parables, proverbs, and eschatological sayings is not the Kingdom of God, but human reality in its wholeness… This is where the unshakeable truth of the existential interpretation of the New Testament lies. Religious language discloses the religious dimension of common human experience.[64]

Part 3: Implications for Biblical Studies

An initial assessment of the implications of Ricoeur's study of metaphorical language in the Bible came from the notable Roman Catholic theologian David Tracy (1978a). It is important to note that, during the period in question, Tracy was a colleague of Ricoeur at the University of Chicago Divinity School.[65] What's more, his critique of Ricoeur's "Biblical Hermeneutics", entitled "Metaphor and Religion: The Test Case of Christian Texts", was presented at the same 1978 symposium as Ricoeur's fifth and final study of metaphor ("The Metaphorical

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[61] Ibid., pp. 126.
[62] Ibid., p. 123: "As we have seen, the logical force of Jesus' words was not so much to recommend a sort of conduct as to use an already constituted language in order to take it to its limits."
[63] Ibid., p. 118. Ricoeur puts forward that the explication of experience, via extravagant language, "transforms" the narratives from the "poetics of the parables to the poetics of faith".
[64] Ibid., pp. 127-128.
[65] Tracy's and Ricoeur's tenure at the University of Chicago overlapped between 1970 and 1985.

Process of Cognition, Imagination and Feeling").[66] In this work, Tracy offers an appraisal of recent advancements in the study of symbolic language and makes clear that his own vision of biblical metaphors is congenial to, if not dependent on, Ricoeur's 'tensional' understanding.

He begins his study by explaining how Ricoeur's recent focus on the metaphoricity of biblical discourse had fulfilled a long-standing need in biblical hermeneutics. Indeed, despite the abundance of metaphors within biblical language, they had attracted comparatively little attention over the centuries. This, he postulated, was because biblical scholarship prior to the 1960s tended to accept Aristotle's rhetorical explanation that metaphors were simply "decorative substitutions" that did not greatly alter the semantic value of the text. In this respect, the metaphorical interpretation of scripture put forward by Ricoeur, Crossan *et al.* offered a viable alternative to the now defunct rhetorical model:

> If metaphors are purely and simply defined as decorative substitutions for real, literal, ideational meanings, then the relative lack of concern among many theologians with most biblical metaphors for God is completely justified. If, however, metaphors are more properly understood to function by means of some theory of tension or interaction (on the three levels of the word, the phrase, and the text), the move to replace these decorative images with concepts seems a precipitate one.[67]

While Tracy's study was chiefly concerned with how isolated metaphors operate 'intertextually' throughout the Bible, he credited Ricoeur with setting the basic groundwork for all future studies of the parables by identifying, through his metaphorical "theory of tension or interaction", the central symbolic function of biblical language.[68] For Tracy, Ricoeur's study of "narrative metaphors" *qua*

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[66] Both Tracy's and Ricoeur's papers were initially given at the symposium "Metaphor: The Conceptual Leap", held at the University of Chicago in February 1978. Both texts were published later that year in a special edition of *Critical Enquiry* (vol. 5), and the S. Sacks (editor) compilation: *On Metaphor*. In this thesis, the *Critical Enquiry* editions are principally cited (i.e. Ricoeur, 1978b and Tracy, 1978a).

[67] Tracy, 1978a, p. 95

[68] Ibid., p. 101. This sentiment is echoed almost two decades later by I.H. Jones (1995), who suggests that, in the wake of Ricoeur's 1970s studies, all later explorations of the biblical parables would incorporate Ricoeur's findings concerning both the metaphoricity of the parables and its

parables was deemed "the most developed position to date", in that it highlighted a number of important implications for the study of, what he terms, 'biblical metaphors'.[69] These can be summarised as follows:

1. The parabolic form was shown by Ricoeur to be a conflation of metaphors and narratives.

2. This illuminated the extent to which parables (as well as other biblical genres) rely on semantic innovation.

3. From a reception standpoint, we better understanding the "heuristic" function of biblical texts, whereby the reader is mandated to discover the biblical message for themselves. As such, the parables can now be classified as "heuristic fictions" due to their capacity to *re-describe* reality.

4. It is now accepted that specific biblical forms (namely, the New Testament parables and proverbs) promote new possibilities for being-in-the-world through the use of "limit language".

5. In the parables, this language takes the form of extravagant and hyperbolic explication, which is tactically employed to illustrate how a religious interpretation of the world differs from a secular one.[70]

The true value of Tracy's study is that it places Ricoeur's contributions within the rich collaborative context of the time. As concerns the term "limit-language", for instance, Tracy demonstrates that Ricoeur appropriated the basic theoretical understanding from Beardsley and Crossan with a view to applying it to other (biblical and non-biblical) discursive forms. Thus, Ricoeur was able to present biblical texts as just one example of poetic language and, therefore, bring into question the belief that limit-language is exclusive to biblical discourse.

> The question recurs: Is there a specifically religious and theological use of metaphor? If one's substantive definition of religion includes an insistence upon the limiting character of all religious language, and one's definition of

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relation to the narrative form: "For the study of the parable the definition of metaphor is of central importance. Almost all main interpretations of parables begin with a study of metaphor and the relation of metaphor to narrative, asking how metaphor and narrative relate to reality." (Jones, 1995, p. 64.)

[69] Tracy, 1978a, p. 99.

[70] Ibid., pp. 99-101.

> theology includes an insistence upon the second-order, reflective, and conceptual character of all properly theological language, then the theologian's problem becomes more clearly defined.[71]

Tracy's early critique was therefore pivotal to highlighting how Ricoeur's 1975 *Semeia* study brought to light the central role of limit-language in the Bible (and possibly, more widely, in poetic works). As he notes, the concept of "religious-as-limit" had long been part of post-Kantian biblical hermeneutics,[72] with theorists in the 19th and 20th centuries in particular arguing that the juxtaposition between common human experiences and the boundlessness of religious truth underpins all theological understanding.[73] Ricoeur had however gone one step further. By focusing on the semantic structure of biblical textuality, he established that limit-language was not only a systematic theological construct but, rather, a constitutive element of religious discourse.[74]

As importantly, Ricoeur work showed that limit-language is not restricted to one biblical genre. In grounding his studies of the parables in Beardsley's earlier work on proverbs, Ricoeur established that it is part of an integrated *metaphorical* strategy operating throughout the Bible. For both Tracy and the wider scholarly community, this proved that limit-language was a common thread running through the Bible:

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[71] Ibid., pp. 95; 100-101.

[72] Ibid., p. 94. Tracy considers how the contrast between ordinary and religious experience features in the 19th century outlooks of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard, and in the early 20th century thought of Tillich, Jaspers and Marcel.

[73] Ibid., p. 94-95: "In any of the traditions, the analysis yields a description of *a* distinguishing characteristic of a religious dimension, an experience and language indicative of some specific *limit* to our common, ordinary experience and language. The religious dimension is most clearly recognized in such limit experience as (negatively) anxiety or (positively) fundamental trust in the very worthlessness of our existence."

[74] Ibid. pp. 100-102. This observation was made in the same year by Pellauer: "Religious discourse uses already constituted and available language but takes it to its limit through an intensification of the metaphorical process. There it, so to speak, bursts or shatters in pointing to something that will always remain a mystery for us. The paradigm of this process may be seen in the parables... They refer to the extravagance of the extraordinary in the ordinary. More precisely, their use of the symbol Kingdom of God breaks the system of cosmic correspondences that characterizes the sacred universe. Yet, at the same time, these correspondences retain the functions of the numinous while breaking away from it, thereby confirming that every 'new language is also the reemployment of an ancient symbolism'." (Pellauer, 1978, pp. 278-279.)

> The religious use of the parable form may be stated, in general terms, as in keeping with that limit use of all language proper to its religious use... These extravagant actions in these realistic narratives are, in fact, disorienting to the reader. Yet, the strategy of disorientation may serve the function of reorienting the reader by disclosing a religious possibility: a way of being-in-the-world not based on the ethics of justice and merit but of… "pure unbound love". The phrase "The kingdom of God is like..." performs a similar limit function by serving as a radical qualifier upon the whole model (the kingdom of God). That qualifier radicalizes the model (i.e., the metaphor mediated through the narrative) and relates the entire parable to the similarly radicalized possibilities expressed in the proverbs of Jesus, his proclamatory sayings, and his deeds.[75]

Conclusion

From Tracy, therefore, we glean the first major implications of Ricoeur's metaphorical studies for a 'regional' hermeneutics. By establishing that biblical literary forms such as the parables are patently metaphorical (in that their unconventional description of the familiar leads to the re-evaluation of entrenched beliefs), Ricoeur provided the foundation for an *integrated* (or intertextual) analysis of the different biblical sub-forms. Importantly, he also uncovered that biblical metaphors differ from traditional metaphors in that they rely on ordinary (rather than symbolic) language.

From a 'general' hermeneutical standpoint, the application of his tensional theory of metaphor helped to debunk the notion that the metaphorical 'subject' must be one and the same as the syntactic subject. Because they operate on a compositional level, "extended metaphors" (such as the parables) look to refigure the "common human experience" at the centre of the narrative.[76] As regards this central difference between extended-metaphors (*qua* narratives) and the traditional

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[75] Tracy, 1978a, p. 100.

[76] Though Ricoeur consistently uses the term "redescription" in his 1975a publication, his later works tend to favour the term "refiguration". He argues that this new term better accentuates the "novelty" of the meaning being created. See: Ricoeur, 1995b, p. 235.

metaphorical trope, Ricoeur also uncovered that the parables represent a new and "distinctive class of the metaphorical process":[77]

> [With parables] the bearers of the metaphor are not the individual sentences of the narratives, but the whole structure, the narratives as a whole… This explains why there is no tension between some words taken literally and some other words taken metaphorically, but how the figurative function is assumed by the narrative as such, and how the tension then obtains between the scene and everyday life and reality.[78]

"Biblical Hermeneutics" began with the question: "What do we mean when we say that in parables the narrative needs to be taken metaphorically and not literarily?"[79] To answer this, Ricoeur's study evolved in two directions. On the one hand, it assessed how 20th century metaphorical theory can enhance the understanding of specific biblical literary genres (such as parables). This *exegetical* component of his work provided biblical scholarship with a theoretical framework with which to conduct future exploration of the role of extravagant language and limit-expressions.

It is, however, the second focus that more closely impacts the concerns driving this thesis. By demonstrating that a philosophical theory of language (in this case metaphorical theory) can be enriched through its application to a particular form of discourse, he proved the basic viability of a 'general-regional' hermeneutical approach. In this respect, his 1975 publication "Biblical Hermeneutics" belongs neither to his 'general' study of metaphor, nor his biblical (exegetical) body of work. Rather, it should be seen as a ground-breaking interdisciplinary experiment that successfully brought together philosophical theory and regional exegesis. In the following chapter, we explore two branches of hermeneutical research that ensued from Ricoeur's ambitious exploration of biblical metaphors.

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[77] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 94. For Ricoeur, this "class" is characterised by "narrative inconsistency" or "transgression" that breaks up its sense (Ricoeur, 1975a, pp. 99, 107-109). This, in turn, allows the parable's metaphorical function to operate on a discursive rather than rhetorical level (Ibid., p. 75.). See Apczynski (1982, pp. 63-64) for further discussion.
[78] Ricoeur, 1975a, pp. 94-95.
[79] Ibid., p. 75.

Chapter 7:

Models and Narrative

Ricoeur's 1975 publication "Biblical Hermeneutics" did not only impact biblical scholarship in the years immediately following its publication, but had significant implications for the 'general' study of symbolic language. In applying his tensional theory of metaphor to the New Testament parables, Ricoeur confirmed Beardsley's assumption that the defining characteristic of metaphors was 'semantic innovation', and that metaphors could be up-scaled, so to speak, from a sentence level trope to a literary composition. Due to their ability to employ semantic innovation as a means of challenging fossilised beliefs, narratives came to be viewed as "extended metaphors".[1]

Indeed, much of Ricoeur's later work in the 1970s and 1980s would proceed from the belief that all symbolic discourse shared an ability to affect the reader's outlook through a metaphorical "twist" in language. As articulated by T. Oldenhage (2002), "Biblical Hermeneutics… is an expert hermeneut's effort at theoretically grounding the American endeavour and elevating the notion of the parable as metaphor to a sophisticated level."[2]

While for some it may seem problematic to equate narratives to sentence-metaphors, it is consistent with Ricoeur's understanding of discourse. In his 1976 publication *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Ricoeur endorses E. Benveniste's "hierarchical" understanding of language, in which sentences are seen to be on a *higher* discursive level than words, but on *a par* with longer segments of discourse, such as narratives. Let us consider these two ideas in turn.

Because sentences operate on a semantic, rather than purely semiotic level, they are clearly distinct from words. In effect, words are just signs denoting an object. Sentences,

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[1] As with sentence-level metaphors, Ricoeur held that literary constructions have a "denotative or referential dimension… [that has] the power to redefine reality". (Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 75.) For detailed discussion of Ricoeur's understanding of narratives as "extended metaphors", see Pellauer, 2014.
[2] Oldenhage, 2002, p. 4.

on the other hand, "say something *about* something" and are therefore defined by their predicative function. From this perspective, a sentence is a complete, albeit rudimentary, unit of discourse: "The sentence is not a larger or more complex word, it is a new entity… It is made up of words, but it is not a derivative function of words. A sentence is made up of signs, but it is not itself a sign."[3]

Though Ricoeur notes that there are longer or more "complex" semantic constructions than sentences (such as narratives), from a discursive standpoint they are all the same "species", as they convey meaning through their predication. If we are to see sentences as the smallest unit of discourse, narratives are constructions formed of these same building blocks:

> Considered from the point of view of the propositional content, the sentence may be characterised by a single distinctive trait: it has a predicate. As Benveniste observes, even the grammatical subject might be lacking, but not the predicate. There are not several kinds of predicate… there is just one kind of linguistic utterance, the proposition, which constitutes one class of distinctive unit. Consequently, there is no unit of a higher order that can provide a generic class for the sentence conceived as a species. It is possible to connect propositions according to concatenation [i.e. linking them], but not to integrate them.[4]

It was on the basis of this foundational understanding of discourse that Ricoeur equated the semantic innovation of sentence-metaphors with the novel, "earth-shattering" capacity of the biblical parables. For him, both relied on 'impertinent predication' to transmit new ontological possibilities to the reader.

Scholars often cite the identification of the unusual (i.e. "impertinent") predicative function found in all symbolic language as a key contribution of Ricoeur's metaphorical studies. [5] Importantly, however, Ricoeur's analyses also uncovered key differences between traditional (sentence level) metaphors and extended (narrative) metaphors. Namely, he observed that some narratives (i.e. the New Testament parables) appeared unconstrained by the temporal limitations normally associated with sentence metaphors.

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[3] Ricoeur, 1976, p. 7.
[4] Ibid., p. 10.
[5] See: Kearney, 1988, pp. 118-120; Oldenhage, 2002, pp. 117-119. Kaplan, 2003, p. 50.

In the previous chapter, we observed that the ability of a metaphorical sentence to generate radical interpretations diminishes (or "dies") over time. This, it was suggested, is due to a natural process of ossification, where repeated use of a metaphor leads to its meaning becoming established within the normal semantic range of a given language. In effect, as a metaphor becomes incorporated into everyday speech, its ability to produce a 'semantic clash' dwindles. At this point, it ceases to be a powerful semantic tool and is reduced to a simple ornamental substitution for a routine declaration.

This phenomenon can be observed in most familiar idiomatic expressions, such as "once in a blue moon". If at one point this construction was a novel or "living" metaphor, which led to the ontological refiguring of one's perceptions, this is no longer the case. As the expression became more accepted within conventional speech, its interpretive range was correspondingly reduced. Thus, through repetition and familiarity, what was once a jarring linguistic construction became a simple monosemic expression denoting a rare event.

By applying his 'tensional' understanding of metaphor to biblical discourse, Ricoeur came to realise that the parables – as "extended metaphors" – did not appear to have these *temporal* limitations. For whatever reason, these narrative metaphors resist the semantic reduction (or ossification)[6] occurring with metaphors at the sentence-level. Indeed, in terms of their ontological influence, the parables seemed, on the surface, to respond quite differently to repetition and familiarity:

> It seems that according to the theory of tension, traditional figurative stories should be dead metaphors. Of course this may be the case. Nevertheless, they do not seem to die in the same way, or at least as soon as might be expected on the basis of this theory. Therefore they seem to rely on some other kind of "tension" than the tenor/vehicle tension of Richards and others.[7]

In "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a), Ricoeur did not offer a clear determination on whether the increased semantic longevity of the parables was due to them being

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[6] Ricoeur himself did not use the term "ossification" in his publications, but it does appear an apt demarcation for the reduction in semantic range that he had identified.
[7] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 93.

narratives, or to the religious literary context in which they were situated. This became the basis for an important area of research in the years that followed; numerous scholars sought to clarify whether the extended semantic longevity of biblical narrative metaphors is solely a characteristic of religious discourse or, alternatively, is common to all metaphorical constructions.

Indeed, this question became the basis for two separate lines of enquiry that have continued to the present day.

Part 1: Time and Metaphor

The first approach pursued by scholars – mainly theologians – continued down the disciplinary path laid out by Ricoeur in his *Semeia* publication. They questioned which attributes of biblical textuality, if any, led religious metaphors to having an extended life-span.[8] These scholars looked to assess whether the semantic longevity of the parables could be ascribed to the 'specificity' of religious language or if, indeed, religious metaphors were analogous to the metaphors found in other forms of discourse.[9] The aim of these studies was to provide a more nuanced understanding of how metaphors are employed, with a view to explaining the observed temporal differences between them.

From a methodological standpoint, these studies were broadly similar. They assessed the functional differences between the metaphors used in religious language vis-à-vis other forms of discourse (particularly, scientific discourse). I. Barbour's publications on the diverse models of interpretation used in science and religion were seen as a valuable resource in this respect, and had a significant impact on the theorists that followed.

[8] There have been some explorations of how Ricoeur's understanding of contemporary readings of the Bible compares to K. Barth's notion of "contingent contemporaneity". Wallace's text *The Second Naiveté: Barth, Ricoeur and the New Yale Theology* offers the most detailed comparison of Ricoeur's and Barth's respective theological hermeneutics, whilst considering the points of convergence between Ricoeur's "discourse analysis" and Barth's dogmatic outlook. (Wallace, 1990, pp. 1-85.)

[9] The term "specificity" in relation to religious discourse features prominently throughout Ricoeur's corpus of the 1970s. In particular, this terminology is used to explain how the divine subject matter (i.e. "God-reference") of biblical texts distinguishes them from other forms of discourse: "We can recognize the specificity of the biblical 'issue'… One of the traits which makes for the specificity of the biblical discourse, as we know it, is the central place of God-reference in it". (Ricoeur, 1974a: pp. 82-83.) See also: Ricoeur 1975a: pp. 107-145; Ricoeur, 1977c: pp. 7, 11; Ricoeur,1979a: pp. 224-227.

However, while Barbour published extensively, both before and during the period in question,[10] there was little to no theoretical exchange with contemporary hermeneutical theorists such as Ricoeur. In this respect, the most pertinent studies were those of J. Soskice, M. Gerhart, D. Tracy and S. McFague. Unlike Barbour's studies, their research evolved in direct response to, and often in dialogue with, Ricoeur's theories of discourse and metaphor.[11]

The theorist whose research perhaps best embodies this regional-hermeneutical line of enquiry is Sally McFague. Along with synthesising many of the theories of metaphor from this rich period, McFague was successful in establishing an influential conceptual framework, known as 'metaphorical theology'.

Sally McFague: Metaphors, Models & Root-Metaphors

McFague's explorations of metaphor are primarily found in three major publications spanning more than a decade: *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (1975); *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (1982), and *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (1987). Within these works, the hallmarks of Ricoeur's hermeneutical understanding of metaphorical language are immediately evident.

Echoing Ricoeur's outlook, McFague asserts that metaphors are not simple poetic or discursive ornamentations. Rather, they are words or phrases that are "used

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[10] Barbour's 1966, 1974 and 1990 works consider the relationship between scientific and religious metaphors. For further discussion on the relationship between Barbour's metaphorical studies and other theorists of the 1980s and 1990s see: Russell, 2017.

[11] The suggestion that Soskice (1985) is markedly influenced by Ricoeur's metaphorical publications of the 1970s appears initially incongruous, due to Soskice's outright rejection of his founding principles of metaphorical language and, above all, his understanding of the "split reference" (Soskice, 1985, pp. 84-90). Furthermore, as noted by Gerhart, Soskice's overarching views deviate from that of many contemporary philosophers, such as Ricoeur, in that she primarily understands metaphorical language to have a practical (rather than ontological) function. "[Soskice] does not perceive the literalizing effect of her own reduction of metaphor to model. In other words, by relinquishing the function of metaphor to create new meaning, Soskice sacrifices the distinctive power of metaphor to renew, to correct, and even occasionally to surpass traditional meaning." (Gerhart, 1988, p. 185) Nonetheless, Soskice's principal text, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, presents itself as a study that both builds upon and challenges many of the tenets put forward by 20th theorists (e.g. Richards, Black, Beardsley and, notably, Ricoeur). It should thus be seen as following a related hermeneutical path to that of Ricoeur.

inappropriately" by design,[12] with a view to producing meaning that cannot be transmitted in any other way.[13] She also sees metaphors as heuristic tools that allow one to explore "the great unknowns", such as mortality, love or religious truth. They accomplish this by presenting "one thing *as* something else, pretending 'this' is 'that' because we don't know how to think or talk about 'this'….".[14]

McFague also stresses the "revolutionary character" of metaphor. Through their process of revealing similarity between two wholly dissimilar objects, metaphors are both shocking and provocative: "Metaphors are imaginative leaps across a distance – the best metaphors always giving both shock and a shock of recognition…".[15] Like Ricoeur, she sees this destabilising characteristic to be best exemplified by religious metaphors and, specifically, the New Testament parables:

> Good metaphors shock, they bring unlikes together, they upset conventions, they involve tension, and they are implicitly revolutionary. The parables of Jesus are typically metaphorical in this regard, for they bring together dissimilars (lost coins, wayward children, buried treasure, and tardy labourers with the kingdom of God); they shock and disturb; they upset conventions and expectations and in so doing have a revolutionary potential.[16]

While we shall observe that there are appreciable differences between Ricoeur's and McFague's treatment of metaphor, it is clear that her metaphorical understanding builds upon the 'tensional' framework laid out by Ricoeur in his studies. As highlighted by Stiver (2012), McFague's research proceeds from the core belief that metaphors have the capacity to refigure one's entire world-view precisely because they allow polysemic interpretations to take root: "Sallie McFague took Ricoeur's theory of metaphor and used it for her 'metaphorical theology' where she argued that biblical language should not be read univocally".[17]

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[12] McFague, 1982, p. 15.
[13] McFague, 1987, p. 33: "Increasingly, however, the idea of a metaphor as unsubstitutable is winning acceptance: what a metaphor expresses cannot be said directly or apart from it, for if it could be, one would have said it directly."
[14] McFague, 1982, pp. 15-16.
[15] McFague, 1987, p. 35.
[16] McFague, 1982, p. 17-18.
[17] Stiver, 2012, p. 82.

Where we begin to see a deviation from Ricoeur's hermeneutics is with the notion of metaphorical continuity. Unlike Ricoeur, McFague does not base her philosophy on an elevated understanding of poetic discourse. Indeed, in her eyes, there is no fundamental distinction between poetic discourse and ordinary (or even scientific) discourse. All forms of communication are seen to be innately metaphorical, as a result of humanity's inbuilt "metaphorical sensibility". This is to say that we are naturally predisposed to articulate meaning by identifying similarity amidst variation:

> Actually, it is not the case that anything can be known or thought of directly or literally; rather, we have simply acquired a way of looking at it which is acceptable to us. Even as simple a statement as "this is a chair" means only that I have made a judgement that I will think about this object *as* a chair because there is sufficient similarity between this object and other objects which I have called "chairs" in the past that I believe my assertion is justified… The point to stress, however, is that human thought is of a piece, it is indirect, and it involves judgement.[18]

For McFague, the main difference between religious and ordinary discourse lies in the density of metaphors used. Unlike the sciences, religious discourse simply doesn't function without metaphors. Metaphorical language "provide[s] the explanation of theological concepts, without which the concepts would be empty and unintelligible".[19] What's more, metaphors are the only means by which the transcendental subject matter of religion can be articulated. All discussions of God are by their very nature indirect.[20] Because religion will always be one of the so called "great unknowns", it is only through allusions to what *is* known and understood, that religious truth can be explored: "Metaphor is the way by which we understand as well as enlarge our world and change it – that is, if the only way we have of dealing with the unfamiliar and new is in terms of the familiar and the old, thinking of 'this' as 'that' although we know the new thing is both like *and* unlike the old."[21] For this reason, and in stark contrast to scientific language, religious discourse is rife with metaphorical constructions.

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[18] McFague, 1982, pp. 16-17.
[19] Ibid., p. 105.
[20] McFague, 1987, p. 34: "No words or phrases refer directly to God, for God-language can refer only through the detour of a description that properly belongs elsewhere."
[21] McFague, 1982, p. 16.

Here, the concept of metaphorical continuity becomes important. While theorists like Ricoeur assume that the excessive use of metaphorical language within religious discourse makes it exceptional to the reader, McFague believes the opposite to be the case. The abundance of metaphors functions to make religious discourse more prosaic, commonplace and, therefore, quintessentially human. Indeed, for McFague, the more discourse is metaphorical, the more closely it corresponds to the way we naturally conceive of, and talk about, the world:

> The primary answer to the question of why religious metaphorical statements are so powerful is that they are in continuity with the way we think ordinarily. We are not usually conscious of the metaphorical character of our thought, of seeing "this" in terms of "that", of finding the thread of similarity amid dissimilars, but it is the only way a child's world is constructed or our worlds expanded and transformed. Of course, there are important differences between ordinary and religious metaphorical statements which we shall fully note, but the first thing is to insist on their continuity.[22]

In the context of the present discussion on metaphorical longevity, McFague's outstanding contribution is to provide a hierarchical understanding of how metaphor is manifest in "the continuum of religious language".[23] In particular, she proposed that there are three distinct types of metaphorical constructions observable in the Bible: *metaphors*, *models* and *root-metaphors*.

Individual (or "common") metaphors conform to the tensional understanding outlined by Ricoeur. They are inappropriate and irreducible segments of discourse that generate an 'is' and 'is not' contradiction. The effectiveness of a metaphor naturally varies depending on if it is "fresh" and "sparks our imagination" or, alternatively, if it is so "enmeshed in convention" that it has lost its shock value.[24] As with Ricoeur, the latter group is defined as "dead" metaphors; likewise, McFague sees the power of a vibrant, or

[22] Ibid., p. 16.
[23] Ibid., p. 23.
[24] McFague, 1987, p. 33.

"living", metaphor to be intrinsically fleeting: "Metaphors are usually the work of an individual, a flash of insight which is often passing."[25]

McFague's second category of metaphorical construction, *models*, are defined as grander or more firmly established metaphors that organise, or structure, common metaphors: "A model is a metaphor that has gained sufficient stability and scope so as to present a pattern for relatively comprehensive and coherent explanation."[26] While models retain the tension arising from the 'is' and 'is not' semantic contradiction, they also exhibit some characteristics found in concepts. This is exemplified by the 'God the father' model, and the role it plays within biblical textuality:

> "God the father" comes readily to mind: it is a metaphor that has become a model. As a model, it not only retains characteristics of metaphor but also reaches towards qualities of conceptual thought. It suggests a comprehensive ordering structure with impressive interpretive potential. As a rich model with many associated commonplaces as well as a host of supporting metaphors, an entire theology can be worked out from this model. Thus, if God is understood on the model of "father", redemption is sacrifice by the "elder son" on behalf of the "brothers and sisters" for the guilt against the "father" and so on.[27]

For McFague, models are therefore understood as broad catchments, that both enclose and synthesise individual metaphors. She arrived at this understanding by examining how models are routinely used within the sciences to organise new insights.[28] Of significance to the present study, she also found that, unlike common metaphors, models resist ossification. This is because they are partially conceptual and, as such, retain their ability to arouse debate and challenge the reader: "A model is a dominant metaphor, a metaphor with staying power."[29] In contrast to common metaphors, models continue to invoke questions of "truth and reference", whilst maintaining their predicative tension. In this way, they resist the movement towards total univocity.[30]

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[25] McFague, 1982, p. 23.
[26] McFague, 1987, p. 34.
[27] McFague, 1982, p. 23.
[28] Ibid., p. 167-174.
[29] Ibid., p. 23.
[30] Ibid., p. 25. In McFague's view, models have a more limited potential range of interpretation in relation to the individual metaphors that they encompass. See also: McFague, 1987, p. 34.

The final metaphorical constructions that McFague identifies are "root-metaphors". While the term was originally introduced in 1942 by S. Pepper, McFague primarily defers to E. R. MacCormac (1976), Tracy (1978) and, indeed, Ricoeur (1976) to explain their significance.[31] A root-metaphor is seen as a founding vision that sets the limits of interpretation for a network of models:[32] "It is a way of seeing 'all that is' through a particular key concept".[33] Inasmuch as models function to organise and synthesise individual metaphors, root-metaphors provide a lens by which to understand all models within a set discourse.

Root-metaphors are particularly important for religious discourse in general, as any religion's overarching vision of reality is grounded in its root-metaphors:[34] "They are our signposts which help us to read our way."[35] Yet, while they offer a lens by which to interpret both models and common metaphors, root-metaphor are highly dependent on the way in which the underlying metaphorical language is itself received:

> Since theological models are hierarchically ordered and interrelated, changes in subordinate models have the potential both of enhancing and of endangering the status of the root metaphor. As Paul Ricoeur says, "Root-metaphors assemble and scatter. They assemble subordinate images together and they scatter concepts at a higher level. They are the dominant metaphors capable of both engendering and organizing a network." The content of a religious tradition, then, is known through its root-metaphor and the subordinate models which support and enrich it.[36]

As pertains to biblical discourse in particular, McFague identifies the 'Kingdom of God' as its root-metaphor. In her view, all models within the two Testaments (including that of

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[31] From MacCormac, McFague takes the basic definition: "A root-metaphor is the most basic assumption about the nature of the world or experience that we can make when we try to give a description of it." (McFague, 1982, p. 28.) See also note 32 below for discussion of McFague's understanding of root-metaphors.

[32] Hainsworth (2012, p. 19) provides a further useful definition of how root-metaphors are understood by McFague: "[A 'root-metaphor' is] an attempt to distil a network of inter-related ideas into one central and controlling metaphorical image, model or concept from which the larger complex of ideas is derived." Hainsworth goes on to illustrate that in McFague's studies the term 'root-metaphors' is interchangeable with other terms used, such as "key-model", "material norm" and "paradigm". For further reading, see: Hainsworth, 2012, pp. 121-132.

[33] McFague, 1982, p. 28.

[34] Tracy, 1978a, p. 106 in McFague, 1982, p. 110.

[35] McFague, 1975, p. 97.

[36] McFague, 1982, p. 110.

'God as Father') point to and bolster the broader issue of how divine and human realities converge. What's more, because the parables of Jesus directly represent the 'Kingdom of God' outlook within the New Testament, the 'Kingdom of God' parables can themselves be seen as ostensive representations of the Christian root-metaphor:

> It has been the contention in this essay that the root-metaphor of Christianity is not God the father but the kingdom or rule of God, a relationship between the divine and the human that no model can encompass. The divine-human relationship, therefore, demands both the limitation of the fatherhood model and the introduction of other models. A theology based in the parables and Jesus as parable does not merely allow many models… but insists on them.[37]

Metaphorical Longevity

Because root-metaphors encompass models, it follows that they should share the same ability to resist ossification and endure over time. While this is certainly the case, McFague goes further and offers a more detailed explanation for the sustained metaphorical longevity of root-metaphors, particularly the Christian root-metaphor, the 'Kingdom of God'.

To this point, we have assumed that models resist ossification purely on the grounds of their *quasi*-conceptual make-up. This is however not exactly the case. For McFague, metaphorical "staying power" is a consequence of the way in which some semantic structures present multiple, or indeterminate, meanings. In effect, if a single denotation cannot be assigned to a metaphor (be it a common metaphor, model or root-metaphor) it will retain its semantic longevity. Models are naturally indeterminate because their composite, "conceptual" structure continues to provoke debate amongst multiple generations of readers. The Kingdom of God parables, on the other hand, have their own characteristic strategy for maintaining indeterminacy.

The first of these strategies pertains to how parables are received by their target audience. From a purely doctrinal standpoint, it is unclear whether the parables should be taken as authoritative texts, open-ended provocative narratives, or both:

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[37] Ibid., p. 145.

> [The parables] are foundational; they are classics; they are a beginning. But if we take seriously the parables of Jesus and Jesus as a parable of God as our starting point and model, then we cannot say that the Bible is absolute or authoritative in any sense except the way that a "classic" text is authoritative: it continues to speak to us.[38]

This interpretive problem, which the parables elicit in the reader, is most clearly explored in McFague's earliest work *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor in Theology* (1975). Here, she notes that, as canonical texts that take the form of personalised narratives, the parables purport to express the compelling vision of reality put forward by their author, Jesus.[39] "In a parable we are, as Perrin says, confronted by Jesus' vision of reality and challenged to decide what we will do about it."[40] Though the reader may expect, and desire, this authoritative 'voice' to provide timeless, unambiguous teaching, the parables belie this expectation. Both in terms of their narrative trajectory and "imagistic language", the parables elicit interpretations that are resolutely polysemic, rather than univocal: "The parables of Jesus cry out for interpretation – not for *one* interpretation, but nonetheless for the answers to the question, 'What does this parable mean?' The richness of imagistic language means that it will always spawn many interpretations."[41]

A parable's capacity to generate polysemic interpretation is owed to two factors. Firstly, all parables are set in "deeply controversial" social contexts. These situations tend to provide conflicting 'logics' with no simple or obvious path to resolution.[42] Being forced to confront such a scenario transforms the reader from a passive observer into an active participant. In this respect, the parabolic form tends to provide more questions than answers: "Implied in parable after parable is the question, "And what do *you* say? What will *you* do?"[43]

The second semantic contradiction occurs at the macro-structural level. While the parables begin by stating that "the Kingdom of God is like…", each parable then proves

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[38] Ibid., p. 19.
[39] McFague, 1975, p. 74.
[40] Ibid, p. 80.
[41] McFague, 1982, p. 22.
[42] McFague, 1975, p. 75.
[43] Ibid., p. 75.

unable to adequately define the notion: "No one parable tells us of 'the kingdom of God' and even all together they do not add up to a definition of the kingdom, to a doctrine or concept of the kingdom."[44] Rather, the meaning of the root-metaphor is diffused throughout the parables, and indeed throughout the profusion of models and individual metaphors that undergird them. We earlier observed that metaphors point to models, and that models in turn point to the root-metaphor in, what appears to be, a typical hierarchical structure. However, the inability of the narratives at the summit of the hierarchy to fully delimit the 'Kingdom of God' root-metaphor functions to reverse the stream of interpretation, directing it back towards the individual models and metaphors within the text.

This brings us to the crux of McFague's outlook. As with models, the 'Kingdom of God' root-metaphor represents a surplus of individual metaphorical constructions, each of which elicits its own polysemic interpretations. Common metaphors can ossify precisely because their meaning can be 'pinned-down', so to speak; both models and root-metaphors, however, are effectively resistant to this fate because of the density of polysemic interpretations that they point to. In short, as metaphorical *catchments*, both models and root-metaphors have an inexhaustible, open-ended, interpretive range.[45]

Part 2: Time and Narrative

The second line of enquiry that sought to explain the temporal differences between metaphorical sentences and biblical narratives did not proceed from an analysis of the different manifestations of metaphorical language. Instead, it shifted the focus to the nature of narrative itself, postulating that while narratives are 'metaphorical' in nature, they have a more nuanced relationship with time. This was the path favoured by Ricoeur himself following his publications of the mid-1970s and, indeed, became the basis for his continued exploration of discourse in the 1980s:

[44] Ibid., p. 43.
[45] McFague, 1982, pp. 19-22.

> *The Rule of Metaphor* is, therefore, best seen as a transitional work between the hermeneutics of texts of the 1970s and the hermeneutics of action of the 1980s… *Time and Narrative* continues to develop on the themes of semantic innovation and the ability of poetic discourse to disclose new ways to see and to be in the world but in a far more thorough and convincing fashion than *The Rule of Metaphor*.[46]

Thus far in the thesis, we have noted that Ricoeur's 1970s hermeneutics broadly endorsed Benveniste's "propositional" understanding of discourse, which assumed that all forms of discourse (be they individual sentences or larger compositions, such as narratives) are fundamentally the same, in so far they convey meaning via predication. Yet, as Ricoeur's hermeneutics became more nuanced, he found that Benveniste's propositional explanation did not sufficiently explain the particularities of the narrative form.[47]

While it stands to reason that discourse on a narrative level is constructed of sentences, and therefore individual propositions, it is also true that the overarching meaning of a narrative often differs from the meaning of any one (or all) of its constituent parts. Despite both metaphors and narratives relying on predication to convey meaning, from an interpretive standpoint they should be viewed quite differently:

> One of the great insights in Ricoeur's philosophy, against analytic philosophy, is that the analysis of extended discourse cannot be reduced to the analysis of a single sentence, or even propositions. He has a very strong notion that logical analysis, as propositional analysis and even conceptual analysis (which is the level of the word), is inadequate to interpret extended discourse. It turns on this notion of in what ways language can be intelligible. Propositional analysis is inadequate to explain the full intelligibility of language. That's something that has not been appropriated enough out of his philosophy of language. Where it goes is what keeps his philosophy alive.[48]

In the years following his publications on metaphor, Ricoeur produced a significant body of work that focused on the particular attributes of the narrative form. This research began with the *Critical Inquiry* article "Narrative Time" (1980), and was followed by the

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[46] Kaplan, 2003, p. 49.
[47] Pellauer, 2013.
[48] Ibid. Please note that this excerpt, taken from the 2013 *Fonds Ricoeur: Paul Ricœur et la philosophie contemporaine de langue anglaise* conference proceedings does not feature in Pellauer later (2014) version, published by *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies*.

famed *Time and Narrative* trilogy.[49] In many respects, these works proceeded from the same basic research question that drove McFague's publications, namely: "is the temporal longevity observed in some extended metaphors *qua* narratives due to their usage within specific forms of discourse (e.g. religious discourse), or is it simply because they are narratives"? In following his own line of enquiry, Ricoeur succeeded in identifying a number of important attributes that distinguish narratives from metaphors.

Ricoeur's study of narrative focused on the relationship between the narrative form and time. He initially adopted from the theorist L.O. Mink the belief that narratives are made up of two core semantic elements, one interior and one exterior. The interior semantic structure of a narrative is comprised of individual episodes that are recounted to the reader. These exist outside of time, as the episodes are presented in isolation from the other events in the narrative.

The external structure of a narrative is, on the other hand, defined by its *emplotment*. This is created when the narrative's different episodes are positioned (by the author) into a logical, linear sequence. Unlike the episodic dimension, this "configurational" framework relies on a temporal understanding:

> [A] fundamental trait, which was already implied in my definition of events made into story through plot, may be described as follows: every narrative combines two dimensions in various proportions, one chronological and the other nonchronological. The first may be called the episodic dimensions, which characterizes the story as made up of events. The second is the configurational dimension, according to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events. Here I am borrowing from Louis O. Mink the notion of a configurational act, which he interprets as "grasping together". I understand this act to be the act of the plot, as eliciting a pattern from a succession… The configurational dimension, in turn, displays temporal features that may be opposed to these "features" of episodic time.[50]

In this view, narratives are formed through the mixing of chronological and non-chronological dimensions of time. In effect, a narrative is created through "the basic

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[49] The French editions of the trilogy were published by *Éditions du Seuil* in: 1983 (vol. 1), 1984 (vol. 2) and 1985 (vol. 3).
[50] Ricoeur, 1980d, pp. 178-179.

operation of eliciting a configuration from a succession" of individual events.[51] While on the surface this appears a rather unspectacular claim, there are important consequences that proceed from it.

Firstly, by "emplotting" episodes into a sequence, the semantic potential of a narrative is heightened. As individual episodes are placed into a logical order by the writer, the reader accepts each event as either a cause or consequence of those surrounding it. In this way, the narrative episodes are not only interpreted at face value but are seen as a link within a more complex sequential chain.[52] As the audience *reads* each segment of the narrative *into* the other segments, the hermeneutical potential of each episode is enriched.

Increasing the hermeneutical complexity of a narrative is however not the only effect of the emplotment process. The integration between episodes also functions to draw the narrative together into a more cohesive whole. Ricoeur notes that the process of sequencing episodes helps to synthesise the narrative's major "thoughts", or themes. This, in turn, creates a sense of thematic unity. As he puts it, "the configurational arrangement makes the succession of events into significant wholes that are the correlate of the grouping together. Thanks to the reflective act – in the sense of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* – the whole plot may be translated into one 'thought'".[53]

It can thus be said that the effects of the emplotment process are: 1) that the hermeneutical range of the narrative is expanded and 2) the episode's divergent themes are aligned, allowing for the narrative to be read as a thematically cohesive work.

Narrative vs. Metaphor

The concept of narrative emplotment outlined above provided Ricoeur with an explanation for the *temporal* differences between metaphors and narratives. From the end of the 1970s, Ricoeur postulated that it was the relative complexity of narratives (in relation to sentence level metaphors), that allowed them to function effectively over

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[51] Ibid., pp. 78-79.
[52] Dauenhauer & Pellauer (2011) go further to suggest that when considered as an interlinked composition, each individual "element of a story" is interpreted by the reader as a "quasi-necessity".
[53] Ricoeur, 1980d, p. 179.

extended periods of time. Indeed, in Ricoeur's first two publications wholly dedicated to narrative ("Narrative Time", 1980 and *Time and Narrative: Volume 1*, 1983) he put forward the belief that a text's longevity was directly tied to its indeterminacy of meaning. He reasoned that, since the internal episodes are constantly being redefined (or refreshed) through the emplotment process, it is harder to affix a definitive meaning to narratives. This in turn allows them to remain vibrant (and therefore ontologically potent) for numerous generations of readers.

In these publications, Ricoeur highlights two specific ways in which a narrative's two-part semantic configuration increases its indeterminacy and, therefore, its hermeneutical longevity. The first involves a closer assessment of the function of repetition within narrative interpretation. As part of a longer discussion on what he terms "episodic time", Ricoeur (1980) indicates that the longevity of a narrative stems from the way emplotment invites repetition. While a narrative is read in the first instance with the aim of reaching the finale, or "end point", this does not fully exhaust its interpretive potential.[54] Indeed, once a narrative has been heard, "re-telling takes the place of telling".[55] In other words, once a text is read, the reader is encouraged to re-interpret the same text multiple times, with the new aim of understanding how the particular sequence of episodic events led to the conclusion. In this way, a narrative's hermeneutical structure is like an open-ended cycle, feeding in on itself:

> The plot's configuration also superimposes "the sense of an ending"… on the open-endedness of mere succession. As soon as a story is well known – as is the case with most traditional and popular narratives… – retelling takes the place of telling. Then following the story is less important than apprehending the well-known end as implied in the beginning and the well-known episodes as leading to this end. Here again, time is not abolished by the teleological structure of the judgment which grasps together the events under the heading of "the end." The

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[54] The importance of the conclusion (i.e. "end point"), as a starting point for the re-evaluation of a narrative, is most clearly laid out in *Time and Narrative: Volume 1*: "To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfilment in the "conclusion" of the story. This conclusion is not logically implied by some previous premises. It gives the story an "end point," which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole. To understand the story is to understand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion, which, far from being foreseeable, must finally be acceptable, as congruent with the episodes brought together by the story." (Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 66-67.)

[55] Ricoeur, 1980d, pp. 179.

> strategy of judgment is one of the means through which time experience is brought back from within-time-ness to repetition.[56]

In his 1991 analysis, *Grand Narratives*, J. Bernstein suggests that this cyclical understanding of narrative interpretation also owes much to Mink's original theory of configuration. For both Mink and Ricoeur, the reader is encouraged to "read the end of a narrative back into its beginning, and its beginning into its end, and hence learn to read time backwards."[57] Importantly, Bernstein also observes that, in Ricoeur's outlook, repetition does not only act to extend a narrative's life-span; rather, multiple readings of the same text are a hermeneutical necessity, as they are the only means to fully appreciate its logical, temporal structure:

> Narrative repetition hence involves a deepening of the movement of time through its explicit retrieval of past events *as* conditions, *as* potentialities which make the actual, the end of the narrative, possible (present). The end of the narrative makes the beginning of the narrative a beginning for that end. Repetition is more than a form of understanding narrative; … repetition becomes integral to the work of narration itself.[58]

An aspect of episodic time that is prominent in both Ricoeur's original publications and later critical discussions is its relation to human cognition. In *Narrative Time*, Ricoeur first postulates that the reason why the emplotment process of narratives is such a potent means to alter an individual's ontological outlook is because it mimics both human time and human memory: "Plot does not merely establish human action "in time", it also establishes it in memory. And memory in turn repeats – re-collects – the course of events according to an order that is the counterpart of the stretching-along of time between a beginning and an end".[59] For later theorists, such as Stiver (2012) and Kaplan (2003),[60] one of Ricoeur's most valuable insights is noting that narratives draw upon the reader's conceptualisation of social history and personal identity.[61] In this respect, the uniform

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[56] Ibid., p. 179-180.
[57] Bernstein, 1991, p. 117.
[58] Ibid., p. 117.
[59] Ricoeur, 1980d, p. 183.
[60] See: Kaplan, 2003, pp. 47-50; Stiver, 2012, pp. 79-82.
[61] Kaplan, 2003, p. 47: "The most important insight of *Time and Narrative* for hermeneutical philosophy is that the narrative function is indispensable to articulating the intelligibility of human actions. Anything that is recounted unfolds in time, and anything that occurs in time can be recounted. To describe and to

temporal perceptions between narrative and human experience allow narratives to "harness the heterogeneity of life in time":[62]

> The thesis of *Time and Narrative* is the essential connection between the temporal character of human experience and the act of narrating a story. "Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience" (TN1 3). Temporal experience is expressed in the form of narrative, while a narrative is able to reflect our social reality (in large part) because it expresses temporal experience.[63]

The Narrative Arc

The second aspect that, for Ricoeur, contributes to a narrative's semantic longevity is its mimetic structure. Beginning in *Narrative Time*, and further developed in the *Time and Narrative* trilogy, Ricoeur put forward the groundbreaking contention that all narrative interpretation follows a three-step hermeneutical pattern. This involves Mimesis 1 ("prefiguration"), Mimesis 2 ("configuration") and Mimesis 3 ("re-figuration"): "In other words, there are three stages: that of practical experience, that of the mediating role of [narrative] emplotment, and that of the process of reading."[64] These steps of the interpretive process became collectively known as the "hermeneutical arc".

For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to highlight the personal nature of the interaction, between reader and text, that takes place at each stage of interpretation.[65] At the outset, the reader is seen to approach the text from the standpoint of his or her perceptions of the world. These naïve *pre-understandings* are however tested, and ultimately revised, through the reader's engagement with the text. Importantly, Ricoeur did not see this three-step process as being either homogeneous or reproducible. Because every reader comes to a narrative with their own individual preconceptions, a different interpretation occurs every time.

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explain the genesis and development of an event or object is to narrate."
[62] Stiver, 2012, p. 79.
[63] Kaplan, 2003, p. 50.
[64] L. Dornisch, 1989, p. 309.
[65] Rather than "interaction", in his discussions, Ricoeur favours the term "personal mediation".

The unique *readings* that take place are however not only determined by the different outlooks from individual to individual, as each subsequent 're-reading' of a text, by the same person, also elicits a different outcome. When a reader's pre-conceptualisations of the world change, *re*-engagement with the same narrative will reveal new associations and realisations. As noted by Venema, "narrative configuration is completed through an act of reading that produces a possibility for experience which, when taken up through decision and action, refigures experience and therein personal identity. Each time a text is read the narrative arc is repeated; this repetition takes place from the new vantage point of personal identity that the previous reading produced."[66]

Though this is not explicitly stated by Ricoeur, at various points he intimates that each reading offers a foundation for any subsequent readings of the same text. This is articulated most clearly in his characterisation of the hermeneutical arc as a "healthy",[67] rather than "vicious", cycle.[68] Re-interpretations of the same subject matter are not seen by Ricoeur to be in any way redundant, as the term vicious suggests, as they lead the individual towards an ever more elevated understanding of both the text and the world of the reader: "That the circle is a vicious one can be refuted. In this regard, I would rather speak of an endless spiral that would carry the meditation past the same point a number of times, but at different altitudes."[69]

Representing the hermeneutical arc as an upward spiral of interpretation gives further credence to the belief that narrative interpretation thrives on repetition. While a narrative text does not change from a graphic standpoint, the way that it affects a reader's outlook of the world does. This, in turn, opens up new hermeneutical possibilities within the text. In this way, a narrative provides a dynamic, bespoke experience, whose range of interpretation adapts to the changing outlook of the individual, as well as the social context in which it is read. Unlike a metaphor, a narrative holds in tension that which it

[66] Venema, 2000, p. 103.
[67] Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 3, 76.
[68] Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 3, 71-72.
[69] Ibid., p. 72.

previously *meant* and that which it now *means*.[70] This allows for its hermeneutical possibilities to be enhanced, rather than diminished, over time.

In the introduction to the chapter, we saw that Ricoeur's 1970s studies of metaphorical language could not determine the semantic longevity of "extended metaphors" *qua* narratives. It was only clear that "they do not seem to die in the same way, or at least as soon as might be expected on the basis of this [tensional] theory [of metaphor]."[71] His subsequent explorations of the relationship between time and narrative established that, because its meaning is constantly in flux (with little to no uniformity between readings), a narrative's interpretative range is effectively "inexhaustible".[72] While this for Ricoeur was most clearly observable in biblical narratives,[73] the boundless interpretive possibilities provided by the emplotment process would hold true for non-religious narratives as well.

Part 3: Discussion

At the outset of this chapter, we highlighted two influential claims concerning the New Testament parables that Ricoeur made in his 1975 text "Biblical Hermeneutics":

1. Despite being narratives, the parables of Jesus have the distinguishing elements of sentence-metaphors. Most importantly, they employ the schema of "orientation-disorientation-reorientation" that is characteristic of all metaphorical language.

2. While having a close affinity with sentence metaphors, the biblical narratives – as "extended metaphors" – show notable variations. Namely, they do not

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[70] See the section entitled "Message and Speaker", in *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and Surplus of Meaning* (Ricoeur, 1976 pp. 29-32), for in-depth analysis of the tension between past and contemporary interpretations of textual discourse.

[71] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 93.

[72] Indeed, though Stiver does not differentiate between the hermeneutical surplus of meaning of different sub-forms of poetic discourse (i.e. metaphor versus narrative), he stresses that their lack of a precise meaning gives them an "inexhaustible" hermeneutical potential: "Ricoeur, in any case, seemed to think in terms of a *directed* meaning but not a *precise* meaning… It is what one may call, somewhat paradoxically, a 'limited infinity'. Texts, especially rich ones such as metaphors and narratives – but also systematic theologies – have a surplus of meaning that is inexhaustible yet not necessarily out of control. Ricoeur's philosophy of narrative illuminates this general hermeneutical point." (Stiver, 2012, pp. 81-82.)

[73] Vanhoozer argues that, for Ricoeur, biblical narratives exemplify this temporal dimension on the grounds that they continue to 'speak' to the same individuals throughout their lives. (Vanhoozer, 1990, p. 203.)

> appear as susceptible to ossification as other metaphorical structures. In other words, they appear to have increased semantic longevity (compared with common metaphors).

In the present chapter, we observed that these discoveries initiated two separate streams of analysis that were carried forward into the 1980s and beyond. The first was represented by the 'metaphorical theology' of Sally McFague, and the second by Ricoeur himself in his publications on narrative time. Importantly, both undertakings transcended biblical hermeneutics, and looked to engage with broader 'general' hermeneutical questions concerning the reception and function of discourse.

As concerns the first approach, McFague identified what elements, inherent within some (regional) metaphors, allow them to resonate through time. In so doing, she outlined a new paradigmatic understanding, whereby metaphors were identified as the first stage in the development of new concepts.

Significant to McFague's metaphorical understanding was the role played by both *models* and *root-metaphors*. Models were defined as more "dominant" and "mature" metaphorical constructions, which provided a catchment for individual metaphors. Root-metaphors, placed still higher in McFague's hierarchal understanding, were seen to provide an over-arching 'vision of reality' that all models and metaphors within a given discourse were oriented towards. This three-tiered understanding of metaphorical language was exemplified, within biblical discourse, by how the model 'God is Father' encompasses a number of individual metaphors, while the root-metaphor, the 'Kingdom of God', offers a frame of reference with which to interpret all underlying models and common metaphors. The parables of Jesus were seen as direct representations of the Christian root-metaphor on account of their overt explication of the 'Kingdom of God' notion.[74]

Importantly, McFague observed that models and root-metaphors did not appear to have the same limited life expectancy as common metaphors. This was due to their being, in effect, umbrella constructions that consolidated the metaphorical constructions beneath

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[74] McFague, 1982, p. 28. See also: McFague, 1985, p. 50.

them. This allowed them to combine the extended interpretative range of a metaphor with the immutability (and longevity) traditionally associated with conceptual thought.

McFague's studies during the 1980s clearly fell somewhere between the spheres of general and regional hermeneutics. While her research aimed to incorporate insights from other forms of discourse (namely, scientific discourse), her primary goal was to demarcate the role of metaphorical language in biblical discourse.

Ricoeur's studies during this same period likewise began with the question of metaphorical longevity raised in "Biblical Hermeneutics". However, his research led him down a quite different path. If McFague was concerned with identifying a hierarchy of metaphorical constructions in one form of discourse, Ricoeur sought solutions to more *general* hermeneutical concerns. In a departure from both his previous work and his contemporaries, such as McFague, Ricoeur chose not to dwell on metaphors as such, nor their placement (or usage) within particular forms of discourse. Rather, he sought to shed light on the complex relationship between narratives and time. For, in Ricoeur's view, the question of a parable's semantic longevity would best be answered by considering the parables as narratives, rather than as metaphors:

> Even though the stories of Jesus are old and well known, they do not seem to die through habitual usage. This suggests that parables are characterized by some other kind of tension than that of metaphors. In fact, Ricoeur emphasizes that the metaphorical tension in a parable does not lie between single words or sentences. Where does it lie then? The tension, Ricoeur claims, is carried by the narrative as a whole. It exists between everyday life and what the story narrates, between reality as described and as redescribed.[75]

As Hayden White convincingly articulates, Ricoeur's research centred on the "narrativistic nature of time itself".[76] In this respect, he made two highly pertinent discoveries. The first, concerning a narrative's episodic dimension, demonstrated that the

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[75] Oldenhage, 2002, p. 6.

[76] White, 2002, p. 142: "The overarching thesis of *Time and Narrative* is that temporality is 'the structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity' and that narrativity is 'the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent'. This formulation appears in Ricoeur's 1980 essay, 'Narrative Time', which plainly indicates that his study of the truth of narrative is based on a notion of the narrativistic nature of time itself."

relationship between a narrative's internal and external structure allowed its constituent episodes to continually redefine one another. This explained why a narrative's hermeneutical potential is not exhausted after a single reading. Because this episodic dimension mimics the way in which humans schematise past actions and experiences, this first observation also shed light on the strong ontological influence that literary texts exert on the reader: "The superiority of narrative over non-narrative is the dynamic account of the relationship between experience and writing. In a narrative, the subject is action, as are the configurational and re-configurational acts of telling a story and following a story."[77]

Secondly, Ricoeur defined a narrative's mimetic structure in terms of a hermeneutical arch. Here, he assessed the indeterminacy of narrative interpretation from the perspective of reader response, by emphasising how one's engagement with narratives acts to refigure their perception of the world. In this light, the reader's modified pre-understandings go on to alter any subsequent readings of the same text, in what he likened to a limitless, upward spiral of interpretation.

Metaphorical Clusters

While on the surface there appears little potential for crossover between the studies of McFague and Ricoeur, this is not the case. Certainly, McFague's focus on the hierarchical structure of metaphorical language seems far removed from Ricoeur's analysis of narrative emplotment. However, at the core of both studies, similar findings were uncovered. Namely, both arrived at the conclusion that the ability of discourse to maintain its ontological potency (i.e. the ability to enable the reader to conceive of new possibilities) is directly tied to its capacity to *regenerate* (or at least maintain) a range of polysemic interpretations.

For McFague, metaphorical longevity was seen to be tied to the 'density' of the metaphorical system. In this view, while models and root-metaphors are catchments for symbolic language, the flow of interpretation between them goes both ways. This was

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[77] Kaplan, 2003, p. 54.

exemplified by the New Testament parables. Though the parables represent the Christian root-metaphor, the 'Kingdom of God, they are unable to fully define it, and must therefore defer to the very metaphorical constructions that they are meant to encapsulate. For McFague, this exemplifies the way in which metaphorical constructions within discourse rely on one another to create an interrelated hermeneutical network. Because meaning is constantly passed back and forth between them, the models and root-metaphors (in particular) are able to maintain an open-ended interpretative range.

Ricoeur arrived at similar conclusions following a different tack. He determined that semantic longevity derived from the way in which a narrative's configurational and mimetic structure allowed it to elicit an adaptable range of interpretations (which evolved in line with the reader's perceptions of both the world and the text being read). Like McFague, Ricoeur found that a limitless "surplus" of polysemic interpretation was the main factor accounting for the longevity of discourse.

Despite these evident points of convergence, however, there is still significant scope for further dialogue between narrative theory and a model-based understanding of metaphorical language. Initially, McFague's work looked to fulfil a research need that Ricoeur first identified in "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a), where he observed that metaphors (and particularly biblical metaphors) are rarely isolated events of discourse.[78] At the time, Ricoeur hypothesised that the tendency of religious metaphors to appear in "clusters or networks" may explain their extended semantic range: "In effect, a metaphor never comes alone. One metaphor calls for another and altogether they remain alive thanks to their mutual tension and the power of each to evoke the whole network."[79] More than any scholar to date, McFague's characterisation of models and root-metaphors has clarified the composition of the metaphorical network and their ontological repercussions.

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[78] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 94: "In the Hebrew tradition, God is called King, Father, Husband, Landlord, Shepherd, Judge, and also Rock, Fortress, and Redeemer, etc. In this way certain metaphors emerge which encompass several partial metaphors borrowed from different fields of experience and provide them with a kind of equilibrium. These 'root' metaphors have a particular capacity to engender an unlimited number of potential interpretations at a conceptual level. Thus they both "gather" and "diffuse"."

[79] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 94. (See also Ricoeur's discussion on "chains of meaning" in Ricoeur, 1980d, p. 177.)

However, at least in terms of biblical discourse, there is scope for further analysis of the formal differences between metaphorical types. While McFague appeals to the argument of complexity to explain the hierarchical system, a deeper understanding is needed as to *how* and *why* some metaphors attain the classification of models, or root-metaphors. To use her own examples, why was 'God is father' singled out as a model, while 'redemption is sacrifice' remains an individual metaphor? Furthermore, at which stage, and by which processes, did the 'Kingdom of God' construction assume its elevated role as Christianity's root-metaphor?

The danger with assigning classifications to one metaphorical construction over others within the same network is that it may appear either arbitrary, or suggestive of a non-textual rationale. It is on these grounds that further research is needed into the literary (or, rather, discursive) differences between metaphors, models and root-metaphors. Particularly in the case of the 'Kingdom of God' root-metaphor, incorporating narrative theory may well prove beneficial. McFague appears to recognise as much in her later publication, *Metaphorical Theology* (1982), when she concedes that the narrative form of the parables is indivisible from its function as the Christian root-metaphor:

> "The Kingdom of God" is always intimated indirectly through telling a story... What is crucial in these stories is the plot; they are exemplars, not discrete poetic metaphors. As Ricoeur has said perceptively, the interactive partners in permanent tension in a parable are two ways of being in the world, one of which is the conventional way, and the other, the way of the kingdom.[80]

From this excerpt, we see that McFague recognised that the emplotment process of the narratives (here termed "stories") opens up hermeneutical possibilities that are beyond metaphorical tropes, or even models. She further acknowledges that a narrative's configurational structure is necessary to maintaining its metaphorical tension. While McFague has in this instance deferred to Ricoeur's earlier (1970s) discussions on the metaphoricity of the parables, it is in fact the next phase of Ricoeur hermeneutical studies (on narrative and narrative emplotment from the early 1980s) that is more applicable to this line of research.

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[80] McFague, 1982, p. 45.

The untapped potential for dialogue between narrative theory and the study of religious metaphors was likewise identified by Ricoeur himself in his 1981 publication "The Bible and the Imagination". He here postulates that the dynamic configuration of the narrative form is that which prevents the 'Kingdom of God' notion from ossifying into a dead prescriptive slogan. Intentionally or not, he is highlighting an initial, compelling point of convergence between his own research and McFague's model-based understanding of root-metaphors:

> The metaphorizing relation runs in two directions. The expression "kingdom of God"… referred to its enigmatic character by the movement of transgressing the narrative. Without this movement, these expressions risk falling to the rank of frozen religious representations. In this way, the expression "the kingdom of God", left to itself, could become nothing more than a dead image with some vague political content. It is the extravagance of the narrative that, by bursting out of the mundane meaning of the narrative, attests that "my kingdom is not of this world".[81]

Conclusion

This chapter has exposed a strong link between Ricoeur's biblical studies of the 1970s and his subsequent narrative theory. From the standpoint of Ricoeur scholarship alone, this is highly significant. It now appears that, while much of Ricoeur's attention throughout the 1980s was given to exploring the intricate bond between time and narrative, this research began with his initial discussions on the temporality of metaphor in "Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975a). The continuity between his biblical and narrative bodies of work further brings into question the popular belief (explored in Chapter 2) that Ricoeur's publications from the 1980s were a watershed that signalled a firm break from his religious writings. That his biblical hermeneutics significantly informed his 'general' literary and narrative theory is both an interesting and provocative notion that warrants continued research.

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[81] Ricoeur, 1995g, p. 165: This citation refers to the version of "The Bible and the Imagination" reprinted in *Figuring the Sacred*. This article was originally published in English in *The Bible as a Document of the University*. (Ricoeur, 1981f.)

Secondly, this chapter assessed the contributions and potential crossover between two divergent branches of research that ensued from Ricoeur's 1975 study of biblical metaphors. It was observed that there are significant points of convergence between Ricoeur's understanding of the temporal character of narratives and McFague's investigations of the levels and limits of metaphorical language. Namely, both found that a *density* or *surplus* of polysemic interpretation allows discourse to refresh its meaning, and thereby maintain its vibrancy and contemporaneity. In the final chapter of the thesis, we will consider in greater detail the unique *revelatory* function that unites all polysemic forms of discourse.

Chapter 8

Philosophical and Biblical Revelation

Parts 1 and 2 of the thesis have argued that Ricoeur's explorations of language proceeded from the belief that discourse has the ability to refigure one's entire world-view. In the past chapter, specifically, we explored how metaphors and narratives operate to revise assumed interpretations (as well as to form new ones) by way of their polysemic make-up. However, metaphors and narratives are for Ricoeur just two instances of a broader hermeneutical category: *poetic language*. Having appropriated Jean Cohen's basic understanding of semantic innovation in the early 1970s, Ricoeur came to believe that the poetic form was distinct from ordinary language because it had a redescriptive, rather than descriptive, function.[1] As highlighted in the previous chapter, this understanding of semantic innovation was not only the basis of Ricoeur's metaphorical theory, but became a key facet of his later mimetic characterisation of narrative:

> [For Ricoeur] a narrative truth is like a metaphorical truth, which is the ability of poetic discourse to bring to language hidden aspects of reality. It is a hermeneutic conception of truth as manifestation. A reader or hearer experiences a new way of seeing-as through the referential dimension opened up by a use of language, including symbols, words, metaphors, sentences or narratives. Any form of discourse may introduce new interpretations and new experiences of the world, affecting me at the level of the life-world that I inhabit and presuppose prior to reflections.[2]

In the years immediately following Ricoeur's study of metaphor, he sought to gain a more comprehensive view of poetic language and how it differs from ordinary language. In this respect, Ricoeur believed that the concept of 'revelation' could provide insight into how poetic texts affect the ontological perceptions of readers.

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[1] Though a more comprehensive definition of 'poetic language' will be given in Part 2 of this chapter, to this point it has been suggested that Ricoeur at least initially equated poetic language to polysemic language. See: Chapter 6, Part 1.
[2] Kaplan, 2003, pp. 58-59.

The key study considered in this chapter is, therefore, Ricoeur's 1977 work "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation". Initially published in *The Harvard Theological Review*, it was itself based on two lectures given by Ricoeur in 1976 (at the *Faculté Universitaire St. Louis* and the Harvard University Divinity School). This study was one of his most ambitious interdisciplinary endeavours, as it sought to compare biblical and philosophical conceptions of 'textual interpretation', with a view to exposing how literary (i.e. 'poetic') works become ontologically "revelatory".

While Ricoeur of course acknowledges that the notion of 'revelation' is traditionally associated with biblical "professions of faith", he likewise postulates that the concept itself is underpinned by a "general hermeneutic". This is to say that, at its root, biblical revelation stems from a *non-religious* interpretative process common to the reception of *all* literary works. From this standpoint, biblical texts are seen to be no different from any other example of 'poetic language', all of which are revelatory in as much as they affect the ontological perceptions of the reader.

This chapter argues that, by creating a conceptual ligature between religious texts and poetic language (via the concept of revelation), Ricoeur puts biblical textuality forward as a possible foundation on which to construct a 'universal' notion of literary reception. Of relevance to this thesis, his study of revelation is also the point where his hermeneutics most closely mirrors, and realises, Schleiermacher's Romantic vision. As established in Chapter 1, both theorists believed that, while the primary role of the *general* study of language is to provide a relevant exegetical framework for *regional* forms of discourse, a viable hermeneutics must maintain a constructive dialogue between these two branches. In this light, Ricoeur's interdisciplinary analysis of biblical and poetic revelation is an ambitious attempt to show the extent to which a philosophical paradigm (namely, poetic language) can be informed by a 'particular' hermeneutical form, namely, the interpretation of scripture.

As with Ricoeur's study itself, this chapter is presented in three parts. Part 1 offers a preliminary discussion of, what Ricoeur terms, the "originary" representations of revelation. Its specific focus is the diverse ways in which the concept of revelation appears in the Bible's various genres.

Part 2 of the chapter explores the concept of revelation from the perspective of poetic language. Beginning by reviewing Heidegger's notion of "the world of the work", it argues that Ricoeur's general understanding of "poetic forms" of discourse evolved through an engagement with earlier phenomenological outlooks. Specifically, we observe that Ricoeur appropriated in some cases (and rejected in others) earlier characterisations of art and artistic reception, with a view to fashioning a textual reception theory based on the concept of "the world of the text".

The third and final part of the chapter looks to clarify the relationship between Ricoeur's *regional* study of biblical revelation and his *general* philosophical theory of the "the world of the text". Although his 1977 work touches on both topics, he fails to fully explore the symbiotic relationship existing between the two. This section therefore aims to more closely integrate the biblical and literary facets of his groundbreaking study, in order to assess the extent to which a fruitful hermeneutical exchange – between a philosophical reception theory and biblical exegesis – is possible.

Part 1: The 'Modalities' of Biblical Revelation

Ricoeur believed that, through the concept of revelation, one could explore *how* and *why* all poetic texts are meaningful. However, in order to formulate a secular "literary" understanding, one must begin with the regional discourse with which the concept of revelation is most closely associated, namely, biblical discourse: "I…endeavour to carry the notion of revelation back to its most originary level, the one, which for the sake of brevity, I call the discourse of faith or the

confession of faith".[3] In reviewing the various depictions of revelation in the Bible, Ricoeur observed that no one uniform meaning came to the fore. Instead, the Bible housed a number of different representations of revelation, all of which could potentially provide insight into the ontological significance of literary works.

Ricoeur's first notable finding was that the biblical representations of revelation change from genre to genre. Indeed, the various characterisations only appeared to relate to one another in so much as they didn't have an overt epistemological connotation. This is to say that, throughout the Bible, revelation never equates to the transmission of received knowledge: "If one thing may be said unequivocally about all the analogical forms of revelation, it is that in none of its modalities may revelation be included in and dominated by knowledge".[4] Put more simply still, instead of *directly* conveying knowledge, all versions of biblical revelation elicit insights *indirectly*.

Ricoeur therefore set out in Part 1 of his study to identify the specific ways in which each biblical genre purported to be revelatory. While he focused on a number of different characterisations (or "modalities") of revelation, the representations found in four genres proved to be particularly significant. These belonged to the prophetic, narrative, prescriptive and wisdom genres. Let us begin our own investigation by considering each of these genres in turn, as well as the specific hermeneutical characterisations (or modalities) of revelation that Ricoeur identified.

Ricoeur initially turned his attention to the prophetic genre. Seeing that its characterisation of revelation details a correspondence between earthly and divine sources, Ricoeur noted that it was generally regarded as the basis (or "basic-axis")[5] for a religious understanding of revelation:

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[3] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 2.
[4] Ibid., p. 17.
[5] Ibid., p. 3.

> Indeed, this is the discourse which declares itself to be pronounced in the name of …, and exegetes have rightly pointed out the importance of its introductory formula: "The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, 'Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem…'" (Jer. 2:1). Here is the original nucleus of the traditional idea of revelation.[6]

Ricoeur found that the prophetic concept of revelation was closely tied to the rigid prophetic "formula" seen throughout the Old Testament – in which an unearthly voice transmitting a divine plan that was more widely disseminated via a human agent.[7] While revelation in this light could be equated to double authorship (or "double speech"), Ricoeur warned that this would be a somewhat reductive interpretation, as it omitted its implicit *inspirational* intonations.[8] Instead, a more apt characterisation of 'prophetic revelation' is the influence that the *speech of others* can have on both individuals and society as a whole.[9]

In more broad hermeneutical terms, the prophetic modality emphasises the potential of language to inspire and influence those who listen. Though Ricoeur did not note this himself, within this genre inspirational language tends to engender more inspirational language. The voice spoken from "on high" is only the first instance,[10] as the insights conveyed from a divine source are then transmitted to others via the human voice of the prophet. Lastly, there is the tacit recognition that the text itself, comprising the 'speech' of the biblical writers, likewise has the capacity to inspire a contemporary religious community. In this way, prophetic discourse presents a *three-fold* depiction of the inspirational power of language.

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[6] Ibid., p. 3.

[7] The representation of revelation, as exposing a divine plan or design, is found in Ricoeur's discussions on prophetic discourse (ibid., p. 4) and narrative discourse (ibid., pp. 7-8).

[8] Ibid., p. 3: "…it also remains true that the explicit form of double speaking tends to link the notion of revelation to that of inspiration conceived as one voice behind another."

[9] Ibid., p. 3.

[10] In the Old Testament, divine instructions to prophets are often demarcated by their heavenly source. This is exemplified by the use of "from heaven" (שָׁמַיִן), as seen in the description of the prophetic formula in Nehemiah: "You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them *from heaven*. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses." (Neh. 9:13-9:14)

Ricoeur cautions, however, against seeing the prophetic modality (in which revelation equates to inspiration) as the definitive biblical representation. For, in addition to its emphasis on inspiration, prophetical discourse also displays an "almost invincible association" with unveiling the future and eschatology.[11] This *prescient* emphasis is, for Ricoeur, only relevant to the prophetic formula and could potentially skew our interpretation of biblical revelation. Consequently, he points to the other modalities in order to arrive at a more balanced understanding.

The second genre Ricoeur considers is narrative. Here, he found that the revelatory power of the text is linked to its capacity to "re-count" historical events in the ancient world. If the prophetic genre extols the power of words, narrative discourse emphasises the primacy of actions before language, and their subsequent importance to communities of faith. Although the Bible is in one respect a "confessional account", the narrative form highlights that these confessions are predicated upon actual events in the world.

In contrast to the other genres (and specifically the prophetic genre), biblical narrative places its focus on the underlying events in human history, and the discernible trace of God in them. It effectively shifts attention away from the Bible's rhetorical form and towards the text's ability to convey the realism of past action:[12] "What is essential in the case of narrative discourse is the emphasis on the founding event or events as the imprint, mark, or trace of God's mark. God's mark is in history before being in speech. It is only secondarily in speech inasmuch as this history itself is brought to language in the speech-act of narration".[13]

Consistent with the concept of emplotment introduced in the preceding chapter (as well as Ricoeur's understanding of kerygmatic "reading" identified in Chapter 4) biblical narratives are seen to place the Word of God in a temporal *filum*, or sequence. The narratives follow from traceable actions in history and, once read

[11] Ibid., p. 4.
[12] Ibid., p. 7.
[13] Ibid., p. 6.

and interpreted, can affect subsequent events in the world. In this light, narratives are a link in a chain, their revelatory function highlighting the tangible effects that real-world actions *behind* the text have on present and future circumstances.

Indeed, Ricoeur believed that, through narrative, the religious reader best observes the discrepancy between the Bible's two contrasting "orientations" (as earlier outlined). On the one hand, scripture is a subjective account put forward by human agents; on the other, it chronicles the 'objective' history of a people:

> The word event is thus emphasized at the expense of the first intentionality of the narrative confession, or rather the confessing narrative. The latter does not distinguish itself from the things recounted and the events that present themselves in the story. It is for the second order reflection that the questions "who is speaking? who is telling the story?" are detached from *what* is narrated and said.[14]

This tension between the subjective (authorial) and objective (referential) aspects of language becomes a central element of Ricoeur's later characterisation of poetic language.

The last of the modalities considered here are those of the *prescriptive* and *wisdom* genres.[15] Though Ricoeur offers an independent treatment of each, it is clear that both of their revelatory functions centre on the existential dimension of the text. Ricoeur begins his analyses of these genres by noting that contemporary scholarship often misrepresents prescriptive discourse as rigid and authoritarian. In this light, Hebraic law is seen to be indistinguishable from "heteronomy" (i.e. the submission to a higher, external command). For Ricoeur, "nothing is more inadequate" than interpreting the prescriptive discourse in this way.[16] While there is certainly an apodictic dimension to the Torah, in as far as the Hebrew community deferred to its legislations, a heteronomic outlook reduces the relationship between God and the 'chosen people' to a simple "command – obey"

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[14] Ibid., pp. 6-7.
[15] In fact, along with the four sub-forms of biblical discourse considered here, Ricoeur discusses a fifth form: hymnic discourse. (See: Ricoeur, 1977c, pp. 14-15.)
[16] Ibid., p. 8.

dynamic. This of course fails to recognise the "complex of relations" that makes up the Covenant.[17]

For Ricoeur, rather, prescriptive discourse works in unison with other biblical forms (such as the prophetic and narrative genres), to show that the individual and community have the ability to learn from past mistakes and aspire to a more perfect existence: "If we continue to speak of the revelation as historical, it is not only in the sense that the trace of God may be read in the founding events of the past…, but in the sense that it orients the history of our practical actions and engenders the dynamics of our institutions".[18] This *practical* emphasis on "living well" is shared with wisdom discourse.[19] For both, scripture is seen to be revelatory in that it encourages the reader to reflect on their own existential condition in light of what they have read.

It should be noted that the *forward-looking* function of these last two modalities harmonises with the temporal (referential) dimension of narrative discourse. Indeed, we could go so far as to suggest that, in line with Ricoeur's initial observation that biblical revelation never equates to an epistemological understanding of 'revealed truth', all four modalities appear to elicit insights through the indirect *experiential* process of reflection. Specifically, all forms impel the reader to reflect on how documented actions in history have gone on to tangibly affect their lives.

While the 1977 study offers a somewhat more detailed discussion on the various biblical representations, these four modalities are central to Ricoeur's understanding, as well as the integrated analysis that shall be carried out in Part 3

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[17] Ibid., p. 9.
[18] Ibid., p. 11.
[19] Ricoeur notes that, like prescriptive discourse, the dogmatic tone of wisdom discourse has also led to problematic, heteronomic interpretations: "[Wisdom discourse] seems to turn the transcendental commandments of the Decalogue into minute details, practical advice… But behind this somewhat shabby façade, we need to discern the great thrust of a reflection on existence that aims at the individual behind the people of the Covenant". Ibid., p. 11.

of this chapter. For the purpose of the upcoming discussion, then, let us define the different biblical modalities of revelation as follows:

1. prophetic genre: the capacity of language to 'inspire' others
2. narrative genre: the ability of the text to highlight the significant historical events undergirding the biblical Word
3. prescriptive and wisdom genres: emphasises the practical, or 'real-world', implications of scripture (where the reader is urged to interpret the text in direct relation to his or her life)

Part 2: The World in Front of the Text

In order to assess how the biblical modalities of revelation outlined above can inform a universal reception theory, it is necessary to review Ricoeur's understanding of literary (or 'poetic') reception leading up to the 1977 publication of "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation".

Beginning in the mid-1970s, the concept of the 'world of the text' became a seminal facet of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. It provided Ricoeur with a conceptual basis by which to explain why poetic language was more *ontologically* potent than ordinary language. Indeed, Ricoeur's 1977 study was structured as a comparative analysis between the modalities of revelation, on the one side, and the literary-philosophical concept of 'the world of the text' on the other. In order to assess to what extent these two visions of literary reception can be consolidated, it is important to first understand how the 'the world of the text' concept evolved in Ricoeur's writing.

Heidegger and The World of the Work

Though little research has been done in this respect, it is likely that Ricoeur's notion of 'the world of the text' has its roots in Martin Heidegger's "The Origin

of the Work of Art" (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*).[20] This publication, based upon a series of lectures from 1935 to 1937, proposed that works of art have a meaningful effect on the ontological outlook of their audience. For Heidegger, this influence stemmed from the way in which works of art enable contemporary viewers to access the context (or "world") from which the artworks originated: "What does the work, as work, set up? Towering up within itself, the work opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force. To be a work means to set up a world."[21]

In this publication Heidegger first introduced the concept "the world of the work".[22] Though on the surface there are clear resonances with "the world of the text" formulations used by Ricoeur in later decades, we shall note in due course that there are important distinctions between the two. For Heidegger, the "world" opened up by a work of art is tantamount to the historical reality that gave rise to it. An ancient architectural structure, for instance, evokes the specific socio-historical reality for which the building was designed. For Heidegger, the *ontological* potency of art is linked to its dis-association with the current world in which it is now displayed. Because a historical work's aesthetic form jars so substantially with contemporary (functional) interpretations of reality, it is able to conjure the world from which it derived and the primordial insights (or "truths") from it:

> "World" is the "all-governing… open relational context" of an "historical" culture… The fundamental insight contained in the theory is that truth as "correspondence"… actually presupposes a more "primordial" truth which has the task of establishing what kind of "facts" there are to which statements may, or may not, correspond. Heidegger calls this "truth as disclosure" or "aletheia"…[23]

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[20] The only study identified that cites the relationship between 'the world of the text' and Heidegger's notion of projected artistic 'worlds' is Bourgeois and Schalow's 1990 publication "The World of the Text and the Worlding of Thought" (in *Traces of Understanding: Profile of Heidegger's and Ricoeur's Hermeneutics*).
[21] Heidegger, 1971a, p. 43.
[22] Ibid., p. 39-43.
[23] Young, 2001, pp. 22-23.

Since the publication of "The Origin of the Work of Art" in 1950, certain ambiguities have plagued Heidegger's notion of 'the world of the work'. In particular, scholars have felt that he failed to establish the extent to which a work of art presents accurate depictions of historical realities or, indeed, if contemporary art can be deemed insightful (or "revelatory") at all.[24] There are, however, certain aspects of 'the world of the work' concept that are relevant to Ricoeur's later characterisation of 'the world of the text'.

Firstly, though Heidegger initially focuses on fine art and architecture, his understanding of artistic worlds lends itself to the study of poetic language (or, at least, "poetry"). In the finale of his treatise, Heidegger proclaims that the power of art to disclose truth is not only mimicked by linguistic or literary compositions, but exemplified by them. Indeed, in terms of the ability to project worlds, he finds that all works of art are inherently 'poetic':[25]

> All art, we learn from "The Origin of the Work of Art", is essentially poetry, because it is the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is. And poetry, as linguistic, has a privileged position in the domain of the arts, because language, understood rightly, is the original way in which beings are brought into the open clearing of truth.[26]

Secondly, Heidegger proposes that the ontological potency of art, from a reception standpoint, derives from its designation as autonomous work. All artists tacitly acknowledge that their work will one day "stand on its own for itself alone" without the need for the artist to justify its existence.[27] In other words, all works

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[24] Heidegger, 1971a, p. 54. It should be noted that there is a range of interpretations surrounding Heidegger's delimitation of both the terms artistic 'works' and the 'worlds' they project. Singh (1990) takes the view that, for Heidegger, the capacity of artistic works to disclose truth is limited to historical 'classics' due to a more narrow understanding of the term 'worlds'. This is challenged by Bruin (1992) who asserts that "The Origin of the Work of Art" presents a more general philosophy of art that can be extended to include contemporary artistic compositions. See also Nwodo (1976), Young (2001) and Babich (2002) for discussion on the ontological significance of historical representations in Heidegger's understanding of artistic worlds.

[25] Heidegger, 1971a, pp. 70-76.

[26] Hofstadter, 1971, p. xii. For discussion on the "privileged position" of poetic forms, see also: Young, 2001, pp. 60-61.

[27] Heidegger, 1971a, p. 39: "To gain access to the work, it would be necessary to remove it from all relations to something other than itself, in order to let it stand on its own for itself alone. But

of art are released into the world with a view to becoming wholly self-referential.[28] For Heidegger, it is this designation as a free-floating expression that allows works to impart unique truths to a contemporary audience and become a vehicle for *self-understanding*. This is most clearly articulated in his description of how classical Greek temples affect present-day viewers on an ontological level:

> The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth, which itself only thus emerges as native ground… The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves.[29]

As we move forward, we shall note a number of stark differences between Heidegger's notion of artistic "worlds" and Ricoeur's understanding of literary "worlds". Yet, Heidegger's prioritisation of the poetic form, and designation of art as autonomous, would provide later theorists such as Ricoeur and Gadamer with a rudimentary model on which to base their own reception theories.

Ricoeur and The World of the Text

Thus far in the thesis, we have observed that Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics of the 1970s, as well as the narrative theory that ensued from it, are predicated on the belief that 'poetic' interpretation differs from that of ordinary language. Due to its polysemic nature, poetic language widens the semantic range of the text and, in so doing, modifies or "refigures" the reader's understanding of the subject matter being discussed. In many respects, 'the world of the text' is the foundational concept on which this understanding is based.

Ricoeur's use of the term 'the world of the text' dates back to his first studies on the properties of written discourse from 1973,[30] in which he explored the

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the artist's most peculiar intention already aims in this direction. The work is to be released by him to its pure self-subsistence. It is precisely in great art — and only such art is under consideration here — that the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge."

[28] Ibid., p. 39.

[29] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[30] See: Ricoeur 1973c, p. 131, 139-141; 1981b, p. 91. It is worth noting that both publications

distinction between textual and spoken modes of discourse. It was, however, not until *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975) that its full significance became clear. In this publication, Ricoeur signalled that his future hermeneutical studies would depart from the rigid structuralist method that had defined his work until the mid-1960s. He would instead embrace a new ontological approach that would look to challenge the Romantic belief that interpretation stems from the coming together of two subjective outlooks (namely, that of the author and that of the reader).[31] Henceforth, he would focus on the mechanics of interpretation, in which literary works would be considered "objective" discourse:

> The kind of hermeneutics which I now favour starts from the recognition of the objective meaning of the text as distinct from the subjective intention of the author. This objective meaning is not something hidden behind the text. Rather it is a requirement addressed to the reader… What has to be interpreted in a text is what it says and what it speaks about, i.e., the kind of world which it opens up or discloses; and the final act of "appropriation" is less the projection of one's own prejudices into the text than the "fusion of horizons" – to speak like Hans-Georg Gadamer – which occurs when the world of the reader and *the world of the text* merge into one another.[32]

From this vantage point, the novel propositions put forward by a literary work are subsumed (or "appropriated") by the reader. The ensuing "fusion", between the outlook of the text and that of the reader, allows the work to be ontologically potent. In line with Heidegger's earlier description, Ricoeur believed that the

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were published in some form in 1973. As concerns the former, the English publication of "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" (1973c) predated the 1975 French version found in *Exegesis : Problèmes de méthode et exercices de lectures*. As regards the latter, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" (1981c), the original French version was released in 1973 as "Herméneutique et critique des idéologies", which significantly predates the English translation published in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981). See note 43 below for further clarification.

[31] Ricoeur, 2003, pp. 377-378: "[The concept of 'hermeneutical circle'] instead is formulated in new terms… It does not proceed so much from an intersubjective relation linking the subjectivity of the author and the subjectivity of the reader as from a connection between two discourses, the discourse of the text and the discourse of the interpretation… This shift within hermeneutics from a 'romanticist' trend to a more 'objectivist' trend is the result of this long travel through structuralism." (Originally published in Ricoeur, 1971.)

[32] Ricoeur, 2003, p. 378.

junction of different world-views incites the reader to re-consider their present circumstances in light of the new aesthetic experience, and all that it "evokes".[33]

It is noteworthy that while Heidegger's term 'the world of the work' is used at various points in *The Rule of Metaphor* – as a means of describing "the ontological import of [literary] works" –[34] when it comes to defining his own understanding of this process of poetic appropriation, Ricoeur favours the new formulation 'the world of the text'. This is consistent with other publications, where he goes to some lengths to distance his textual hermeneutics from Heidegger's ontology.[35] As concerns 'the world of the text' concept in itself, however, Ricoeur clearly adopts a number of elements from Heidegger's earlier lectures.

To begin with, he reaffirms Heidegger's stance that poetic works affect the outlook of the reader because of the alternative "worlds" that they "project". He likewise argues that, amidst the many diverse artistic forms, literary works (such as narrative and poetry) have a "privileged position".[36] Indeed, on the surface, little separates Heidegger's and Ricoeur's respective characterisations of poetic reception.

The main point of divergence between the two centres on the different methodologies employed. Heidegger sought to establish the prominence of poetry through a direct comparison with other artistic forms, such as painting, sculpture or architecture. In this respect, literary interpretation was seen as an adjunct to a more general artistic (or aesthetic) reception theory. Ricoeur's studies, on the other hand, focused solely on the linguistic properties of poetic language that make it distinct from ordinary language. Unlike Heidegger, Ricoeur believed that

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[33] Ricoeur, 1977b, pp. 106-110. Ricoeur here discusses the ability of "aesthetic metaphors" to evoke second-order references (or second relationships).
[34] Ricoeur, 1977b, p. 92. See also: pp. 93, 220.
[35] In particular, see: Ricoeur, 1980c, pp. 69-72.
[36] Heidegger, 1971a, p. 70: "What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out… Nevertheless, the linguistic work, the poem in the narrower sense, has a privileged position in the domain of the arts."

the power of poetic forms to transmit *new* interpretations is wholly tied to its linguistic (and, often, textual) mode:

> Through fiction and poetry, new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up within everyday reality. Fiction and poetry intend being, but not through the modality of givenness, but rather through the modality of possibility. And in this way everyday reality is metamorphised by what we could call the imaginative variations that literature works on the real.[37]

As discussed in previous chapters, for Ricoeur, the term poetic language describes discourse that is polysemic in nature. As an 'umbrella' term, it does not exclusively denote one genre, but rather includes all literary forms. What's more, it encapsulates all text-based *forms* of discourse that stimulate self-understanding through the metaphorical process of semantic innovation. This includes philological, fictional and biblical forms.

Importantly, for Ricoeur, 'poetic' works are distinct from other works of art (and specifically fine art) because they do not simply project alternative worlds but, rather, showcase "inhabitable" ones that make us aware of new ways "of being". Unlike, for instance, painting or architecture, the worlds opened up by poetic works are marked by their authenticity and extensiveness. Poetic works are not simply static artistic representations, but vivid expressions that put forward possibilities and extend the reader's comprehension of what is, or could be possible.[38]

Anticipating the counter-argument that literary depictions of reality are often so fanciful that they nullify their heuristic function, Ricoeur adds that "no discourse [is] so fictional that it does not connect up with reality".[39] This is to say that, irrespective of how alien or fantastic a piece of literature is, it is always a variant or alternative to our own world. Utilising language that closely echoes that of Heidegger, Ricoeur holds that literary forms of poetic language are *privileged* above

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[37] Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 141.
[38] Ibid., pp. 139-141.
[39] Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 141. (See alternative translation in: Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 140.)

other mimetic expressions because they provide novel experiences that feed back into our own perceptions of the world:

> I have shown elsewhere… that fiction is the privileged path for the redescription of reality; and that poetic language is *par excellence* that which effects what Aristotle, reflecting on tragedy, called the mimesis of reality. For tragedy imitates reality only because it recreates it by means of a mythos, a "fable", which reaches the profoundest essence of reality.[40]

The second notable point of convergence between Ricoeur and Heidegger is the designation of poetic works as autonomous. To recall, Heidegger understood works of art as relics of a bygone age that are inevitably (mis)construed by a contemporary audience.[41] Once released into the public sphere, artwork is left to transmit its own meaning without any further attribution from its creator, or 'framing' from its original social-historical context. Heidegger further stressed that the expectation that a work must become self-subsistent is wholly aligned with the intentions of the author/creator. For, in the act of publishing their work, an artist implicitly acknowledges that it will henceforth speak for itself:

> The artist's most peculiar intention already aims in this direction. The work is to be released by him to its pure self-subsistence. It is precisely in great art—and only such art is under consideration here—that the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge.[42]

In two publications from 1973, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" (1973c) and "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" (1981b),[43] Ricoeur echoes many of these sentiments concerning the reception of artistic 'works'. However, by shifting the focus away from all works of art, and towards *textual* forms of poetic language, he significantly extends Heidegger's notion of

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[40] Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 142. (See alternative translation in: Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 141.)
[41] Heidegger, 1971a, p. 40.
[42] Ibid., p. 39.
[43] Though initially published in French in 1973 (in *Archivio di filosofia* vol.2, no. 4, pp. 25-61), the first English translation of "Hermeneutics and Critique of Ideology" appeared in the 1981a compilation *Paul Ricoeur: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.*

autonomy.[44] In particular, he intimates that Heidegger's belief that poetry has the "potential" to transmit meaning beyond its socio-historical context does not go far enough.

In Ricoeur's view, a given work can *only* be fully realised *once* it has been completely separated from its original "spatio-temporal network".[45] This happens because all works of art are initially understood as a "dialogue" between the author and their target audience.[46] Over time, however, this dialogical situation ceases to exist. Freed from the intentions of their author/creator, it loses any "reference to a given reality".[47] As discussed in Chapter 4, it is at this stage, when a work stands for itself alone, that its objective meaning is laid bare. This process is described by Ricoeur in terms of a change in "reference". As a work's primary reference to the author's everyday world wanes, a new 'second-order' reference (to the work's objective linguistic meaning) comes to the fore:

> What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant; verbal meaning and mental meaning have different destinies. This first form of autonomy already implies the possibility that the "matter of the text" may escape from the author's restricted intentional horizon… The peculiarity of the literary work, and indeed of the work as such, is nevertheless to transcend its own psycho-sociological conditions of production and thereby to open itself to an unlimited series of readings, themselves situated in socio-cultural contexts which are always different. In short, the work decontextualises itself, from the sociological as well as the psychological point of view, and is able to recontextualise itself differently in the act of reading. [48]

It is worth noting the overt references to the hermeneutical studies of Gadamer that Ricoeur employs in the excerpt above.[49] Indeed, as concerns the notion of

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[44] Though Ricoeur presents his discussion of autonomy in terms of literary works, he states that the observations are likewise valid for works of art in general. (Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 133.)
[45] Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 140.
[46] Though this assertion is initially made in reference to "literary works", Ricoeur adds that it can be extended more broadly to incorporate "the work as such". (Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 91.)
[47] Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 140.
[48] Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 91. See also: Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 133 and Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 84 and Ricoeur, 1979a, p. 218.
[49] Gadamerian terms used here include "the matter of the text" and the author's "horizons". Throughout the two 1973 studies, Ricoeur draws a number of parallels between his

autonomy, Ricoeur's understanding closely conforms to that of Gadamer (1960 and 1963). For both, artistic works offer "authentic" aesthetic experiences to the reader because they transcend the "*mens auctoris*" (author's intention).[50] While, in this light, the author's subjective viewpoint is always discernible within a given text, and may in fact be a "point of interest to the reader", its true hermeneutical value is found in the "excess of meaning that is present in the work itself".[51]

Herein lies the fundamental distinction between the textual hermeneutics of Ricoeur and the more narrow understanding of the 'the world of the work' put forward by Heidegger. For Ricoeur, the worlds projected by poetic texts do not conform to, nor necessarily evoke, the historical world of the author *qua* artist. Rather, a shift in the "axis of interpretation" inevitably takes place "from the question of subjectivity to that of the world".[52] In other words, as a work is removed from its original context, it conjures a variety of new associations and meanings that in no way refer to the intentions of the artist nor the historical world from which they came.

This inevitable move towards de-contextualisation is even more evident with textual poetic works, as there is only a tenuous spatio-temporal relationship between the writer and reader to begin with.[53] As the distance grows between the two, and the differences between the historical world (of the writer) and the contemporary world (of the reader) become ever more pronounced, a text becomes "emancipated". This is to say that it now transcends the limited horizon of the author, and is received by its contemporary audience as a distinct work that generates novel assertions:

> The autonomy of the text already contains the possibility that what Gadamer calls the "matter" of the text may escape from the finite

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hermeneutical understanding and that of Gadamer. For further discussion see also: Kirkland (1977), Madison (1994), Ross (2003) and Taylor (2011).

[50] Gadamer, 2007, pp. 129-130.

[51] Ibid., p. 130.

[52] Ricoeur, 1975c, p. 94.

[53] Ibid., p. 94.

> intentional horizon of its author; in other words, thanks to writing, the "world" of the text may explode the world of the author.[54]

Text and Reference

If poetic texts do not project the world of the author as suggested by Heidegger, to what do they refer? From his own metaphorical theory, Ricoeur borrowed the belief that the heuristic function of a text to "reveal" novel insights lay in its ability to project a state of affairs that is in some ways *familiar* and other ways *alien* to that of the reader. Much like with metaphors, poetic texts challenge the reader's established comprehension of objects, people and circumstances and replace them with a new paradigm of interpretation. This process is described by Ricoeur as the dismantling of the text's "first-order" ostensive references (i.e. those things that the reader can 'point to' in their everyday life), before replacing them with a "second-order" metaphorical reference.[55] In effect, whilst a text may utilise the same linguistic signs that the reader attributes to familiar entities, they are often characterised in a way that is wholly unfamiliar.[56] McCarthy (1989) explains that, much like a metaphor, a poetic work is only successful when it points to an alternative vision of reality that jars with the reader's previous understanding:

> The return may be made at this point to the "world of the text" as the reference of the text. Just as metaphor sublates a first order conventional reference in order to suggest a new possibility for reference through a semantic dissonance, so at the level of the text the activity of configuration, composition through genre, and production as an imaginative process, acts to transform the conventional world through the fictional world of the text. In this sense the text displays a world as its creative reference, often in the wake of the fictional alteration of the everyday. The everyday need not be reproduced in the text; in fact, for the poetic work, a reproduction of the world is a failure. In the work of fiction the everyday is reconfigured to present a world understood as a possible way of being.[57]

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[54] Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 133.
[55] Ricoeur, 1974a, pp. 78-79. (See also p. 73.)
[56] With respect to this, we need only consider the atypical representations of the magical rose in J. Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* or the anonymous judges in F. Kafka's *Der Prozess*.
[57] McCarthy, 1989, p. 12.

In this view, poetic texts have, what can be termed in a Kantian sense, a "productive" referentiality that acts to elicit a re-appraisal of the world and the objects in it. This contrasts with the "reproductive" function of spoken or mundane language, which seeks only to represent the world as it is currently perceived and understood. [58] However, this new terminology is largely unnecessary, as it simply recasts the constructed opposition identified in earlier chapters between 'ordinary' and 'poetic' language.

To recall Chapters 6 and 7, we observed that Ricoeur identified three basic categories of discourse: ordinary, scientific and poetic. The first two types were seen as the most common means of communicating within a given society because they provide clear assertions (or argumentations) that are necessary for day-to-day living. In order to achieve accurate articulations of reality, these forms of discourse utilise a system of "falsification and verification", whereby a specific interpretation of any one thing is sought.[59] All other interpretations are filtered out on the grounds that they are less "adequate". While these common forms of discourse are certainly useful for describing one's surrounding environment, Ricoeur warns that they are limited to "show[ing] us a world already there".[60] In this respect, there is a relationship between the monosemy of scientific discourses and its explicit, reproductive function.

This is in stark contrast to the equivocacy of poetic language. Whereas ordinary language seeks to faithfully describe the world as is, poetic works glory in generating new, alternative interpretations through their inherent polysemy. This productive function of poetic language is explored most comprehensively in Ricoeur's 1975 text "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics".[61] In it, he puts the 'world of the text' concept forward as a future

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[58] Ricoeur, 1977b, pp. 189-191. See also: 1981d, pp. 291-293.
[59] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 25. See also: Ricoeur, 1975c, pp. 85-87.
[60] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 87.
[61] This study was initially published in French in 1975 under the title "Herméneutique philosophique, herméneutique biblique". The first English translation, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics", was published the same year in the Canadian journal *Studies in Religion / Sciences religieuses* (as well as in the "Protocol of the 17th Colloquy of the

focus of hermeneutical study,[62] suggesting that it offers a valuable conceptual resource with which to investigate how literary works engender "imaginative variations" of the world:

> The world of the text, therefore, is not that of everyday language. In that sense it implies a new kind of distanciation, that of *fiction*, to our ordinary grasp of reality. A narrative, a tale, a poem are not without referents, but there is a gap between their referents and that of ordinary language. Through fiction and through poetry new possible modes of being-in-the-world are opened up in the midst of reality. Fiction and poetry intend being not as given being but as potential being. Consequently everyday reality undergoes a metamorphosis, thanks to what could be called the "imaginative variations" which literature displays… Metaphorical – and, more generally – poetic – language aims at a mimesis of reality. However, this language "imitates" reality only because it recreates reality by means of a mythos, a plot, a fable, which touches upon the very essence of things.[63]

What is perhaps lacking in Ricoeur's various studies of poetic and ordinary language is a thorough assessment of their relationship to the mode (or medium) of communication used. Considering the hermeneutical distinctions between the spoken and written modes discussed earlier in the thesis, it follows that there would be a strong correlation between the basic categories of discourse (i.e. ordinary or poetic) and the spoken or textual modes in which they are predominantly expressed.

In fact, Ricoeur does provide a cursory analysis of the relationship between the 'ordinary' form and the spoken 'mode'. In *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1976), he explains that ordinary language is predominantly articulated verbally (or "dialogically") because its primary function is to accurately

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Center for Hermeneutical Studies"). This source is here cited as "Ricoeur, 1975b". In 1978, an amended version was released by Pickwick Press, in *Exegesis: Problems of Method and Exercises in Reading*, with the new title "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics". This is here cited as "Ricoeur, 1978a", and is the principal translation used in this thesis. A third version appeared in the 1991 compilation *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (by Northwestern University Press). Due to significant distinctions in translation and organisation between the 1975, 1978 and 1991 versions, the three are treated as separate publications in this thesis.

[62] The other conceptual (or philosophical) hermeneutical "categories" identified in this work are "discourse, writing, explanation, interpretation, distanciation, appropriation, etc." (Ricoeur, 1975b, p. 14)

[63] Ricoeur, 1975b, p. 26.

detail the shared circumstances between speakers. There is, in effect, a correlation between an individual's intention to provide accurate descriptions, or avoid misunderstandings, and the verbal mode that is often used.[64]

It is with regard to the relationship between poetic works and the textual mode that Ricoeur provides a much less detailed analysis.[65] We may well assume that there is a corresponding relationship between the poetic form and textual mode that mirrors the one between ordinary language and the spoken mode. In this light, poetic works often find expression in a textual mode because they do not rely on common ostensive references between author and reader. Indeed, this lack of shared circumstances impels the reader to look for a meaning more aligned with the productive function of poetic discourse.

This point, while not overtly stated, is intimated at various points in Ricoeur's publications of the 1970s.[66] What makes the notion so compelling is that it links the polysemy of poetic language, on the one hand, with the unique (second-order) referentiality of texts on the other. From this perspective, a literary work's content, style and *textual* mode of expression all work together to decontextualise it from its original world and, in so doing, expose a "deeper" objective meaning.[67]

Appropriation

Prior to considering how the concept of the 'world of the text' can be augmented by the 1977 study of biblical revelation, it is necessary to review how for Ricoeur

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[64] Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 14-19.
[65] It could be argued that the relationship between poetic discourse and textual transmission is precisely what Ricoeur's narrative studies of the 1980s are seeking to establish in a less direct way.
[66] See: Ricoeur, 1974a, pp. 73-75; Ricoeur, 1975a, pp. 67-71; Ricoeur, 1979a, pp. 218-219.
[67] It should be noted that this interpretation wholly aligns with Ricoeur's notion of "depth semantics". In "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology", he argues that the textual form of transmission leads to a more objective interpretation of discourse due to the prioritising of linguistic meaning: "It is necessary to have gone as far as possible along the route of objectification, to the point where structural analysis discloses the depth semantics of a text, before one can claim to 'understand' the text in terms of the 'matter' which speaks therefrom. The matter of the text is not what a naive reading of the text reveals, but what the formal arrangement of the text mediates." (Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 93.)

literary works were seen to be received, or "actualised", by a contemporary audience.

As earlier noted, Ricoeur adopted Heidegger's core belief that the *worlds* projected by poetic works can profoundly affect the ontological understanding of the reader in a process termed "appropriation". This occurs when key aspects of a literary work are first interpreted, then internalised: "To appropriate is to make what was alien become one's own. What is appropriated is indeed the matter of the text."[68]

In terms of reception, there are notable distinctions between Ricoeur's understanding and Heidegger's aesthetic interpretive model. To recall, for Heidegger, exposure to great works of art was seen to offer a contemporary audience access to earlier ("primordial") insights. In this view, the audience is characterised as a receptor, of sorts, which perceives the "genius" of the artistic creations of yesteryear, and all that they signified. For Ricoeur, however, appropriation is both a creative and cooperative process, involving a mediation between the reader's vision of reality and that expressed by the work itself.[69] Far from simply conveying a different "cultural paradigm",[70] for Ricoeur, a text provides a dynamic aesthetic experience that clashes with the present "contingent circumstances".[71] This juxtaposition between what *is* and what *is possible* stimulates the reader to re-assess their reality and their own placement in it.

It is important to note the focus that Ricoeur here places on the *subversive* function of literary works. Because the world of the text is neither that of the author nor that of the reader, it is able to reveal new, and perhaps better, ways of being-in-

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[68] Ricoeur, 1981c, p. 113. This translation of "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics", from *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, is more precise than that of the original *Noûs* translation that states: "To appropriate is to make what was strange become appropriated". (Ricoeur, 1975c, p. 95.)

[69] For discussion on how appropriation stems from the "creative matrix" of reading (which is in itself based upon Gadamer's understanding of "play"), see: Ricoeur, 1981e, pp. 182-190; McCarthy, 1989, pp. 21-23. For more general commentaries on Ricoeur's notion of appropriation, see: Bühler, 2011; McCall, 2016.

[70] Young, 2001, p. 18. See also pp. 19-24 for further discussion on Heidegger's notion of art and its contemporary reception.

[71] Sohn, 2016, p. 18.

the-world.[72] In this respect, poetic language runs contrary to the accurate, denotative function of ordinary language. By manifesting authentic experiences in an "unconventional" way, literary texts expose what is potentially realisable in the world of the reader:

> The world of the text… is therefore not the world of everyday language. In this sense it constitutes a new sort of distanciation which we can call a distanciation of the real from itself. It is this distanciation which fiction introduces into our apprehension of reality. A story, a fairy tale, a poem, do not lack a referent. Through fiction and poetry new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up within everyday reality.[73]

Through their unorthodox portrayals of reality, literary works challenge the distinction between the real and the imaginary. In this respect, poetry is not simply descriptive, but a radical, revelatory form of discourse.[74] Indeed, far from *reproducing* the world as is, it *projects* untold possibilities and, in so doing, compels the reader to question the present state of affairs.[75] Schwarz (1983) argues that this "subversive" depiction of poetic discourse – in which appropriation requires the reader to somehow submit to the outlook of the text – is a seminal facet of Ricoeur's understanding:

> Ricoeur envisions interpretation as the dialectical interaction between the understanding of the world projected by the text and the self-understanding which takes place as the reader enters a reality different from his own. For Ricoeur, the act of appropriating a text should be a process of disappropriating one's habitual identity as it is transformed imaginatively and non-coercively by its participation in the world of the text.[76]

Though this quite harsh characterisation of appropriation explains the potential ontological influence of literary works, it is less clear in what way this process is seen by Ricoeur to be cooperative, or "mediated". To answer this, we must refer

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[72] Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 93.
[73] Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 141.
[74] Madison, 1994, p. 274.
[75] Kaplan, 2003, p. 35. & Petrovici, 2013, p. 24.
[76] Schwartz, 1983, p. 8. For further discussion on the subversive function of poetic discourse see: Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 144; Ricoeur 1975c, p. 95.

to his understanding of autonomy. It was earlier established that when a work is no longer understood as a manifestation of the psychological intentions of its author, it sheds any ties to its historical context.[77] Ricoeur holds that once a literary work has become objectified in this way, it is only through the act of reading that it can again come to *mean* something.

Thus, the very act of reading allows literary works to find expression (or at least signification) outside their original historical context. Kearney (1994) likens this interdependency between text and reader to "a two-way street": the reader requires the text to extend their ontological horizons through the appropriation of its literary worlds, while the text requires the reader to become meaningful (or "actualised") in a contemporary setting:

> The relation between text and reader is thus, as it were, a two-way street: the text depends on its readers for its actualization, but in the process of reading — giving the text a meaning — readers are themselves actualized ("metamorphosed") — given a self — by the text. In exposing ourselves to the text, we undergo "imaginative variations" of our egos and receive in this way from the text "an enlarged self, which would be the proposed existence corresponding in the most suitable way to the world proposed".[78]

The World in Front of the Text: A New Formulation

There are several key implications stemming from the understanding of literary reception outlined above. The first concerns its influence on Ricoeur's subsequent literary studies.

To this point, we have focused on Ricoeur's publications up to 1975. As much as defining his own 'textual' hermeneutics, these works also reveal the extent to which Ricoeur's study of poetic reception evolved through a dialogue with earlier hermeneutical philosophies. In terms of the concepts of 'the world of the text' and 'appropriation', in particular, we saw that they took shape through a process

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[77] Ricoeur, 1973c, p. 133.
[78] Madison, 1994, p. 306.

of accepting or rejecting various tenets of Heidegger's (and, indeed, Gadamer's) phenomenological aesthetics.

These respective characterisations of the 'world of the text' and 'appropriation' would however not be the final forms of the two concepts. Over the next decade, both would become more refined as Ricoeur integrated them into his understanding of, firstly, the hermeneutical arc and, secondly, the three stages of mimesis (as represented in the *Time and Narrative* publications).[79] In this respect, Pellauer (2007) observes that Ricoeur's conspicuously phenomenological conception of poetic worlds became the foundation on which his narrative theory of the 1980s was built:

> [Ricoeur] needs to complete his consideration of narrative discourse by adding to it a theory of reading. To this point he has tried to focus his attention on structures internal to all narrative; we might even say his focus is on the objective structures of any narrative. But he needs also to show how we appropriate such objective structures. This happens, he claims, when the world of the text is taken up in the reader's imagination through reading, a process that has been discussed extensively by literary critics, but one that is also open to phenomenological description.[80]

A second important implication of Ricoeur's poetic reception theory relates to the way in which it exposed the failings of earlier literary interpretive models. At the outset of the thesis, we noted that Romanticism saw texts as *external* representations of an individual's *internal* thoughts and intentions. This viewpoint was exemplified in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, which asserted that the study of a work's linguistic form was only pertinent in so much as it exposed the true, psychological meaning "behind" language. Ricoeur's vision of literature as objective discourse provided an important alternative to this prevailing Romantic outlook. Through Ricoeur's concept of appropriation, it became clear that textual interpretation does not "find any model in the fusion of consciousnesses, in

[79] Moloney, 1992, pp. 122-126.
[80] Pellauer, 2007, p. 88-89.

'empathy' or in sympathy", as previously assumed.[81] Rather, a text says something in its own right and, in so doing, transcends the intentions of its author.

Ricoeur's understanding of discourse likewise challenged the long enduring perception (introduced in the post-Reformation era) that meaning was buried *within* the text, ready to be exhumed. Ricoeur's focus on the ontological processes of reception found that texts generate meaning by way of a back-and-forth (or, coefficient) process of interpretation. Uncoupled from its original context, a work points to a new "second-order" linguistic reference that belongs neither to the world of the author nor that of the reader. This reference becomes meaningful at the point in which the text is read, and internalised, by a contemporary audience:

> This concept of interpretation expresses a decisive shift of emphasis with respect to the Romantic tradition of hermeneutics. In that tradition, the emphasis was placed on the ability of the hearer or reader to transfer himself into the spiritual life of a speaker or writer. The emphasis, from now on, is less on the other as a spiritual entity than on the world which the work unfolds… The shift of emphasis from understanding the other to understanding the world of his work entails a corresponding shift in the conception of the "hermeneutical circle". For the thinkers of Romanticism, the latter term meant that the understanding of a text cannot be an objective procedure… For my part, I do not wish to conceal the fact that the hermeneutical circle remains an unavoidable structure of interpretation. An interpretation is not authentic unless it culminates in some form of appropriation (*Aneignung*), if by that term we understand the process by which one makes one's own (*eigen*) what was initially other or alien (*fremd*).[82]

Ricoeur's reception theory resolved these two incorrect assumptions that had undermined Schleiermacher's general hermeneutical vision. By conceptualising textual interpretation in terms of "projected" meaning,[83] Ricoeur believed that hermeneutics could finally abandon the impossible task of mentally reconstructing

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[81] Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 107.
[82] Ibid., p. 139-140.
[83] To avoid confusion, please note that while Ricoeur understands the interpretative process as the reader appropriating the "projected world" of the text, he stresses that this does not entail the reader "projecting" their own prejudices onto the work: "I should rather say that the reader understands himself before the text, before the world of the work. To understand oneself before, in front of, a world is the contrary of projecting oneself and one's beliefs and prejudices; it is to let the work and its world enlarge the horizon of my own self-understanding" (Ricoeur, 1974b, p. 107.)

the historical world of the text, in the hope of ascertaining the psychological intentions of the author. Indeed, for Ricoeur, contemporary hermeneutics was neither equipped for, nor interested in, the task of establishing the meaning *behind* a text, as Schleiermacher proposed. Rather, henceforth, it would be able to focus its attention on the world opened up *in front of* it: "The most decisive break with Romantic hermeneutics is here; what is sought is no longer an intention hidden behind the text, but a world unfolded in front of it."[84]

With regard to this, a small but significant amendment to "the world of the text" formulation was needed. From 1977 onwards, Ricoeur would adopt into his studies the new term "the world *in front of* the text".[85] This change in terminology sought to emphasise the process of mediation, between the respective world-views of the reader and of the text itself, that he saw to be at the core of all literary interpretation.[86] It should however be emphasised that, for Ricoeur, this innovative understanding of literary reception was not presented as a rejection of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics but, rather, a means by which it could finally be realised.

Chapter 1 of the thesis indicated that Ricoeur and Schleiermacher both sought to establish a philosophical, or general, hermeneutical model that looked to account for the individual (or "human") elements of the interpretative process, while remaining rigorous from a linguistic standpoint. In Ricoeur's estimation, a mediated understanding of literary reception, based on the capacity of language to "reveal" insights by way of its textual worlds, both corresponds to and complements Schleiermacher's ambitious vision:

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[84] Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 92. See also*:* Ricoeur, 1975c, p. 91-95.

[85] The first instance of this formulation is found in Ricoeur, 1974a, p. 80: "If we no longer define hermeneutics as the search for another person and psychological intentions which hide behind the text, and if we do not want to reduce interpretation to the identification of structures, what remains to be interpreted? My response is that to interpret is to explicate the sort of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text."

[86] The new formulation became the focus for a number of Ricoeur's own studies during this period, as well as sustained scholarly interest to the present. For primary source discussion, see: Ricoeur, 1977c, pp. 25-31, 37; Ricoeur, 1979a, pp. 217-226; Ricoeur, 1981e. For secondary source discussion, see: Mudge, 1980; Robinson, 1995; Beldman, 2007, pp. 45-50; Reynhout, 2012, pp. 87-107, 156-163; Suazo, 2013.

> The link between appropriation and revelation is, in my view, the cornerstone of a hermeneutics which seeks both to overcome the failures of historicism and to remain faithful to the original intention of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. To understand an author better than he understood himself is to unfold the revelatory power implicit in his discourse, beyond the limited horizon of his own existential situation.[87]

Part 3: Biblical and Poetic Revelation: An Interdisciplinary Analysis

Part 2 of the chapter demonstrated that, for Ricoeur, the ontological function of poetic works derives from how their fictional 'worlds' challenge the outlook of contemporary readers. From this perspective, biblical texts are hermeneutically no different from any other poetic work: they are "revelatory" in so much as their innovative use of language presents unconventional (or radical) ways of being in the world:

> Religious discourse is poetic in all the senses we have named. Being written down as scripture removes it from the finite horizon of its authors and its first audience. The style of its literary genres gives it the externality of work. And the intended implicit reference of each text opens onto a world, the biblical world, or rather the multiple of worlds unfolded before the book by its narration, prophecy, prescriptions, wisdom and hymns. The proposed world that in biblical language is called a new creation, a new Covenant, *the Kingdom of God*, is the issue of the biblical text unfolded in front of the text.[88]

This broad categorisation of biblical discourse, as a sub-set of poetic language, is not only emphasised in "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" but is a central aspect of many of Ricoeur's studies throughout the period.[89] Comstock (1986) observes that Ricoeur's hermeneutical studies proceeded from the belief that biblical discourse is poetic (rather than, say, historical or scientific) on the grounds that the Bible's 'sense' of truth is transmitted via the reader's imaginative faculties:

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[87] Ricoeur, 1981e, p. 192. See also: Ricoeur, 1973c, pp. 133-134; Ricoeur, 1981b, pp. 92-93.
[88] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 25. For further discussion on how Ricoeur situates "religious discourse" as a sub-form of "poetic discourse" see: Benjamins, 2014, pp. 55-59.
[89] In particular, see: Ricoeur, 1968; Ricoeur, 1974a; Ricoeur, 1975a; Ricoeur, 1975b; Ricoeur, 1979a.

> Ricoeur understands these stories as a species of religious language. Religious language in turn is a form of poetic discourse. In it the human imagination is at work, creating new forms of response to God's actions upon us. On Ricoeur's view, the truth claims of religious texts are more like those of the poet than of the historian or the scientist.[90]

However, one of the key arguments put forward in the thesis is that Ricoeur's hermeneutical vision does not wholly endorse a top-down approach, from broad philosophical categories to regional (in this case, biblical) literary works. As with Schleiermacher, Ricoeur held that, in order for philosophical hermeneutics to avoid turning into a set of antiquated conventions, regional forms of discourse must feed back into, and inform, the general theories. Thus, despite appearing on the surface to be a mere sub-set of poetic language, biblical texts were seen by Ricoeur to offer an invaluable resource with which to refine the *general* concept of poetic language.[91]

Why Biblical Discourse?

One could however ask why, of all the text-based forms of discourse, biblical discourse should be so singled out? Ricoeur emphasises that the ligature between poetic and biblical forms goes much deeper than the mutual appeal to the imagination noted by Comstock. Indeed, it could be said that biblical texts exemplify the enduring influence (i.e. unique temporality) of poetic works. Of all so called poetic works, the Bible illustrates how human experience can be brought to language, through text, in a way that continues to 'speak' to readers over the centuries: "We immediately establish a correspondence with the fact that the claim of revealed speech reaches us today through writings to be interpreted… So it is therefore appropriate, I believe, to inquire into the particular revelation function

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[90] Comstock, 1986, p. 131-132. See also: McCarthy, 1989; Pellauer, 2007, p. 85-89; Laughery, 1999.

[91] This back and forth relationship between philosophical and biblical forms of discourse (where one is seen to amend, or modify, the other) is further explored in Part 3 of the conclusion to the thesis.

attached to certain modalities of scripture which I will place under the title *Poetic*."[92]

Though it is left unsaid by Ricoeur, there is a clear affinity between that which the Bible has achieved from a receptive standpoint and that which all poetic works aspire to. By practically demonstrating the timeless heuristic power of past literary works, the Bible is a paragon of sorts of metaphorical temporality (as earlier established in Chapters 6 and 7).

It is on these grounds that Ricoeur's 1977 study initially sets out to test if the specific biblical modalities of revelation correspond to how all poetic works "reveal" insights to the reader. This is of course not the first time that we've seen Ricoeur take highly regional terminology or jargon (as he does here with the term revelation) and modify it to suit his interdisciplinary approach. In Chapter 4, we observed how Ricoeur assigned new meanings to the terms 'critique' and 'conviction'. By interpreting these terms along hermeneutical lines, Ricoeur sought to expose the practical, communicative properties of the two concepts. In effect, he *de-philosophised* the concept of critique, and *de-theologised* the concept of conviction, with a view to demonstrating that both were necessary for textual interpretation.

"Toward a Hermeneutic of the idea of Revelation" employs a similar methodology. Ricoeur here appropriates the concept of 'revelation' and uses it to define the heuristic function of poetic works. In this light, biblical texts are seen to correspond to all other poetic works in so far as they refigure the reader's ontological perceptions through the subversive worlds they project. As with critique and conviction, the justification to extend the meaning of revelation beyond its theological boundaries rests on the fluid relationship existing between general and regional hermeneutics. That a concept has "always been comprehensible" in a certain regional "sense" does not mean it should only be

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[92] Ricoeur, 1977c, pp. 20-22.

understood in that way. Rather, the opportunity exists to extrapolate the base elements of the concept and construct a more universal understanding.[93]

This, however, is not to suggest that Ricoeur did not have some apprehensions in tinkering with such a loaded religious term. Throughout his 1977 study, he repeatedly emphasises his "non-violent" appeal to biblical textuality, in the hope that the Bible's various representations of revelation could help to establish a more complete understanding of literary reception:[94]

> So it is therefore appropriate, I believe, to inquire into the particular revelatory function attached to certain modalities of scripture which I place under the title Poetics, in a sense I will explain in a moment. In effect, under the category of poetics, philosophical analysis encounters those traits of revelation which may correspond with or respond to the nonviolent appeal of biblical revelation.[95]

A regrettable aspect of "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" is that it does not necessarily fulfil its ambitious objectives. While the study provides a thorough analysis of both the biblical modalities of revelation and the revelatory function of poetic works (in terms of "the world in front of the text" concept), it does not adequately explore the relationship *between* the two. This final section of the chapter, therefore, endeavours to explore the mutual benefits of a 'mediated' philosophical-biblical understanding of revelation.

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[93] Ibid., p. 20.

[94] As a way to maintain his philosophical focus, Ricoeur limited his analysis to the representation of revelation in biblical textuality and, therefore, omitted any discussion on how the concept is understood *theologically* or *doctrinally*: "[I] tried to carry the idea of revelation back to a more 'originary' level than that of theology, the level of its fundamental discourse… These are those cardinal experiences, as language brings them to expression, which can enter into resonance or consonance with the modes of revelation brought to language by the most primitive expressions of the faith of Israel and of early Christianity." (Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 20.)

[95] Ibid., p. 22: Indeed, Ricoeur characterises his study as "nonviolent" throughout the article (pp. 19, 21-22, 37). The definition of "appeal", as used above, is earlier defined (on p. 19) as a claim "which does not force one to accept its message".

From Biblical to Poetic Revelation

As previously discussed, the belief that literary texts have the ability to uncover or "reveal" truth became a seminal facet of both Gadamer's and Ricoeur's respective understandings of the 'fusion of horizons' and 'the world of the text'.[96] It was however not until Ricoeur's 1977 study that the capacity of literature to expose inhabitable worlds was considered in direct relation to the religious concept of revelation.[97]

Ricoeur postulated that these two forms of 'revealing' were perhaps not so different, and that biblical textuality might in some way inform our understanding of how poetic works become ontologically significant. Looking at how reality is rendered in the Bible, he concluded that biblical texts typify the way truth is disclosed poetically. Whereas ordinary language looks to "slavishly" describe the world as it is, scripture provides an annotated re-description (or "re-figuration") of reality. For the Bible, then, truth equates to that which is shown by the text (i.e. "manifestation"), and not that which the text can prove empirically (i.e. "verification"). For Ricoeur, this "productive" function of biblical discourse exemplifies the semantic structure that all poetic language aims towards.[98]

In his 1977 study, the productive semantics of biblical discourse is articulated using Aristotle's "mimetic-mythos" distinction. From this perspective, the accurate, verifiable schematization of the world of ordinary language is tantamount to a simple *mimetic* description of reality. However, in scripture, the mimetic content is consistent with, and supported by, the overarching biblical world-view of the text (i.e. mythos). This allows it to assume a semantic structure

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[96] Indeed, from the earliest phenomenologically-based studies of aesthetics, the term revelation (or at least the idea of "revealing") was linked to the notion of artistic reception. Heidegger's foundational works on 'the world of the work' articulated the ontological power of art and poetry in terms of its capacity to *uncover* that which was concealed: "The voice of thought must be poetic because poetry is the saying of truth, the saying of the unconcealedness of beings ("The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 72)." His subsequent 1942 publication "What are Poets For?" goes even further in drawing overt associations between the, so called, unconcealedness of poetic works and the ability to *reveal* that which is unknown or obscure. (Heidegger, 1971b, p. 104.)

[97] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 21. See also: Ricoeur, 1979a, p. 224.

[98] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 24.

whereby description (mimesis) and meaning (mythos) are fused together in what Ricoeur terms "true mimesis":

> To speak like Aristotle in his Poetics, the mythos is the way to true mimesis, which is not slavish imitation, or a copy, or mirror-image, but a transposition or metamorphosis – or, as I suggest, a redescription. This function of fiction and redescription, of mythos and mimesis, constitutes the referential function by means of which I would define the poetic dimension of language.[99]

Ricoeur postulates that, while this hybrid form of truth disclosure is presented in an amplified form in the Bible, it is a necessary condition for all poetic works. As with the Bible, literature looks to go beyond offering faithful descriptions of the world as it is typically conceived. "Poetic discourse suspends this function" and, in so doing, "does not directly augment our knowledge of the object [described]".[100] In effect, all literary works are linked inasmuch as they transmit insights through new, and unfamiliar, presentations of reality: "What shows itself is in each instance a proposed world, a world I may inhabit and wherein I can project my own-most possibilities. It is in this sense of manifestation that language in its poetic function is a vehicle for revelation."[101]

From the biblical example, therefore, we can learn that, while ordinary language imparts knowledge *directly* by way of its accurate descriptions, literary-poetic works elicit insights *indirectly*, by presenting fictional accounts whose significance the reader must work to uncover. This understanding of a "longer", circuitous route of interpretation, involving an extended phase of reflection on the part of the reader, was first put forward in his 1968 publication "Preface to Bultmann".[102] In "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation", Ricoeur goes yet further to

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[99] Ibid., p. 24.
[100] Ibid., p. 25.
[101] Ibid., p. 25.
[102] Ricoeur, 1980c, pp. 67-72. This source (i.e. "Preface to Bultmann") was originally published as the Preface to the 1968 Seuil edition of Bultmann's *Jesus, mythologie et demythologisation*. It was later translated by P. McCormick and features in the translated compilations *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Ricoeur, 1980a) and *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Ricoeur, 1974c).

intimate that the Bible is the poetic work *par excellence*, in that it exemplifies this "longer path" of interpretation:

> But why call it revelatory? Because through all the traits that it recapitulates and by what it adds, the poetic function incarnates a concept of truth that escapes the definition by adequation as well as the criteria of falsification and verification. Here truth no longer means verification, but manifestation, i.e., letting what shows itself be.[103]

Ricoeur's discussion on manifestation and verification in "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" convincingly argues that biblical textuality provides a practical model of this unconventional semantic structure of poetic works. What he does not sufficiently consider is how his initial analysis of the modalities of revelation (in Part 1 of his study) further elucidate the relationship between biblical semantics and poetic reception.

One fruitful point of convergence between the two is the notion of "split-referentiality". To recall, in Part 1 of his 1977 study, Ricoeur highlighted that the biblical genres (and particularly the narrative form) emphasise the dual referentiality of scripture: on one side towards acts in history and on the other towards its contemporary implications. This seems to align itself with his understanding of the *second-order* referentiality of poetic language. That said, it it is not immediately clear how the former (biblical) understanding may inform the latter (poetic) one.

Klemm's 1993 publication, "The Word as Grace: The Bearing of Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy", may offer a helpful basis in this respect.[104] Klemm suggests that, instead of maintaining a reductive distinction between ordinary language and poetic language (with biblical discourse being seen as wholly "poetic"), we should consider biblical discourse as an intermediary between the two poles. In this view,

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[103] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 25.

[104] Klemm, 1993, pp. 513-514: While Klemm's categories broadly conform to Ricoeur's designations of "ordinary" discourse, "poetic" discourse and "biblical" discourse, his analysis utilises different terminology; specifically, "ordinary" is replaced by "descriptive", "poetic" by "literary" and "biblical" by "religious".

biblical texts are neither wholly descriptive, nor wholly fictional. Their historical foundation holds in tension the Bible's two bearings – on the one hand towards the historical world that they describe and, on the other, towards the possible future world that the reader can aspire to: "Religious texts make manifest a fundamental feature of both literary and descriptive texts."[105]

These independent "orientations" – *back* towards real historical events and *forwards* towards a yet unrealised reality – are consistent with Ricoeur's characterisations of the narrative, prescriptive and wisdom modalities of revelation. As previously established, biblical narratives describe events in human history with a view to marking their practical significance for present and future generations. Likewise, the prescriptive and wisdom modalities show what can be learned from past events, and how this knowledge may help to create a "more perfect" existence for the community. Is it possible that this back-and-forth movement between real and possible worlds is a characteristic of all poetic works, and not only biblical genres?

Some caution must of course be taken when applying the biblical notion of split-referentiality to poetic works, as not all literature proceeds from a historical basis. That said, this movement in the biblical modalities does expose how literary works are *often* situated between that which is known and accepted by the reader and that which is possible. Indeed, one can even assume that this hermeneutical movement is a necessary component of all poetic forms that presume to be ontologically significant. We observed that with sentence-level metaphors, semantic innovation could only take place if there is a base understanding with which to operate. As extended-metaphors, aren't literary works likewise compelled to establish a believable ("mimetic") description of reality, before emphasising the more fantastic, or subversive, *re*-descriptions?

Ricoeur's 1977 study reviews the three attributes that he sees as the defining criteria for poetic works. These are, "autonomy through writing, externalization by

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[105] Ibid., p. 514.

means of the work, and the reference to a world".[106] All of these qualities, however, are focused on uncoupling the text from the "actual world", and presenting an alternative vision. If there is one insight that can specifically be taken from the biblical modalities, it is that poetic works must also look back and access the audience's experiential understanding of their world, before projecting a fictional vision of what is possible. For, as noted by Van Den Hengel et al. (1989), though language has the capacity to express reality, we must remember that it is itself preceded by reality.[107]

A Reappraisal of Religious Revelation

A further limitation of "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" is that it does consider in any great depth the implications for biblical hermeneutics. We have until now observed the ways in which the Bible's modalities of revelation can feed into, and bolster, a broader literary reception theory. However, to what extent does this interdisciplinary approach advance the study of biblical discourse in itself?

As with Ricoeur's predecessors (namely, Schleiermacher and de Saussure), Ricoeur's hermeneutical model assumes that this form of interdisciplinary dialogue benefits the study of the regional discourse (in this case, biblical discourse) as much as it enriches the broader philosophical understanding. As with de Saussure, Ricoeur believed that hermeneutics is a continuous cycle, in which individual applications of language (i.e. *parole*) feed into the general discourse theories (i.e. *langue*), and then back again.[108] Since it is evident that the overt philosophical stance of Ricoeur's 1977 study negated this secondary phase back towards scripture, we must look beyond this one publication to better

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[106] Ricoeur 1977c, p. 23.
[107] Van Den Hengel et al., 1989, p. 46: "Language both expresses reality and engages it in praxis. The indisputable fact that our language intends to say something about reality presupposes, according to the ontological position, that human beings are themselves orientations to reality and are linked to reality by a variety of ties."
[108] See discussion in Part 1 of *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*: Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 1-24.

understand the benefits that a poetic reappraisal of revelation can offer biblical hermeneutics.

At the outset of the chapter, we noted that "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" was originally given as a lecture at the Faculté Universitaire St. Louis (Brussels) in 1976. In fact, this was part of a conference entitled *La Révélation*, in which a number of interdisciplinary studies on the topic were presented. Beyond the lectures themselves, the conference also included a panel discussion involving Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, the theologian Edgar Houlotte et al.[109] In the transcribed panel-discussion, Ricoeur discloses how he sees the philosophically-based exploration of revelation feeding back into the study of biblical textuality.

"Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" begins by stressing Ricoeur's "non-violent appeal" to the Bible's different depictions of revelation. In this respect, he describes his research as an experiment, of sorts, where a secular (or poetic) understanding is tested against biblical representations.[110] This driving aim is echoed in the panel discussion, with Ricoeur proclaiming that his sole intention is to sketch a *philosophy* of revelation: "In response to the problem arising from the philosophical character of my contribution, I confirm that, far from proposing a theology of revelation, I am attempting to outline a philosophy of revelation."[111] This however is not to say that, for Ricoeur, there were no new theological avenues of research that might emerge from the coming together of philosophical and biblical perspectives. One interesting line of enquiry, cited by Ricoeur himself at *St Louis*, concerns the relationship between *biblical* and *theological* interpretations of revelation.

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[109] This roundtable discussion was later published as "La Révélation: discussion d'ensemble" by the Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis in 1977. It is here cited as: Ricoeur et al., 1977d.
[110] Ricoeur, 1977c, pp. 19 & 21-22. See also note 90 above for secondary source material discussing Ricoeur's delimitation of biblical discourse in his 1977c publication.
[111] Ricoeur et al., 1977d, p. 228: "Quant au problème qui a été soulevé concernant le caractère philosophique de ma contribution, je confirme que je n'ai aucunement voulu faire une théologie de la révélation, mais une philosophie de la révélation." (Translation mine.)

The chapter began by establishing that the study of the Bible's textual modalities offered a distinct vantage point from which to consider the concept of revelation. By laying the modalities out as discrete units, their intertextual relations become evident. This firstly proved that there was no heterogeneous depiction of revelation between the biblical genres. However, it also highlighted the prominence of the prophetic modality.

In Ricoeur's initial exploration, he found that revelation was presented using the prophetic formula in which an 'inspirational' voice behind a voice transmitted enlightening truths. Being "the original nucleus of the traditional idea of revelation", he also found it to be the "basic referent" for the religious concept of revelation.[112] In the panel discussion, Ricoeur speaks quite overtly of the hazards of having one such *dominant* representation amongst the various modalities.

> This…was only meant to caution against the temptation to associate the specific trait of the prophetic formula with all kinds of religious discourse. Conversely, in highlighting this specific trait, I in no way subscribed to the faulty understanding that underlay it, namely, that inspiration stems from the presence of a shadow author directing the performance of the material author, as reflected in a view which has long dominated the Christian theological tradition. [113]

He specifically argues that the prominence of the prophetic formula has acted to overshadow the other biblical representations of revelation. In many respects, the prophetic understanding of revelation – as "reported speech" – became synonymous *with* revelation. This in turn shaped the theological (or dogmatic) understanding of the concept, in which revelation became commonly understood in terms of received enlightenment. Put in theological terms, the prominence of

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[112] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 3. As noted earlier, revelation as inspiration is articulated through a distinctive prophetic schema (or "model") within the Bible, whereby a divine voice inspires a human voice, which in turn addresses a wider audience.

[113] Ricoeur et al., 1977d., p.226.: "Cette remarque exégétique n'avait servi qu'à mettre en garde contre la tentation de généraliser le trait spécifique de la formule prophétique à tout discours religieux. Inversement, en soulignant ce trait spécifique, je n'endossais aucunement la mécompréhension qui lui a été attachée, à savoir la conception qui assimile l'inspiration à l'action d'un auteur derrière l'auteur, — conception qui a tenu une place exorbitante dans la tradition théologique chrétienne…" (Translation mine.)

the prophetic modality helped to wed the doctrine of revelation to the doctrine of inspiration.[114]

The interdisciplinary hermeneutical approach employed by Ricoeur thus exposed the way in which religious revelation came to be understood in quite reductive terms, at least with respect to the rich array of meanings exhibited within the biblical genres: "In dealing with the other literary genres, I primarily intended to loosen the constraint exercised by [the prophetic] model which, while resting on an exegetical base, has been unduly extrapolated well beyond the prophetic genre."[115] Indeed, this rigid association between prophecy and revelation has gone on to create a number of problems from an interpretative standpoint.

Ricoeur's 1977 study demonstrated that each of the Bible's various representations of revelation has an exegetical role to play. By making the concept of revelation an appendage to the doctrine of inspiration, some of these exegetical considerations became obscured. For instance, Ricoeur identified that the role of the narrative and wisdom modalities was to look beyond the origin of the prophesied word in order to address more ontological concerns. If scripture is only seen in terms of reported speech – based upon the "exegetical criterion" of "go and tell"– less attention is given to how the biblical texts open up new, inhabitable worlds for the reader.[116]

The prophetic formula also places excessive emphasis on authorship, and how the prophesied word can be traced back to the benediction of God. While this has fostered a strong theological bond between the concepts of revelatory speech, grace and inspiration, it has overshadowed the Bible's capacity to display new, and

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[114] Ibid., pp. 225-226. See also: Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 21.
[115] Ricoeur et al., 1977d, p. 226: "…je ne me suis servi des autres genres littéraires que pour desserrer la contrainte de ce modèle, dans la mesure où il a une base exégétique, mais extrapolée indûment au-delà du genre prophétique." (Translation mine.)
[116] Ibid., p. 225-226: "Je voudrais répondre par une brève mise au point au malentendu qui pourrait résulter de ce que j'ai dit sur le prophétisme en tant que modèle "d'inspiration". Je n'avais en vue que la structure littéraire de la prophétie et le critère exégétique connu comme "clause introductive" : "La parole me fût adressée en ces termes : vas et dis à...". (Translation mine.)

perhaps better, ways of being. As Ricoeur intimates in the panel discussion, the biblical message is first of all a textual message and it is therefore problematic if the ontological significance of the Bible's textual worlds becomes muted:

> My exposition made clear that a discussion on revelation could take place without appealing to the notion of authorship, but not by doing away with the idea that the text carries a vision of a world, the text's own world. It's like the world of the text (this "new being", "the kingdom of God") is projected in front of us. By the same token, it seems to me that it is this very proposition of a particular mode of existence, of life, of the world and kingdom being evoked, which can bring about a reading practice so that we are able to listen to the word (*parole*) speaking through the text.[117]

Conclusion

Part 3 of the chapter has looked to establish the mutual benefits that arise from an interdisciplinary exploration of general and regional forms. On the one hand, we have seen how a comparison between biblical *revelation* and literary *appropriation* exposes the need for a more in-depth understanding of the referentiality of poetic works (and, specifically, how they are situated between conventional and possible visions of reality). On the other, we saw that a comparison of the biblical modalities highlights the current monosemic understanding of revelation, in which the "second-order" (i.e. poetic) function of the narrative form is "eclipsed" by the prominence of the prophetic form.

It is interesting to note the shift in language that occurs in both Ricoeur's 1977 publication and the panel discussion. Both begin with an appraisal of revelation based on a comparison between *dogmatic* and *biblical* interpretations. However, as the analysis moves towards the broader implications for biblical hermeneutics,

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[117] Ibid., p. 210: "J'ai montré dans mon exposé que dans une discussion sur l'idée de révélation on pouvait faire à la rigueur l'économie de la notion d'auteur, mais non de l'idée que le texte déploie un monde, qui est le monde du texte. C'est comme monde du texte que « l'être nouveau », « le Royaume de Dieu » est projeté. Or, c'est cette proposition d'existence, de vie, de monde, de Royaume, qui me paraît capable d'engendrer une pratique, et d'abord une pratique de lecture, à savoir l'écoute de la parole parlant dans le texte." (Translation mine.)

Ricoeur inevitably defers to the *philosophical* notions of 'appropriation' and 'the world of the text'.

Though "areligious" concepts,[118] they provide a necessary basis with which to explore the link between the meaning of scripture and its textual mode of transmission. It is perhaps in this respect that biblical hermeneutics benefits most from the interdisciplinary dialogue – with philosophical hermeneutics offering the conceptual resources to fully articulate scripture's unique form of *textuality*. Indeed, this very point is underscored by Ricoeur himself in the conclusion of "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation":

> Thus, this areligious sense of revelation helps us to restore the concept of biblical revelation to its full dignity. It delivers us from psychologising interpretations of the inspiration of the scriptures in the sense of an insufflation of their words into the writer's ear. If the Bible may be said to be revealed this must refer to what it says, to the new being it unfolds before us. Revelation, in short, is a feature of the biblical world proposed as the text.[119]

[118] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 26.
[119] Ibid., p. 26.

Conclusion:

A "Conflictual-Consensual" Relationship

Part 1: Summary

This study set out to offer a re-appraisal of Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics of the 1970s, as well as to establish the role of religious reflection in it.

It was initially found that, far from proposing a post-structuralist or existential theory of interpretation, as might be expected, Ricoeur's *textual* hermeneutics presented striking similarities with the, so called, Romantic model of the 19th century. In order to better understand this relationship, Part 1 of the thesis began by reviewing Ricoeur's critique of Friedrich Schleiermacher's 'universal' principles of interpretation.

Here, two foundational elements were identified that Ricoeur would use to build his own contemporary understanding. The first was Schleiermacher's two-part notion of discourse itself, in which language was presented in terms of contrasting common and particular "coordinates of meaning". For Ricoeur, this bi-partite characterisation was wholly relevant to the present-day study of discourse, in that it provided a theoretical basis with which to explore the different "modes" and "forms" that language takes. Secondly, Ricoeur was drawn to the belief that the discipline must assume a back-and-forth dialogue between *general* theory and *regional* applications of language. As with Schleiermacher, Ricoeur was convinced that only in this way could the theoretical (or philosophical) study of interpretation evolve alongside the ever-changing ways of "expressing life".[1]

[1] Ricoeur, 1973a, p. 116.

Philosophical and Biblical Hermeneutics

In proposing that his hermeneutics was in fact a two-part system, involving the interplay between philosophy of language and specific acts of interpretation, Ricoeur's publications of the 1970s were cast in a new light. In particular, it opened up the possibility that his theoretical studies of discourse were designed to operate alongside his parallel explorations of biblical textuality from the same period. From this perspective, biblical discourse was treated as a *regional* exemplar that enabled Ricoeur to validate or invalidate his *general* hermeneutical theories as they were being formed.

However, as noted in Chapter 2, this proposed kinship between Ricoeur's philosophy of language and his biblical studies was largely at odds with contemporary scholarship, in which the two were seen to have been intentionally segregated due to their inherent incompatibilities. Part 1 of the thesis, therefore, looked to test the radical supposition that, far from being incongruous, these "competing" branches of Ricoeur's hermeneutics were in effect two sides of the same hermeneutical project. Ricoeur's late autobiographical publications (from 1990-2004), as well as previously untranslated sources from the period in question, proved valuable resources in this respect. They confirmed that while, in his early career, Ricoeur had adhered to a strict "rule of separation" between philosophy and religion, the 1970s saw a notable softening of this stance. Indeed, during this period, Ricoeur openly explored the "rich middle-ground" between philosophical *theory* and religious *applications* of language in what could best be described as an ambitious interdisciplinary experiment.

Though Ricoeur himself tended to represent his research as a continuation of Schleiermacher's vision,[2] we saw that his hermeneutics was in no way a repetition,

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[2] Ricoeur, 1981e, p. 191: "The link… is, in my view, the cornerstone of a hermeneutics which seeks both to overcome the failures of historicism and to remain faithful to the original intention of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. To understand an author better than he understood himself is to unfold the revelatory power implicit in his discourse, beyond the limited horizon of his own existential situation."

or rehash, of the Romantic model. To ensure that the "totality of language" was better represented, Ricoeur proposed a novel, more inclusive, understanding of discourse that encompassed the common *modes* of expression (e.g. spoken, textual etc.),[3] as well as the different genres or *forms* of discourse (e.g. biblical, legal, political etc.). The amalgamation of the two primary branches of discourse theory exposed important links between "ordinary language" and spoken communication on the one hand, and between "poetic language" and textual communication on the other. As demonstrated in Part 2 of the thesis, this realisation went on to become a cornerstone of Ricoeur's characterisation of biblical textuality in the 1970s, as well as his exploration of the narrative form in the 1980s.

Part 1 of the thesis concluded by more closely examining the way in which philosophical discourse and biblical discourse acted, for Ricoeur, as referential 'poles' that structured his hermeneutical outlook. Philosophical discourse, being itself a meta-discourse, was presented as the most *general* form possible and thus the most apt to evaluate all human phenomena (language included). In contrast, biblical discourse was representative of a highly particular (or *regional*) form, in that its message and mode of transmission were solely oriented towards its kerygmatic intentions. It was proposed that, in Ricoeur's 1970s studies, these two forms were held in a 'constructed opposition' as a means of facilitating a dialogue between philosophy of language and particular forms of discourse.

Interdisciplinary Studies: Metaphor and Revelation

In Part 2, the focus shifted to Ricoeur's "exploratory" hermeneutical studies themselves, in which his interpretation theories were brought to bear on the study of biblical language. It was initially shown (in Chapters 4 to 7) that these two tracks initially came together through Ricoeur's extensive exploration of metaphor. This body of work (comprising five separate publications) was presented as Ricoeur's most comprehensive interdisciplinary investigation, its

[3] A notable distinction from Schleiermacher was Ricoeur's belief that, for hermeneutics to provide a valuable resource for linguistic studies, no one "mode" should be prioritised.

primary goal being to confirm that a fruitful exchange between general and regional hermeneutics was possible.

It was concluded that his exploration of metaphorical language delivered the initial 'proof of concept' for his integrated hermeneutics. From a theoretical standpoint, Ricoeur exposed the notable deficiencies in the then popular 'interaction theory' of metaphor (of A.I. Richards, Black et al.). Though it was certainly an advancement on the now defunct rhetorical model, the continued focus placed on lexical units obscured the referential (and therefore ontological) function of metaphorical language. This perpetuated the flawed belief that metaphors could only exist in the form of subject-predicate sentences. Ricoeur's amended 'tensional' theory convincingly argued that metaphors should be not defined by their syntactic structure but, rather, by their capacity to generate semantic innovation. An upshot of his proposal was that literary works could be seen as "extended metaphors".

In his 1975 publication "Biblical Hermeneutics", Ricoeur applied his tensional theory to biblical discourse with a view to confirming that metaphors could indeed be up-scaled to a "compositional" level.[4] In so doing, he discovered that certain biblical literary compositions, such as the New Testament parables, employ a *metaphorical* process of semantic innovation that is distinct from sentence level metaphors. Biblical narratives in particular did not appear to generate semantic tension through 'logical absurdity', as is the case with metaphorical sentences, but instead affected one's ontological outlook by revealing a world-view wholly at odds with that of the reader. This finding led Ricoeur to proclaim that fictional narratives, while undoubtedly metaphorical, "constitute a distinctive class of metaphorical processes".[5]

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[4] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 93. The term "composition", as appearing here in "Biblical Hermeneutics" is used synonymously with his earlier categorisation of literary "works" in *Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics* (1974b, p. 105). As with this definition of "works", Ricoeur highlights that "compositions" can include a variety of literary forms, from narrative parables to poetry.
[5] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 94. See Chapter 7 of the thesis (Parts 2 and 3) for discussion.

If Ricoeur's first major contribution was to amend the *general* theory to include the unique semantic tension of literary works, his second was to highlight its implications for biblical studies. Specifically, he found that the 'distinctive' metaphorical function of biblical narratives derived from how they employed paradox and hyperbole to challenge the established notions, beliefs and perceptions of readers. For David Tracy (1981), the significance of this observation could not be overstated, as it suggested the existence of a coherent semantic strategy that linked the Bible's various genres.[6]

The third and final contribution to the study of metaphorical language identified in the thesis pertains to the subsequent impact of Ricoeur's analysis of the New Testament parables. A minor finding at the time was that the Bible's "extended metaphors" (*qua* narratives) appeared to endure longer than sentence-level metaphors, which inevitably lose their innovative function and "die as metaphors".[7] Chapter 7 demonstrated that this seemingly innocuous observation gave rise to two important branches of research in the years that followed.

The first, exemplified by Sally McFague, approached the question of 'metaphorical longevity' from a *regional* (in this case, religious) perspective. By seeking to understand what differentiates biblical metaphors from conventional metaphors, she observed that figurative language operates 'hierarchically' in the Bible. In particular, more complex metaphorical constructions – namely, "models" and "root-metaphors" – were seen to act as semantic catchments for the Bible's many individual metaphors. It was these models and root-metaphors that had an extended semantic life-span. As McFague put it, they were "metaphors with staying power".[8]

The second line of enquiry considering the question of metaphorical longevity was pursued by Ricoeur himself. Coming at the issue from a literary rather than biblical perspective, he sought to establish what qualities *narratives* possess that

[6] For discussion, see Chapter 6 (Part 3).
[7] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 93.
[8] McFague, 1982, p. 23.

enable them to remain semantically innovative. This approach led to insights concerning the "narrativist nature of time itself", as well as exposing the link between semantic longevity and the 'configurational' dimension of narratives. In particular, Ricoeur discovered that a narrative's ability to produce multiple interpretations allows it to remain meaningful to subsequent generations of readers.

A notable finding of Part 2 of the thesis was that McFague and Ricoeur arrived at a similar conclusion regarding metaphorical language. Though approaching the issue from contrasting (theological and philosophical) perspectives, they both concluded that, in effect, figurative language remains innovative so long as it (re)generates polysemic meaning via a process of semantic deferral. Put another way, it is their *indeterminacy* that allows literary texts to remain ontologically potent. The chapter concluded with a call for renewed scholarly attention to, firstly, assess the role of 'polysemy' in the semantic structure of narrative works and, secondly, to consider how narrative theory can further inform a model-based analysis of biblical metaphors.

Revelation: A Test-Case

In order to demonstrate that Ricoeur's general-regional exploratory studies were not limited to metaphorical language, Part 2 concluded with an examination of what was seen as Ricoeur's most ambitious study of the 1970s: "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation". In this work, Ricoeur sought to ascertain the points of convergence between the *revelatory* function of biblical texts and the *ontological* function of poetic works. Chapter 8 therefore provided a synthesis of Ricoeur's notion of biblical revelation (in Part 1), while delineating his often-neglected poetic reception theory (in Part 2). It was found that, while Ricoeur succeeded in showing potential points of dialogue between a biblical and literary understanding of "appropriation", his 1977 study did not go far enough in bringing the two together.

Part 3 of the chapter attempted to resolve this shortcoming in Ricoeur's study, by more clearly establishing the benefits that could be achieved through an interdisciplinary study of the revelatory capacity of literary works. It was demonstrated that biblical narratives expose a shift occurring in all literary works, from *a posteriori* conceptions of reality to potential representations of the world. In terms of the reciprocal benefits, it was highlighted that, by viewing biblical revelation through the lens of literary reception, biblical hermeneutics acquired a rigorous conceptual framework that helped account for the distinctive ways that scripture "comes to language".

Having summarised the main findings from the preceding chapters, I would like to conclude by reflecting on two key contributions of this study that are relevant for future research.

Part 2: Ricoeur's Lost Poetics

The attention given in this thesis to the notion of poetic language has contributed to a long-standing debate in Ricoeur scholarship. As mentioned in the introduction, it was widely expected that, in the 1970s, Ricoeur would unveil his so called 'poetics'. This anticipation arose from assertions on his part that he would release a final volume of his Philosophy of the Will,[9] in which his "poetics of the will" would be presented.[10] Notwithstanding the effort of scholars such as Wall (2001, 2005, 2011),[11] the general perception is that this work was never completed: "When he began his projected three-part Philosophy of the Will, he

[9] Ricoeur's 'Philosophy of the Will' was, in fact, meant to comprise four publications. The first was the 1950 work *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and Involuntary*. The second 'volume' was published in two parts, comprising *Fallible Man* and *Symbolism of Evil* (released concurrently in 1960). For Ricoeur's own précis of the ideas covered in these three published works see the discussion entitled "Philosophy of the Will" in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, (1978e, pp. 3-58).

[10] Ricoeur, 1966, p. 441, n. 99. See also the preface to *Fallible Man* for a detailed description of his then forthcoming publication on the 'poetics of the will': Ricoeur, 1986, pp. xliv-xlv.

[11] As noted in the introduction, recent scholarship by Wall and others has approached the question of Ricoeur's poetic outlook from the perspective of theological ethics. Wall's contention is that, through the characterisation of "morally creative beings" in Ricoeur's hermeneutics, his ethical and poetic outlooks are "mutually implied". (Wall, 2005, p. 17.) See also: Hall, 2006; 2007.

hoped to return, after the two-volume detour of *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil* had worked through the symbolics of evil, to incorporate those symbols in a project of pure reflection, a concluding volume on The Poetics of the Will. But the third volume has never been written."[12]

As for what his 1970s poetics was meant to have comprised, there are mixed views. Having worked closely with Ricoeur during the period in question, Pellauer (2007) recalls that Ricoeur envisaged the missing volume to build upon his earlier studies of mythical language and, in so doing, consider a disparate array of topics in the human sciences (from criminology to political philosophy):

> This projected volume would address areas within what the French call the human sciences, as well as take up the question of speculative thought and a possible ethical worldview on that basis. More specifically, Ricoeur envisaged discussing psychoanalysis, criminology and contemporary penal theory, and political philosophy, including the problem of alienation, on the basis of the two books we are about to consider in order to find a speculative equivalent of the mythical themes discovered in *The Symbolism of Evil*. He never explained why this particular volume was not written…"[13]

Somewhat at odds with this disclosure, J. Grondin (2013) specifies that Ricoeur, instead, had intended to focus on questions surrounding religious symbolism. In this view, Ricoeur's poetics was to have been a "poetics of transcendence":

> Several topics discussed in *The Symbolism of Evil* foreshadow the third volume which was to be devoted to the theme of transcendence. Myth reveals the overriding relationship between man and the notion of the sacred, and even his dependence upon the sacred.[14]

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[12] Placher, 1987, p. 40. The view that Ricoeur's 'poetics' was never published is echoed in: Taylor, 2006, p. 101, n. 6; Teixeira, 2006, p. 278; Pellauer, 2007, pp. 19, 26; Scott-Baumann, 2009, p. 146; Sunkenberg, 2009, p. 35; Leichter, 2011, p. 51; Grondin, 2013.

[13] Pellauer, 2007, p. 26. There are notable similarities between Pellauer's description and that found in the preface to the *Fallible Man*. (Ricoeur, 1986, p. xlv).

[14] Grondin, 2013, pp. 53-55. This excerpt is from Grondin's extended Chapter 2 discussion entitled "Listening to the Symbols of Evil" ("À l'écoute des symboles du mal"): "Par bien de ses thèmes, *La Symbolique du mal* annonce le troisième tome, promis à la transcendance. C'est que le mythe dévoile avant tout le lien de l'homme au sacré, voire sa dépendance du sacré." (Translation mine)

Despite the clear disparity between these two portrayals, both Pellauer's and Grondin's observations are accurate, in that at different points in time Ricoeur had intended to focus on these topics in his poetics publication. Indeed, while his initial plan was to explore ethics-based issues in the human sciences (specifically with the aim of providing "a reflection on guilt… that [does] justice to symbolic modes of expression"),[15] his emphasis later shifted to the "conversion of the imaginary".[16] Before considering how this stark change in direction came about, let us first challenge the assumption that Ricoeur's 'poetics' was never written.

The second volume of the Philosophy of Will trilogy, *Fallible Man*, was published in French in 1960. Following the initial English translation by Kelbley (in 1965), a new translation was released by Fordham University Press in 1986. In this later edition, the author of the introduction, W. J. Lowe, discusses the missing third volume of the trilogy. He especially notes that, due to the time that had now elapsed, it was highly unlikely that Ricoeur's 'poetics of the will' would ever be published. He however suggests that, in Ricoeur's interim writings of the 1970s, one could observe a number of points of continuity with the first two volumes of the trilogy:

> The *hermeneutical* studies appear, in this light, as an extended detour by way of the object, where the object is understood as the manifold array of cultural representations – "the works, the deeds, the institutions, the monuments" and texts – in which human freedom has objectivized itself. The detour is extended indeed, because these representations, as one soon discovers, give rise to a great variety of interpretations – the Marxist, the Freudian, etc. There quickly emerges a "conflict of interpretations" that is not unrelated to the conflicts already delineated in *Fallible Man*. Accordingly, the first task of hermeneutics is not to erect a grand theory of language, but to go about the more concrete, piecemeal task of mediating

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[15] Ricoeur, 1986, p. xliv: "The third part, which will be published in a subsequent volume, is devoted wholly to thought that starts from the symbol… For a reflection on guilt, and one that is to do justice to symbolic modes of expression, there is no by-passing the encounter with psychoanalysis, for such an encounter is both instructive and serves to define the peculiar intelligibility and the limits of the validity of this mode of reflection."

[16] Ricoeur, 1989, p. 143: "Conversion of the imaginary is the central aim of poetics. With it, poetics stirs up the sedimented universe of conventional ideas which are the premises of rhetorical argumentation." For further discussion, see: Kaplan, 2003, p. 13.

> between colliding interpretations; and in the carrying out of this mediation, one continues to observe the characteristic Ricoeurian themes.[17]

Lowe's contribution is significant. He not only correctly forecast that Ricoeur's poetics would never appear as one published volume, but also pointed to his hermeneutical publications as the missing link. Indeed, Lowe went so far as to suggest that, if Ricoeur's poetics is to be found in his hermeneutics, it should not be seen as a "grand" poetics but, rather, one defined by conflicts of interpretation.

Two decades later, Ricoeur's close friend and colleague Olivier Abel took Lowe's interpretation yet further and stated that Ricoeur's missing poetics could indeed be found in his cumulative writing from the 1970s and 1980s. Abel argued that, in attempting to navigate a path between the epistemological hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger, Ricoeur crafted a "poetics of the world as interpreted".[18] His studies of metaphorical language and narrative, in particular, exposed how new possibilities are revealed through poetic expression.

Throughout the thesis we have appealed at various points to Ricoeur's late autobiographical publications as a means of resolving disputed aspects of his *oeuvre*. As concerns the question of his 'missing poetics', these sources again offer insight. In his intellectual autobiography (1999), Ricoeur acknowledged that he indeed set aside his intentions to complete the Philosophy of the Will trilogy in favour of an exploration of the "multiple modalities" of poetic language. He further confirmed that this new endeavour found expression in his published works between the 1960s and 1980s:

> As for the poetics of transcendence, this was never written, if by this title one expects something like a philosophy of religion… Any reflection on the status of a subject who is summoned and called to self-scrutiny must, therefore, be sought in my efforts at biblical exegesis. I would, however, say that something was accomplished of what I then termed a poetics. *The*

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[17] Lowe, 1986, p. xxviii. These sentiments have in recent years been echoed by Sunkenberg, 2009 and Leichter, 2011.
[18] Abel, 2003a, p. 16.

> *Symbolism of Evil*, *The Rule of Metaphor*, *Time and Narrative* do aspire in several ways to the title of poetics, less in the sense of meditation on primordial creation than in that of an investigation of the multiple modalities of what I will later call an ordered creation, illustrated not only by the great myths on the origin of evil, but also by poetic metaphors and narrative plots. In this sense, the idea of ordered creation still belongs to a philosophical anthropology in which the relation to biblical faith and theology is held in abeyance.[19]

As with Lowe and Abel, Ricoeur points to his textual hermeneutics, admitting that, while he renounced the task of delineating a 'poetics of the will', in its place he set about exploring the relationship between "poetic creation" and religious expressions of faith.[20]

While it is certainly compelling to believe that Ricoeur's missing poetics is housed in his hermeneutical publications, one could certainly question whether this recasting of his hermeneutics (as a poetics) only took place retrospectively, once his *oeuvre* had fully taken shape. Indeed, this is not the case. Already in the 1970s, Ricoeur signalled the move from a 'poetics of the will' to 'a poetics of transcendence', and made clear his intention to orient his hermeneutical writings in this direction. This is seen in "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical

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[19] Ricoeur, 1995a, pp. 13-14.

[20] Richard Kearney would later link Ricoeur's notion of "poetic creation" to the concept of "figuration" in his published works: "Others…are equally concerned with the question of 'poetics' as redefined by Ricoeur and other hermeneutic thinkers. The term covers my attempts to explore the role of creativity – or what in *Poétique du Possible* I call "figuration" – in life as much as in art. This involves a whole range of activities from the dream-work of the unconscious to the functioning of symbol, myth, narrative, image, and metaphor in our cultural and social lives; and of course it also covers the ways in which these poetic functions operate in the arts themselves, that is, at an exemplary or explicit level. In other words, art and literature express at a secondary level the poetic activity that is going on at a primary level in our lives… [I am also indebted to] Kant's and Schelling's notions of 'transcendental imagination'. The reason I chose to replace the term 'imagination' with the term 'figuration' is that the former had become too narrowly associated with a certain late romantic notion of aestheticism and elitism, as if creativity was somehow the prerogative of a few *poètes maudits'* – misunderstood geniuses composing *chefs d'oeuvre* of great genius far from the madding crowd". (Murchadha & Kearney, 2004, p. 670) For further discussion on the importance of the 'transcendental imagination' and 'self-transcendence of language' in Ricoeur's hermeneutics, see: King, 1995; Venema, 2000; Melaney, 2011; Vlacos, 2014.

Hermeneutics", where he discloses his desire to explore a poetics of understanding (or reception) that *precedes* the "faculty to choose":[21]

> Imaginative variations, play, metamorphosis – all these expressions seek to encircle a fundamental phenomenon, namely, to know what it is in the *imagination* which first forms the new being in me. I rightly say the imagination and not the will. For the power of allowing oneself to be seized by new possibilities precedes the power of deciding and of choosing. Imagination is the dimension of subjectivity which responds to the text as a *Poem*.[22]

This now brings us to the relevance of the thesis within this intriguing historical backdrop. Admittedly, offering a detailed delineation of Ricoeur's poetics was not initially a driving aim of the study. However, through the assessment of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, it became clear that the philosophical category of 'poetic language' was of central importance and therefore warranted a comprehensive investigation. From this, several noteworthy discoveries came to light. To begin with, it was revealed that Ricoeur's notion of 'poetic language' evolved from a seemingly peripheral exploration of polysemy to becoming a contradistinction to 'ordinary language'.

As outlined in Chapter 8, this embryonic characterisation of poetic language was further augmented by the phenomenological aesthetics of Heidegger and Gadamer (and particularly their notions of 'artistic autonomy' and 'the world of the work'). This allowed Ricoeur to arrive at a viable understanding of poetic appropriation that, while retaining a phenomenological basis, was more applicable to the study of regional forms of discourse, such as biblical discourse. In this way, the current study not only provided a delineation of the origins and fundamentals

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[21] In his later work, *The Course of Recognition* (2005), Ricoeur clarifies that "the distinction between the two faculties of knowing and choosing [are] those of the understanding and the will" (p. 32). Following a Cartesian outlook, Ricoeur holds that the human faculty to understand equates to the "reception" of an idea (pp. 30-37). This is not to be "confounded" with the faculty of choosing *qua* election: "It is understood that judgment is not to confound the faculty of election with that of receiving the idea, hence of the will with the understanding as in Descartes". (Ricoeur, 2005, p. 42.)

[22] Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 338.

of Ricoeur's notion of 'poetic language', but also showed how it was used to reconcile the general and regional branches of hermeneutics.

As importantly, this study also established the seminal role of biblical discourse in Ricoeur's poetic reception theory. While he would always maintain that mapping the formal structures and functions of the 'poem' is primarily a philosophical enterprise, Ricoeur came to believe that there was great benefit in applying this understanding to the poetic reflections of God's transcendence. This is because scripture is also an "extreme" example of the poetic form,[23] indeed, one that explodes our understanding of how *projected* textual worlds impact the *actual* world of the reader. More so than any other manifestation of poetic language, biblical discourse was seen to demonstrate how language can "remake the world following the essential intention of the poem".[24]

One of the challenges initially set for this study was to explain Ricoeur's 1979 declaration that "the Bible is a poem, albeit unique and, in this sense, eccentric."[25] By establishing what Ricoeur intends by 'poem', this thesis uncovered an inseparable relationship between his literary reception theory and his biblical hermeneutics. It could thus be said that an unexpected contribution of this thesis was to identify and demarcate Ricoeur's latent poetics, as found in his composite writings of the 1970s.

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[23] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 127: "It is precisely as extreme that religious language is appropriated. And it is this appropriateness of limit-expressions to limit-experiences which is signified by our affirmation that religious language, like all poetic language, in the strongest sense of the word, redescribes human experience."

[24] Ricoeur, 1979a, p. 226. A more comprehensive explanation of this is perhaps presented in "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics": "We stated that the world of the 'literary' text is a projected world, one that is poetically distanced from everyday reality. Is this not the case *par excellence* of the new being projected and proposed by the Bible? Does not this new being make its way through the world of ordinary experience, despite the closeness of this experience? Is not the power of projection belonging to this world the power to make a break and a new beginning? And if this is so, must we not accord a poetic dimension to this world projection, 'poetic' in the strong sense of the word as it was recognized in the 'thing' of the text?" The excerpt above is from *Conflicts of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 96). This is in my opinion the most lucid (and faithful) rendering of the sentiment found within the three published versions of this study. For the other translations of this passage, see: Ricoeur, 1975b, p. 27; Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 332. For clarification concerning the three translations of "Herméneutique philosophique, herméneutique biblique", see Chapter 8, note 61.

[25] Ricoeur, 1979a, p. 218.

Part 3: The Organon

From the outset, this study has presented Ricoeur's 1970s work as a groundbreaking interdisciplinary project aimed at proving the viability of a truly "universal" hermeneutics. By delving into Ricoeur's metaphorical theory and notion of literary reception, we have confirmed his belief that the philosophical study of "language as discourse" can be brought into dialogue with specific genres of interpretation, without succumbing to the methodological pitfalls of the Romantic model.

In terms of future studies, a logical next step is to ascertain the scope for development, and indeed limitations, of Ricoeur's interdisciplinary approach. Perhaps an apt place to begin is by considering the extent to which philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics are indeed compatible. Throughout the thesis, we have seen the two placed in a constructed opposition as a means of representing the poles of his general-regional outlook. As noted in Chapter 3, philosophical discourse was seen to provide the undergirding theories for the study of *all* modes and forms of language, while scripture represented the particular form "par excellence".[26] Characterising them as such enabled Ricoeur to highlight the unique grounds for "mediation" that hermeneutics provides.[27]

This, however, is not to say that their association was always represented in such harmonious terms in Ricoeur's writings. Indeed, in three of his publications from the 1970s (and two from the 1990s),[28] Ricoeur suggests that the interaction

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[26] Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 332.

[27] Ricoeur, 1998, p. 151: "On this mediation of philosophical language in the use of confessional theologies, I have presented my views in the texts that are found in volume 3 of Lectures, where - and this is an interesting example of a form of mixed functioning - a general hermeneutics in Schleiermacher's sense (that is to say, a reflection on the nature of understanding, the place of the reader, the historicality of meaning, and so on) serves as *organon* for Biblical hermeneutics. But, inversely, the specificity of the religious serves as a cover for its own philosophical *organon*."

[28] The 1970s English language publications that discuss the inversion of the "organon" relationship between philosophical and biblical hermeneutics include: "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics" (1975b), pp. 14-17; "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" (1977c), p. 26; "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics" (1978a), pp. 86-92. Several of Ricoeur's later publications discuss the relationship in similar terms.

between philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics is akin to a tense, cyclical relationship, where each in turn "subordinates" the other. Let us consider this claim in more detail.

In his 1978 publication "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics", Ricoeur outlines the basic relationship between the two hermeneutics, initially stressing how they exert a positive influence over one another:

> We appear to admit that biblical hermeneutics is only one of the possible *applications* of hermeneutical philosophy… That, however, is only one half of my working hypothesis. It seems to me rather that there exists a complex relation of mutual inclusion between the two hermeneutics. Certainly, the first movement goes from the philosophical pole to the biblical pole. The same categories of work, of writing, of the world of the text, of distanciation and of appropriation rule the interpretation here as there. In this sense, biblical hermeneutics is a *regional* hermeneutics in relation to philosophical hermeneutics, which constitutes a *general hermeneutics*. It may seem then that we sanction the subordination of biblical hermeneutics to philosophical hermeneutics in treating it as an applied hermeneutics.[29]

The association between philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics is here characterised as a "complex relation of mutual inclusion". By suggesting they are "mutually inclusive", Ricoeur firstly emphasises how each functions to inform the other. At this stage, the stream of influence is seen to move from the theoretical paradigms of *general* hermeneutics to the *particular* "applications" of language (i.e. biblical discourse). In line with what this thesis has endeavoured to demonstrate, Ricoeur highlights that the philosophical concepts of (poetic) 'works', 'world of the text' and 'appropriation' are most relevant to the study of biblical textuality.[30]

It should however not be overlooked that, while largely presented as a positive exchange, their relationship is also marked by its "complexity". This is because, in

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These include: "Reply to Don Ihde" (Ricoeur, 1995c, p. 72) and *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay* (Ricoeur, 1998, p. 151).

[29] Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 321.

[30] See also: Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 86.

the first instance, biblical hermeneutics is "subordinated" to the general theories. In the earlier (1975b) draft of this publication, Ricoeur clarifies that the term "subordination" is apt because, in the initial interaction, scripture is held to be "a *province* within the broader field of textual hermeneutics".[31]

In his following discussion, Ricoeur's goes on to describe an "inversion" in power relations that takes place. If their relation began with philosophical hermeneutics informing biblical hermeneutics, the flow of influence inevitably pivots from the *particular* to the *general*:

> But, it is precisely in treating theological hermeneutics as a hermeneutics applied to a species of text – the biblical texts – that we bring to light an opposite relationship between the two hermeneutics. Theological hermeneutics presents qualities so original that the relation progressively reverses itself, theological hermeneutics finally subordinating philosophical hermeneutics as its own organon… Nothing will make the "excentric" character of theology more apparent than the very effort to "apply" the general categories of hermeneutics to it.[32]

In this second move, biblical textuality is seen to invert the hierarchical structure by exerting influence of its own on philosophical hermeneutics. This occurs because the 'general' theories meant to account for *all* human articulations inevitably prove insufficient to define the eccentricities of biblical discourse. This brings about a necessary reappraisal of the philosophical concepts themselves. Thus, while their "relation of mutual inclusion" is beneficial, it is also presented as a ceaseless power struggle brought about by the inherent incongruities between the two. Indeed, in all five publications where this is discussed, Ricoeur describes their interaction in terms of each "subordinating" the other "as its *organon*". [33]

Before proceeding, let us consider the likely meaning of "organon" as used here by Ricoeur. In philosophy, organon has overt associations with Aristotle's six treatises on logic as well as Francis Bacon's *Novum Organun Scientiarum* (1620). As

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[31] Ricoeur, 1975b, p. 17.
[32] Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 321-322.
[33] See note 28 above for list of sources.

the term appears in Ricoeur's corpus in relation to both theorists,[34] one could perhaps assume a composite meaning is employed. At the risk of being overly reductive, the term is often rendered into English as "tool" or "instrument"; however, from Bacon, we can add that the tools must also provide conceptual resources in line with critical enquiry.

Defining organon as a critical or analytic tool is consistent with Ricoeur's usage above. General hermeneutics looks to biblical hermeneutics as instrumental support to explore the theoretical classification of 'poetic language' etc.,[35] whereas biblical hermeneutics uses the theoretical paradigms as a means of proving its distinctiveness from the general literary categories and, consequently, all other regional forms of discourse. The roles invert at the point where scripture's "eccentricities" inevitably bring into question the general theoretical categories.[36]

In sum, Ricoeur is warning that any integrated interpretation theory built upon the interchange between philosophical and regional forms of discourse will invariably entail moments of *conflict* as well as *consent*. While the first move is defined by the applicability of general theories of language (i.e. philosophical hermeneutics), there will be points of seemingly insurmountable dissonance where the regional forms demonstrate their 'particularity'. This viewpoint coincides with Ricoeur's early declaration (in 1965) that a fully-realised general hermeneutics, which harmonises

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[34] For use of the term "organon" in reference to Aristotle's rhetorical understanding, see: Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 9; in relation to the works of Francis Bacon, see: Ricoeur, 2004b, p. 65.

[35] Ricoeur, 1977c, p. 26: "The biblical hermeneutic is in turn one regional hermeneutic within a general hermeneutic and a unique hermeneutic that is joined to the philosophical hermeneutics as its organon. It is one particular case insofar as the Bible is one of the great poems of existence." In *Critique and Conviction*, he further links this movement to Schleiermacher's general hermeneutical vision: "On the mediation of philosophical language in the use of confessional theologies, I have presented my views that… a general hermeneutics in Schleiermacher's sense (that is to say, a reflection on the nature of understanding, the place of the reader and historicality of meaning, and so on) serves as *organon* for biblical hermeneutics." (Ricoeur, 1998, p. 151.)

[36] Ricoeur, 1975b, p. 17: "But a more complex relationship will emerge as we go along, a relationship which can be expressed in terms of mutual inclusion. Certainly religious texts are primary texts, texts among other texts. Therefore theological hermeneutics must remain, at first glance, a province within the broader field of textual hermeneutics… The specificity of the task of interpreting these specific texts will require that theological hermeneutics ultimately encompass philosophical hermeneutics and transform it into its own organon." See also, Ricoeur, 1998, p. 151.

all discourse, is an illusion; we must therefore only aspire to one that accommodates and reconciles the *disparate* ways of interpreting language: "The difficulty – it initiated my research in the first place – is that there is no general hermeneutics, no universal canon for exegesis, but only disparate and opposed theories of interpretation."[37]

This dissonance is most clearly exposed when attempting to apply the general categories to such a 'particular' form as biblical discourse. This is because – beyond being a literary genre like any other – scripture is also a unique confessional account of paramount importance to an entire community of faith. It will thus always present pronounced incongruities with literary paradigms more suited to the interpretation of fictional works. As Boeve (2011) reminds us, it is the "particular rootedness" of the God reference that will always differentiate religious discourse from broad hermeneutical brackets, such as 'poetry' or 'fiction'.[38] Ricoeur admits as much in his 1978 text. Like Boeve, he concedes that there are significant limitations to a 'general' interpretation of the Bible, many of which stem from how the notion of God acts as the primary lens for interpreting biblical texts:

> We now see in what sense this biblical hermeneutics is at once a *particular* case of the kind of a *general* hermeneutics described above and a *unique* case. A particular case because the new being of which the Bible speaks is not to be sought anywhere but in the world of the text, which is one text among others. A unique case because all the partial discourses are referred to a Name, which is the point of intersection and the index of the incompletion of all our discourses about God… However, biblical hermeneutics can claim to say something unique only if this unique "thing" speaks as the world of the text that addresses us, as the "thing" of the text.[39]

Ricoeur cautions that the Bible cannot solely be seen as a particularly challenging literary example. As he reminds us, "God does not function as a philosophical

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[37] Ricoeur, 1970, p. 26-27. It is significant that the original French version of this text (*Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*) was released in 1965, and therefore predated much of Ricoeur's hermeneutical writing.
[38] Boeve, 2011, p. 99.
[39] Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 334. (Italics mine)

concept" and, consequently, there are things that general hermeneutics will never be able to decipher, such as the way God acts as a "vanishing point" for all biblical reading:[40] "The word *God*… presupposes the total context constituted by the entire gravitational space of the narratives, the prophesies, the laws, the hymns, and so on. Understanding the word God is following the arrow of meaning of this word."[41]

Where then does this leave the integrated study of philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics? While it suggests that the two can certainly operate as poles of *general* and *regional* discourse, we must add the caveat that conflicts of interpretation – and even points of unresolvable incompatibility – are to be expected.

However, as intimated by David Tracy in his 1978 discussion on biblical metaphors, it is these distinguishing elements of biblical discourse that are often the most interesting and therefore warrant the most attention.[42] Indeed, this has been observed throughout the thesis. Far from limiting the research landscape, the perceived *aporias* between general and regional hermeneutics have often signalled the most fertile areas of study. This was particularly observed in Part 2, where key advancements were only made in the characterisations of 'metaphor' and 'poetic language' because the two philosophical concepts were initially ill-suited to the study of biblical discourse.

In terms of advancing Ricoeur's argument that scripture broadly falls under the bracket of poetic language, much more work is needed. In the final chapter of the thesis, we saw how Ricoeur tailored the early phenomenological concept of artistic 'worlds' to include the enhanced realism, and ontological influence, of the Bible's textual worlds. While initially appealing, contemporary scholars such as Vanhoozer argue that, by conflating artistic and biblical representations of reality,

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[40] Ibid., p. 333.
[41] Ibid., p. 334.
[42] Tracy, 1978a, pp. 94-95.

Ricoeur introduced a new problem into contemporary hermeneutics, whereby the dividing lines between fictional and historical accounts have become blurred.[43]

Perhaps, in this respect, future philosophical studies of language should employ a more composite approach when dealing with highly regional forms, such as biblical discourse. In 1976, Ricoeur proclaimed that we should look upon the New Testament parables as the "conjunction" of narratives and metaphors.[44] Is it not viable to look upon all biblical discourse in a similar way, namely, as the *conjunction* of poetic language and testimony? Certainly, fashioning a hybrid hermeneutical category of this kind may help clarify the distinction between fictional and historical acts. It would also allow scholars to more fully incorporate Ricoeur's philosophical explorations of 'testimony' and 'confessional accounts' into contemporary debates on the referentiality of biblical language.[45]

Final Remarks

Beginning in 1968 with the publications of *Les incidences théologiques des recherches actuelles concernant le langage*, Ricoeur announced his so called 'linguistic turn'. In an attempt to account for language in its totality, he initially focused on the relationship between the "modes" and "forms" of discourse.[46] However, much like Schleiermacher's early hermeneutical lectures, Ricoeur's studies of the 1970s were only a rough sketch of what a constructed dialogue between the two might look like. In contrast to other universal models of the 19th and 20th centuries, Ricoeur did not attempt to provide a definitive paradigm of interpretation but, rather, only a vehicle to generate new questions. From this perspective, one reading provides the basis for another in an endless spiral of interpretation.

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[43] Vanhoozer, 1990, pp. 11-12, 86-122; Thiselton, 1992, p. 360, etc. For a comprehensive précis of the perceived limitations of Ricoeur's understanding of biblical narratives, see: Ford, 2012, pp. 119-132.
[44] Ricoeur, 1975a, p. 30.
[45] A number of recent analyses of Ricoeur's notion of testimony, and how it relates to his biblical hermeneutics, provide a basis with which to proceed in this respect. In particular, see: Greisch, 1996, 2004; Jeanrond, 2004; Hall, 2007; Kaufmann, 2010; Lythgoe, 2011; Dahl, 2011; Ford, 2012.
[46] Ricoeur, 1977a, pp. 188-189, 196.

By way of this approach (and against his earlier resolve not to "mix" disciplines), Ricoeur demonstrated that philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics could be brought into a "relation of proximity". On the one hand, biblical discourse was shown to be a textual form like any other, and therefore generally receptive to a rubric of literary interpretation.

However, this thesis also exposed the "conflictual relation" between the two that, in many ways, defines Ricoeur's hermeneutics. As one of the most particular forms of human understanding, scripture will inevitably pose challenges for any 'general' theory. Yet, far from seeing these challenges as daunting or limiting, Ricoeur highlighted the rich interdisciplinary benefits that can be achieved by embracing the conflicts inherent in all acts of interpretation. The need for contemporary hermeneutics to follow this longer, more circuitous, path is an enduring testament to Paul Ricoeur's legacy.

Bibliography

Throughout the thesis, a number of English versions of Ricoeur's publications have been consulted.[1] There are two rationales underpinning this use of primary sources.

Firstly, on many occasions, Ricoeur contributed to scholarly debates in languages other than French and, specifically during the period studied, looked to engage with the English speaking academic community. Indeed, Ricoeur's 1970s works typify the complex relationship between the French and English versions of his publications. As seen from the bibliography below, a large number of Ricoeur's lectures and articles during this period were first published in English, with a French version released at a later date. Of the English sources listed, many were translated by trusted colleagues (or, indeed, by Ricoeur himself), while others were initially drafted in English by Ricoeur.

The second rationale centres on the reasonable assurance that the English translations from French are accurate and reliable. It is important to remember that, throughout his career, Ricoeur took an active role in the publication of translated editions of his corpus, and maintained a collaborative dialogue with those rendering his works into other languages. Many of the English compilations of his articles include published correspondences with the translators and editors, usually in the form of a preface, introduction or 'Reply'.[2]

Concerning the English editions of his major publications from this period (e.g. *The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative*), Ricoeur both highlights the

[1] Every effort was made to cite the first English language version (or edition) of Ricoeur's publications. In the preceding chapters, notes signal where this was not possible, or where a later English version was deemed more accurate. In cases where there is no English translation of a French publication, an English translation was provided by the author.

[2] Examples include: Ricoeur, 1979b; Ricoeur, 1980b; Ricoeur, 1981a; Ricoeur 1984; Ricoeur, 1995a; Ricoeur, 1995f. For insight into Ricoeur's mode of collaboration with the translators and editors of his English editions, see J.B. Thompson's "Notes on Editing and Translating" (Ricoeur, 1981a, pp. 27-31) and "A Response by Paul Ricoeur" (Ricoeur, 1981a, pp. 32-40).

collaborative relationship he had with his trusted translators (David Pellauer and Kathleen Blamey),[3] and praises them for being "excellent translators".[4] Ricoeur's late study, *On Translation*, suggests that this term is not used lightly, and that he believed Pellauer and Blamey's translations aptly represented the "unity of meaning" and style of the original text:

> Now *excellent translators*… gave up the comfortable shelter of the equivalence of meaning, and ventured into hazardous areas where there would be some talk of tone, of savour, of rhythm, of spacing, of silence between the words, of metrics and of rhyme. Undoubtedly, the vast majority of translators rush to oppose this, without recognizing that translating the isolated meaning means repudiating an achievement of contemporary semiotics, the unity of meaning and sound, of the signified and the signifier.[5]

Following in the path set by Ricoeur, the executors of his estate actively welcome posthumous translations of his works into English, while likewise providing rigid criteria for translators who wish to have their translations recognised by the *Fonds Ricoeur*.[6]

Organisation of Sources

The bibliography below is presented in two parts. The first lists the works by Ricoeur cited in this study. For all primary sources where a French version predates the first English version, bibliographical references of both the English and French are provided. The second part of the bibliography lists all other scholarly works consulted in this thesis.

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[3] Ricoeur, 1984, p. xii.
[4] See: "Reply to David Pellauer" (1995h), "A Word to Kathleen Blamey" (1995i).
[5] Ricoeur, 2006, p. 38. (Italics mine)
[6] See: Fonds Ricoeur, 2018; Scott-Baumann, 2010.

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