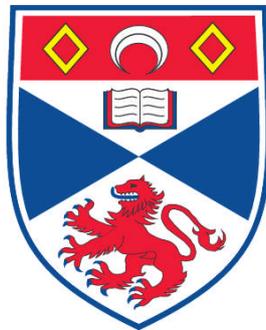


**THE LITERARY-THEORETICAL INFLUENCES ON THE THOUGHT
OF HANS FREI AND PAUL RICOEUR, WITH REFERENCE TO
NARRATIVE IDENTITY**

Edward Nanno

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



1997

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The literary-theoretical influences
on the thought of Hans Frei and Paul Ricoeur,
with reference to narrative identity.

by

Edward Nanno

Thesis submitted in application for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Divinity, St. Mary's College,
at the University of St. Andrews,

25 April 1997



Abstract

This thesis analyses those differences in interpretation which occur when separate literary-theoretical approaches are applied to biblical texts. Hans Frei suggests that the biblical texts describe the world in a way which he calls "realistic narrative". Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic recognises the disclosive power of the text and translates the subject matter of the text into a "way-of-being-in-the-world". Thus, the **primary** identity disclosed by the biblical narratives differs. For Frei, it is the identity of Jesus which is disclosed; for Ricoeur, it is "our common human Christian identity".

These two thinkers have usually been compared theologically. However, I contend that the theological investigations of both Frei and Ricoeur have been influenced by the literary approaches which guide their theological work. I give an exposition of this relationship in chapter one. In chapter two, I sketch out the implications of this relationship, focusing on the issue of narrative identity. In the final chapter, critiques of both systems are investigated as I attempt to deal with the force of these objections.

This dissertation investigates Frei's and Ricoeur's construals of narrative identity (as constructed through the reading of Biblical texts). My working hypothesis is that the construals of identity formulated by Frei and

Ricoeur rely upon formalist, narrative "interpretations". My thesis contends that in their respective approaches to the notion of narrative identity, neither thinker has completely abandoned his early literary-theoretical roots in his theological proposals.

I, Edward Nanno, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 94,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

25 April 1997

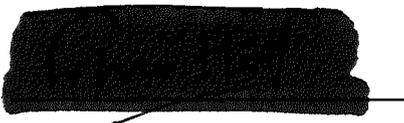


I was admitted as a research student in September, 1995 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in September, 1995; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1995 and 1997.

25 April 1997



I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.



25.4.97

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Standardised Abbreviations

Paul Ricoeur

Books

- CI The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics
- EBI Essays in Biblical Interpretation
- FTA From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II
- HHS Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation
- HT History and Truth
- H Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology
- IT Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning
- LIU Lectures on Ideology and Utopia
- OAA Oneself as Another
- PPR The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur
- RM The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language
- SE The Symbolism of Evil
- T&NI, T&NII, T&NIII, Time and Narrative (3 volumes)

Articles

- "BI" "The Bible and the Imagination"
- "CL" "The Creativity of Language"
- "HI" "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology"
- "HR" "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation"

"HS:I" "Hermeneutics of Symbols: I"
"IN" "Interpretive Narrative"
"MC" "Minutes of the Colloquy of 13 February 1977"
"NG" "Naming God"
"NT" "Narrative Time"
"PP" "Pastoral Praxeology"
"RAF" "The Religious Significance of Atheism"
"Semeia" "The Narrative Form"
"SI" "Science and Ideology"
"SS" "The Summoned Subject"
"TNT" "Toward a Narrative Theology"

Hans Frei

Books

EBN The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in
Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics
IJC The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases
for Dogmatic Theology
T&N Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays
Types Types of Christian Theology

Articles

"LR" "The 'Literal Reading of Biblical Narrative in the
Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It
Break?'"
"Remarks" Remarks in Connection with a Theological Proposal
"Response" "Response to 'Narrative Theology: An Evangelical
Proposal'"
"Resurrection" "Of the Resurrection of Christ"

Archival Material

"HB" "Hermeneutics and Beardslee"
"LComstock" "Letter to Gary Comstock"
"LPlacher" "Letter to William Placher"
"Narrativity" "Problem of Narrativity in general- often
Theologians"

Others: Books

BN Kevin Vanhoozer, Biblical Narrative in the Thought of Ricoeur
CD Karl Barth, The Church Dogmatics
History Rene Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism
IC Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures
KHI Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests
NRD Gerard Genette, Narrative Discourse
ND George Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine
NHH Anthony Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics
PPA Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche:
PSF Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms
RP Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot
R&T Ronald Thiemann, Revelation and Theology
RT Altizer and Hamilton, Radical Theology
Urn Cleanth Brooks, The Well-Wrought Urn
Uses David Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology
WT Martin Heidegger, What Is Called Thinking?

Articles

"FC" T.S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism"
"God" Michael Goldberg, "God, Action, and Narrative"

- "HS" Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics of Suspicion"
- "IF" Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy"
- "LSF" John Searle, "The logical status of fictional
discourse"
- "LM" John Searle, "Literal Meaning"
- "NFM" Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud and Marx"
- "NQE" Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience"
- "OM" A.J. Gremias "On Meaning"
- "PF" Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Philosophical Foundations of the
20th century"
- "QCT" Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology"
- "RPT" William Rogers, "Ricoeur and the Priveleging of Texts"
- "TA" David Kelsey, "Biblical Narrative and Theological
Anthropology"
- "T&IT" T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
- "TvM" Gary Comstock, "Truth vs. Meaning"
- "UHP" Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the
Hermeneutical Problem"

Survey of Principal Secondary Books on Ricoeur and Frei

James DiCenso Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth: A Study in the Work of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1990).

The main thesis is that "an important contribution to the understanding of the experience of truth in an existence-oriented context is found in the approach to truth as **disclosure**, initially formulated by Heidegger [and] ... it is the hermeneutical dimensions of disclosure that allow this approach to truth to function in relation to the problems of perspectivalism that trouble traditional approaches" (xiii). DiCenso suggests that "... Ricoeur provides a corrective to the formulations that curtail the scope of Gadamer's hermeneutics [and uses this] ... to provide the conceptual framework that delineates the set of issues his hermeneutics addresses" (xvii).

Dicenso traces the continuity of thought through the work of these three thinkers and argues that "... many aspects of [Ricoeur's] later work take the form of direct responses to, critiques of, and explorations from their insights" (114). The value of this work is in DiCenso's exposition of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur on the issues related to truth. He concludes that the "... quest for truth on [the hermeneutical] level, leads us to rethink the interpretive patterns that govern our existential activity. It carries us beyond the false immediacy of the subjective appropriation of objects to the processes that are constitutive of subjectivity. In this way, there is engendered an 'unrestricted inquiry' that stimulates the ongoing supersession of distorted and closed modes of disclosure" (143).

David M. Rasmussen Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the thought of Paul Ricoeur (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

The main thesis is that a "theory of mythic-symbolic language does not have to begin with the assumption that primary symbolic forms are invalid. It does not have to assume that modernity is juxtaposed to myth. The thought of Paul Ricoeur sustains that thesis" (114). Rasmussen endeavors to construct a series of steps which philosophy of religion can begin to take with the thought of Ricoeur in mind. He explores what a "positive correlation" might provide: it "... would affirm mythic-symbolic language in its primary form and in its secondary (hermeneutically interpreted) form associated with a philosophical anthropology, an understanding of man which requires such language" (2).

Rasmussen proposes that Ricoeur's "contribution (to date) is not to be found in a consideration of language generally, but in the hermeneutic of a special type of language- the language of symbol and myth" (5). He recognises that "Significantly, Ricoeur has not rejected structuralism, but he has seen its neo-positivistic overtones. To that extent the present focus has been concerned with an attempt to conceive of structuralism in the context of the central role of the subject" (106). He gleans from the various works Ricoeur has engaged in that "the manner in which one treats language is affected by implicit assumptions about the nature of man" (114) for "[a]ny consideration of language involves a related view of the nature of man" (1).

Mary Gerhart The Question of Belief in Literary Criticism: An Introduction to the Hermeneutical Theory of Paul Ricoeur (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1979).

Gerhart's thesis is formed through three issues which require addressing in the field of literary criticism: "My historical analysis indicates that the problem of belief in literary criticism is best set forth in three issues: one, an issue of meaning pertaining to the understanding of beliefs are they are embodied in literature,; two, an issue of verification involving the truth or falsity of such beliefs; and three, an issue of commitment concerning investment in such belief" (3-4). These issues, she suggests, are at the crux of related philosophical problems within criticism (4).

Gerhart "suggest[s] that Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory might provide the possibility of restating and interrelating the issues of the question of belief in literary criticism" (249). Ricoeur's theory requires the recognition of prior commitments in the hermeneutical endeavor: "In the context of Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy, the question of belief is both essential to and existentially present in literary criticism ... [because] belief is intrinsic -- even when only implicit -- to all critical judgments insofar as they involve the basic structure of human consciousness" (298). This conclusion anticipates the work in Oneself As Another, where Ricoeur states that there is no such thing as the non-ethical work. Gerhart commends Ricoeur's notion of the act of appropriation, where one makes a commitment to the world unfolded by the text, noting that this act "occurs only at the end of the processes of interpretation" (138).

John B. Thompson Critical Hermeneutics: A study in the thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Thompson states in the introduction that the "... convergence on the phenomenon of language provides a point of departure for the critical comparison of different traditions. In

undertaking a comparative study, I hope to break down some of the barriers that continue to stand between diverse orientations and disciplines of thought" (3). However, the book is not simply a comparison of the work of Ricoeur and Habermas. Rather Thompson utilises this analysis in a constructive attempt to propose a new methodology for approaching the issues raised by both thinkers.

The relevant sections of the book for this thesis are Thompson's critique of Ricoeur framed within the debate between Gadamer and Habermas. Ricoeur responded to this debate with a series of articles on the issues of ideology and hermeneutics. Thompson dismisses Ricoeur's input as irrelevant (Ricoeur does not address Habermas' issues) though he does not endorse Habermas' thought uncritically. This section of his book is discussed in detail within the thesis below.

John W. Van Den Hengel The Home of Meaning: The Hermeneutics of the Subject of Paul Ricoeur (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

The intent of this work is to "examine Paul Ricoeur's position on the human subject" (ix). Van Den Hengel suggests that the importance of Ricoeur lay in his constructive analysis of the subject after a "disassociation of the subject and consciousness" had been proclaimed by Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche: "Ricoeur, for his part, undertakes a prolonged study of the wounded subject in an effort to heal and recuperate the subject in our time" (xi). Easily the most thorough analysis of Ricoeur's work on the human subject, this text is "not a critically analytic reading precisely because all the building blocks of a poetics of the will are not in place ... [nor is it] meant to be a critique of the total project" (xx).

With the publication of Time and Narrative and Oneself As Another, Ricoeur's investigations into the subject 1) explored the contributions Anglo-American philosophy might make and 2) shifted the discussion from the "subject" to "identity". The first move expanded the parameters of the discussion, broadening its scope to include action. The second move recognised the limitations of phenomenological analysis and supplements Ricoeur's over-all project with a theory of narrative which in turn replaced discussions of the "subject" with "narrative identity" and "personal identity". Thus, Ricoeur's early investigations into the nature of being have been significantly supported and extended by his newer work; work which Van Den Hengel could not comment upon.

David E. Klemm The Hermeneutical Theory of Paul Ricoeur: A Constructive Analysis (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1983).

The main thesis is to "construct a possibility, which Ricoeur himself has not recognized, for defining what is specifically **theological** hermeneutics within Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutical program" (9). Klemm suggests that a dual correspondence (critical and religious consciousness & symbolic sense and reference) would "tighten Ricoeur's analysis of the kind of truth involved in poetic language" (162). This strategy of reflexivity (of consciousness and of the symbol) suggests that "[t]heological hermeneutics can then be articulated as the interpretation of religious texts with the aid of existential-ontological language" (17).

The tools for such a construction can be found in the work of Ricoeur. Focusing on Ricoeur's theory of appropriation, "[h]ermeneutical awareness of the self as constituted **through** the event of appropriation, is awareness of the finitude of self and its understanding of being" (17). Klemm recognises the parallel concerns of Heidegger and Bultmann

when constructing his analysis of Ricoeur. He proposes that "[r]eligious language could be said to open to an infinite dimension of meaning because the mode of being (or 'self-understanding' in Bultmann's terminology) has the power to open a new level of signification- one that is latent in any poetic text and manifest in a religious text" (125). Ultimately, "[t]he reflexive consciousness is to take its bearings from displays of truth as correspondence between reflexive symbols and reflexive consciousness" (163).

Kevin J. Vanhoozer Biblical narrative in the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

This book "... intends to bridge the gap between those treatments of Ricoeur that focus on his philosophy and hermeneutics to the exclusion of his theology on the one hand, and those that focus on the theological significance of his hermeneutics without attending to his larger philosophical project on the other" (3). Vanhoozer suggests that Ricoeur is a "philosopher of hope" for the "'central intuition' of Ricoeur's philosophy is that human existence is **meaningful**" (6).

Chapter seven explores the relationship between Ricoeur and Frei's thought. His "... thesis is that Ricoeur and Tracy are theologians of manifestation and their emphasis on manifestation dramatically affects the kind of referent they perceive in the Gospels" (166). Vanhoozer suggests that an undue "... emphasis on manifestation reflects Ricoeur's Copernican reversal: the subject is the hearer rather than the speaker of language" (167). His "... working hypothesis is that Ricoeur and Frei provide valuable insights into the question of narrative reference but ultimately do not provide an adequate explanation of the nature of the Gospel's referent" (165).

Vanhoozer argues that "Ricoeur's more recent theory of narrative interpretation is the culmination of a larger project which continues the work of Kant and Heidegger by seeking to answer the question, 'what is human being?'" (276). Thus, any interpretation of Ricoeur which neglects this project would be a disingenuous reading of his work. Vanhoozer concludes that Ricoeur's theological investigations are ultimately unhelpful to the theologian who subscribes to "theological realism". This is due to Ricoeur's emphasis on "'the idealism of the word event' where new forms of self-understanding arise in front of poetic metaphors and narratives" (279).

Mark I. Wallace The Second Naivete: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale Theology (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1990).

The main thesis is "that the hermeneutical programs of both Barth and Ricoeur seek to release a thoughtful openness toward the 'world' portrayed in the biblical witness" (XIII). Wallace suggests that previous approaches which placed these thinkers in opposition have failed to adequately (xi) understand Barth and Ricoeur. In the fourth chapter, Wallace introduces the Yale theologians (Frei, Lindbeck and Holmer) to the discussion, arguing that Frei's criticism of Ricoeur's "foundationalism" is off-centre. I also argue this point, noting Ricoeur's comments in Oneself as Another as he relates his project to a "non-foundationalism". Also within my discussion, I introduce archival material (from Frei) to suggest that the foundationalism issue is only one of Frei's disagreements with Ricoeur.

Wallace ends the book with a chapter on theological hermeneutics focusing on a re-introduction of the notion of revelation into contemporary theology. He argues that "[a]

theological hermeneutic for our time will be best served when it is clearly informed by an understanding of how God reveals God's self to us" (112). He suggests that the Yale theologians' refusal to deal with this issue creates "an odd and unnerving affinity between their theological intertextualism and the free-floating intertextualism of both New Critical and deconstructionist poetics: each of these theories accents the self-enclosed immanence of figurative discourse at the expense of the extra linguistic reality-claims that are at the heart of great religious classics such as the Bible" (112). I discuss this issue at length in chapter one, once again introducing archival material and suggesting reasons for Frei's refusal to deal with the doctrine of revelation and suggest Frei's polemical association with the New Criticism.

Introduction

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a drop-off in first-order theological reflection. Tracking the reasons is difficult if not impossible.

It has been suggested that Derrida's 1966 lecture, "Structure, Sign and Play"¹, began a process which effectively ended structuralist readings within the human sciences. Likewise, Lyotard's claim of "incredulity towards meta-narratives" seemed to be an accurate analysis of the "postmodern condition"². Philosophical hermeneutics has been influenced by the three "masters of suspicion"- Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche- and has given birth to a variety of interpretive schemes.

The competing claims of these varied hermeneutical theories has led to a rampant pluralism which the modern theologian finds him-/herself needing to address³. Due to

¹ In Writing and Difference [Translated, with an Introduction and Additional Notes by Alan Bass] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

² Jean Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: a report on knowledge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

³ Several representative theological works which engage this pluralist reality are: David Tracy Blessed Rage For Order: The New Pluralism in Theology (NY: Seabury Press, 1975), Lesslie Newbigin The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society (Grand Rapids and Geneva: Eerdmanns and WCC Publications, 1989), William C. Placher Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), and Ronald Thiemann Constructing a

these new developments in the humanities, first-order theological reflection has been set aside whilst questions of method have come to the fore.

Both Hans Frei and Paul Ricoeur have attempted to address issues of method within this pluralistic arena. What is interesting about these two figures is that they begin their investigations into theological method embracing a type of literary formalism⁴; Frei leaning on the so-called "New Criticism", Ricoeur on French Structuralism. However, as critiques of formalism within literary readings took root, both abandoned their heavy reliance upon formalist readings; Frei abandoning New Critical methodology⁵ and Ricoeur referring to his work as "post-structuralist".

What is wrong with some scholarship is its inability to deal with these thinkers within the context of their own work. For instance, Frei is not constructing a "narrative

Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

⁴ I use the term "formalist" to describe "any method that remains text-centred and explicatory" (Robert Detweiler, "After the New Criticism: Contemporary Methods of Literary Interpretation" in Orientation by Disorientation: Studies in Literary Criticism and Biblical Literary Criticism (Essays presented in honor of William A. Beardslee) edited by Richard A. Spencer (Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1980), 4).

⁵ Hans Frei, "The Literal Reading of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does it Stretch or Will it Break?" in Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays, edited by George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 141-143.

theology" as Michael Goldberg insists⁶, nor does he make a hard distinction between 'meaning or truth' as Gary Comstock and others suggest⁷, nor is he a systematic theologian. Frei was an Anglican theologian specialising in hermeneutics.

Frei's two published books were The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases for Dogmatic Theology and The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics. The last book he was working on was an investigation into various theological methodologies and the way Christology was construed⁸.

Two of Frei's major contributions to theology are firstly, his insistence that the biblical texts describe the actual world- his notion of realistic narrative, and secondly, his first-order theological reflections in The Identity maintain that the identity disclosed by the biblical texts is Jesus' identity, not human being.

Paul Ricoeur is a Protestant philosopher who began his

⁶ Michael Goldberg, Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction, 2nd Edition. (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1991), 245.

⁷ "Truth or Meaning: Ricoeur versus Frei on Biblical Narrative" in The Journal of Religion (1986); Goldberg, 245. What is even more interesting is a letter Frei wrote in response to Comstock's article. I will deal with some of the issues Frei raises in it within the body of the thesis.

⁸ This has been published posthumously as Types of Christian Theology (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

work in philosophical phenomenology. All of Ricoeur's investigations are at the service of his enquiry into the development of a philosophical anthropology, including his hermeneutics. He calls his work a "project on human will" and all of his writings must be interpreted within this framework. Whilst Ricoeur is interested in theological issues, he consciously distances himself from engaging in first-order theological discussion. In fact, his overarching category of reference to the human being is finitude, certainly a theological theme. However, he notes that his voluminous works comprise investigations (diversions) which he has been led into along the way. In this sense, what we have of Ricoeur is a sort of Schopenhauerean education. This is to say that Ricoeur published his investigations along the way to unraveling certain problems.

Ricoeur calls himself a "post-structuralist". His is an investigation into literary theory which recognises both the gains and blindspots of structuralism. Postmodernism is, for Ricoeur, a necessary corrective to the notion of meta-narration. The use of "meta-narratives" has led to ideologies which could not be critiqued because they are part of culture. The holocaust necessitates the fragmentation of these narratives because the control of society through these "constructs" cannot be uprooted. Ultimately Ricoeur is concerned with ethics; an ethics which allows for the

deconstruction of certain forms of ideology. The employment of a discourse analysis, such as Foucault's, allows Ricoeur the double edge of acknowledging that what the text does not say can be as important as what it does say. Hence the hermeneutic of suspicion which allows for the passage toward a second naiveté and ultimately a hermeneutic of restoration⁹.

The two main differences that I will analyse in this thesis are those differences in interpretation which occur when separate formalist approaches are applied to the biblical texts. For Frei, the text describes the world in a way which he calls "realistic narrative". Ricoeur's hermeneutic translates the world of the text into a "way-of-being-in-the-world". Thus, the **primary** identity disclosed by the biblical narratives differs. For Frei, it is the identity of Jesus which is disclosed; for Ricoeur, it is "our common human Christian identity".

These two thinkers have usually been compared theologically. However, I contend that the theological investigations of both Frei and Ricoeur have been influenced by the literary approaches which guide their theological work. I give an exposition of this relationship in chapter

⁹ Ricoeur's project in hermeneutics can be seen within the wider tradition of Nietzsche (one needs to smash the idols so that they may speak again) and Tillich (the symbol dies yet needs to be replaced with another) ("RAF", 88 & 98).

one. In chapter two, I sketch out the implications of this relationship, focusing on the issue of identity. In the final chapter, critiques of the systems are investigated as I attempt to deal with the force of these objections.

Thesis

This dissertation will investigate Frei's and Ricoeur's construals of narrative identity (as constructed through the reading of Biblical texts). My working hypothesis will be that the construals of identity formulated by Frei and Ricoeur rely upon formalist, narrative "interpretations". My thesis will be that in their respective approaches to the notion of narrative identity, neither thinker has completely abandoned his early literary-theoretical roots in his theological proposals.

Both Frei and Ricoeur have focused on "identity" and both have utilised formalist tools within their investigations. Frei's work in The Identity of Jesus Christ focuses on an investigation into Jesus' identity whereas Ricoeur's work on identity has tended to focus on the identity of the Christian believer. Frei, admittedly, has not made **Christian** identity a focal point and thus, his hermeneutic has difficulty in being applied within the sphere of **praxis**. Conversely, Ricoeur's investigations have tended

to focus on philosophical questions which do not necessarily harmonise with Christian theology.

Significance of the Thesis

The analysis of Frei's investigations within this thesis are significant for the following reasons. Firstly, I have accessed material from the Hans Frei archives which has never been published. This material is **essential** for understanding Frei's work within the parameters that he had set. Indeed, much of this material (which I have included as an appendix) directly addresses issues raised by his interpreters. The material "Hermeneutics and Beardslee" counters claims that Frei was developing a "narrative theology" which he considered to be "foundational". The "Letter to Gary Comstock" is a reply to a specific article written by Comstock. The significance of this letter lay in its complete rejection of Comstock's reading of Frei. Frei explicitly counters Comstock's entire article and engages Ricoeur's work. The "Letter to William Placher" discusses Frei's theological leanings in regards to Placher's Unapologetic Theology. The final appended material deals with Frei's reaction to narrative theologies. In this piece, he sketches what he perceives to be some of the problems facing the construal of a narrative theology. I utilise this material to counter specific claims that Frei was a

"foundational theologian" engaged in a "narrative theology".

Secondly, Frei's reliance upon the New Critical way of reading texts is explored here for the first time. Although Stephen Moore has recognised this relationship, he never explored how Frei had applied a New Critical agenda to his investigations within theology. This relationship is explored in detail in chapter I/1 and assess his relationship with the work of George Lindbeck.

Finally, I have given an exposition of Frei's theological work in Types of Christian Theology and Theology and Narrative. These works allow access to a more finalised form of what Frei's construal of theology as "Christian self-description" would have looked like. I give an exposition of this material in chapter III/1.

The analysis of Ricoeur's work within this thesis is significant for the following reasons. Firstly, much of the work on Ricoeur's thought is now dated. His recent publication of Oneself as Another applies much of the theory found in Time and Narrative to the problem of personal identity. Also the publication of Figuring the Sacred has shed new light on Ricoeur's specifically theological work. Much of the secondary literature does not deal with these works for they have been recently published. Thus, much of

this secondary literature seems dated. I suggest that Ricoeur's work in Oneself as Another is the culmination (the fulfilment) of his lifetime work on personal identity (what he formerly called "the human subject"). A discussion of this text is essential for understanding Ricoeur's project as a totality.

Secondly, Ricoeur's relationship with structuralism changed over the years. He spends considerable time in an essay "Narrative Time" and within Time and Narrative discussing his reliance upon structuralist insights for the formation of his hermeneutical theory. In chapter I/2, I discuss this relationship and explicitly demonstrate Ricoeur's emendations of several structuralist theories. Though he considers himself a "post-structuralist", Ricoeur has never abandoned his earlier work within structuralism. It has provided a steady system for Ricoeur to work within and to emend. This relationship has not been explored (May Gerhart's book discusses Ricoeur's earliest literary theoretical contributions but does not discuss Time and Narrative or Oneself as Another).

Thus, the exposition in chapter I/2 sheds light on Ricoeur's **reasons** for moving beyond structuralism whilst acknowledging that the theory is still found, albeit sublated, within his newer work.

Thirdly, this thesis explores the relationship between Ricoeur's thought and Nietzsche's thought. There have been investigations focusing on the relationship between Ricoeur's and Heidegger's thought (Vanhoozer) and Ricoeur's and Barth's thought (Wallace). However, no theologians have attempted to grapple with the influence of Nietzsche within Ricoeur's thought. Ricoeur calls Nietzsche one of the "masters of suspicion" and one of his earliest published lectures on "religion" discusses how Nietzsche's thought has influenced his theological approach. I draw out this relationship as a preface to the discussion of identity in chapter II/2.

Finally, Ricoeur's work is often misunderstood by those who "dip into" his system. I mean that a proper understanding of Ricoeur's contribution can not focus solely upon his excursions into a singular discipline. I argue that to understand Ricoeur's latest work requires a knowledge of his earlier work on human fallibility and the symbolism of evil. Many of Ricoeur's critics seem to disassociate his early work from his later work. This, I suggest, is a fatal flaw in any interpretive system. In discussing some of the critiques levelled in chapter III/2, I give an exposition of those areas of Ricoeur's earlier work (when necessary) to enable the discussion to progress.

Chapter One:

The literary-theoretical basis

I/1 "Hans Frei and the New Criticism"

I/2 "Paul Ricoeur and Structuralism: A new meaning of the notion of truth?"

I/1. "Hans Frei and the New Criticism": Traces the New Critical agenda of close reading, the unsubstitutability of the text ("heresy of paraphrase") and the surplus of meaning. Argues that Frei uses the New Critical agenda in a polemical, not a foundational, way. Deals with Frei's subsequent rejection of New Criticism as a 'false friend' due to an implicit agenda.

I. Introduction

Stephen Moore states that Hans Frei's The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative is "certainly a major conduit through which New Critical ideas have flowed into gospel scholarship". He admits however, that "Frei himself scarcely acknowledges New Critical influences on his book"¹⁰. Moore surmises that perhaps Frei simply took his reliance on the New Criticism for granted because American literary criticism was dominated by New Critical ideas from the 1950's onward¹¹. If Moore's judgement is correct, then it would certainly behove biblical hermeneuticians and New Testament theologians to enquire into the methods and aims of the New Criticism.

Moore proposes the distinctive feature of New Criticism was "its rejection of extrinsic approaches to the literary text- biographical, historical, sociological, philosophical-

¹⁰ Stephen D. Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 10-11. Throughout the thesis, the source cited will initially appear in the footnotes and will then be incorporated into the text.

¹¹ John Crowe Ransom's The New Criticism was published in 1941.

and its advocacy of an intrinsic criticism" (Literary Criticism, 9). He suggests that this emphasis ultimately led the New Critics to "reconceptualize the poem as an autonomous, internally unified organism, the bearer of a meaning that must be validated first and foremost by the context of the work itself" (Literary Criticism, 9). Moore's proposal about the nature of the New Critical enterprise is supported by a short citation from Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's Theory of Criticism which, as Moore himself admits, is a dubious candidate to represent the New Criticism¹². In this selection, Wellek and Warren are advancing the argument that

"the natural and sensible **starting point** for work in literary scholarship is the interpretation and analysis of the works of literature themselves ... But, curiously enough, literary history has been so preoccupied with the setting of a work of literature that its attempts at an analysis of the works themselves have been slight in comparison with the enormous efforts expended on the study of the environment" (Literary Criticism, 9: emphasis mine).

This long quotation combined with two passing references to Cleanth Brook's essay "The Heresy of Paraphrase" and William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's essay "The Intentional

¹² In fact, in his monumental (and somewhat autobiographical) work, A History of Modern Criticism, Wellek states that he "refuses to be lumped together with the New Critics, though I cannot and do not want to deny my sympathy for many of their positions, just as I agree with critics of quite different times and countries" (Vol.VI, 158).

Fallacy"¹³, form the basis of Moore's evidence for his conclusions concerning the New Critical agenda. I will show, however, that Wellek and Warren were not advocating the imbalanced theory that Moore (along with a host of others) attributes to them. Rather, they were issuing a plea for a **more balanced approach to literary-critical studies**. I believe that Moore's analysis (The Eclipse is a major conduit...) would more accurately be understood in terms of three major "New Critical" tenets: "close readings" of texts (a refocusing on the text itself rather than on external factors; intertextuality), an outright rejection of authorial intention as supplying the interpretative schema, and an insistence on the indispensability of the literary work.

What I will do in this chapter is trace the development of Hans Frei's thought in the area of literary criticism, focusing specifically on his relationship with the New Critics. In doing so, there are two separate enquiries which need to be distinguished from the outset. Firstly, what is "New Criticism"; what were its procedures, aims and self-understanding? Secondly, what was Frei's perception of and relationship to this enterprise?

II. What is New Criticism?

¹³ Reference to Brooks, page 9; reference to Wimsatt and Beardsley, page 12.

I.A. Richards' emphasis on "practical criticism"¹⁴ combined with T.S. Eliot's "close readings"¹⁵ provided the foundation and conceptual framework for American New Critical readings of texts. Eliot insisted that "honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry"¹⁶. This insistence on focusing on the poem itself for proper interpretation, is related to Eliot's view of the function of the poetry. He maintained that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" ("T&IT", 10). The scope of interpretation is narrow. In fact, Eliot ascribes a descriptive function to the literary critic: "But it is fairly certain that "interpretation" is only legitimate when

¹⁴ Wimsatt approvingly quotes I.A. Richards: "the tests ... for the correctness of any interpretation of a set of complex signs are its internal coherence and its coherence with all else that is relevant ... this inner and outer coherence is the correctness. When an interpretation hangs together (without conflicting with anything else: history, literary tradition, etc.) we call it correct". Cited by W.K. Wimsatt, "I.A.R.: What To Say About A Poem" in Day of the Leopards: Essays in Defense of Poems (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 245.

¹⁵ Austin Warren says of T.S. Eliot: "His characteristic virtue lies less in perspective than in that close study of the poetic text of which he was, in English, the inaugurator...". It would seem that in the New Critical endeavor, the principle of "close reading" has foundational warrant in Eliot's style. "Eliot's Literary Criticism" by Austin Warren in T.S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, edited by Alan Tate. (New York: Delacorte Press, 1966), 288.

¹⁶ T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in Selected Essays: New Edition. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950 [13th printing]), 7.

it is not interpretation at all, but merely putting the reader in possession of facts which he would otherwise have missed"¹⁷. "And any book, any essay, any note ... which produces a fact even of the lowest order about a work of art is a better piece of work than nine-tenths of the most pretentious critical journalism, in journals or books" ("FC", 21). Terry Eagleton surprisingly agrees that the New Critical tenet of "close reading" (via Eliot) was a valuable, if not necessary, corrective to the abuses of literary critics at the time. Eagleton understands "'close reading' ... [as engaging in] detailed analytic interpretation, providing a valuable antidote to aestheticist chit-chat..." This focus on a "close reading" of the text itself invoked a "limiting badly needed by literary talk which would ramble comfortably from the texture of Tennyson's language to the length of his beard"¹⁸. In light of these types of readings, I will now investigate the challenge which faced literary critical studies which in turn generated the "New Criticism".

Wellek and Warren defined the literary challenge at that time (1949) as "the analogous problem of tracing the history of literature as an art, in comparative isolation from its

¹⁷ T.S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism" in Selected Essays: New Edition. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950 [13th printing]), 20.

¹⁸ Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 44.

social history, the biographies of authors, or the appreciation of individual works" (Theory of Literature, 254). They perceived literary criticism in the earlier part of the 20th century as having placed undue emphasis on historical reconstruction and the psychological intentions of the authors. This perception, viewed in light of Historicism and of Freud's influence on critical theory¹⁹, was not completely unfounded. Thus, Wellek and Warren directed their attacks towards both of these tendencies to reconstruct a now arguably unavailable past or set of intentions.

The authors viewed "historical reconstructionists" as attempting to reconstruct the original setting of the literary work. Whilst not an altogether ignoble enterprise, Wellek and Warren maintained that this method of "reconstruction" would not lead the enquirer to the "meaning" of the work. Many theorists maintained it would. Rather, their notion of constructive history was much broader than the procedure of reconstructing the original **Sitz im Leben** of the inscribed work. They proposed that the "meaning" of a work is the "result of a process of accretion, i.e. the history of its criticism by its many readers in many ages ... (and so) it seems impossible to declare, as historical

¹⁹ This is broadly described as "detecting the connections between the biography of the artist and its product in art or artefact, or to the analysis of 'Freudian' imagery, either deliberate or unintentional, within a work" (entry on 'Freudian Criticism' in the Oxford Companion to English Literature ed. by Margaret Drabble, 5th edition, 370).

reconstructionists do, that this whole process is irrelevant and that we must return only to its beginning" (Theory of Literature, 42). The "meaning" of a text is, for Wellek, much broader than simply its meaning in the original setting. His maxim, "a text is a text and later generations have the right to discover new meanings in it, if they can shown to be there", allows for and invites a constant re-reading of texts (History, VI, 193). Both Wellek and Warren assert that "if we should really be able to reconstruct the meaning (as reference) which Hamlet had for its contemporary audience, we would merely impoverish it. We would suppress the legitimate meanings which later generations found in **Hamlet**. We would bar the possibility of new interpretation" (Theory of Literature, 42). Whilst this citation may seem to invite a reading of **Hamlet** similar to that of Freud²⁰, Wellek and Warren nonetheless remained sceptical about this type of endeavour.

Wellek and Warren were also frustrated by the tendency to focus on the "intentions" of authors. They affirm that the "whole idea that the 'intention' of the author is the proper subject of literary history seems quite mistaken. The meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by, or even equivalent to, its intention" (Theory of Literature, 42).

²⁰ The most obvious example would be in The Interpretation of Dreams, where Freud does analyze the character Hamlet.

However, they argued that the obvious absence of the author does not invalidate enquiries into intentionality; only the abuse of seeking authorial intention as the basis and final concluding point of literary studies. Wellek and Warren were concerned about the considerable emphasis placed on biographies of authors whilst the work itself is given little attention. They were pleading for a more balanced approach which focused on a "close reading" of the text itself with the help of the original setting and the biographical sketch of the author filling a minor, rather than the prevailing major, role. This latter tendency is the subject of a rather influential essay which I will deal with next.

IIa. The Intentional Fallacy

William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley are considered to be central figures in New Critical theory. Their essay, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1954), was a seminal work which helped define the aims of New Criticism. The central thesis of the essay is stated at the outset as, "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art ...")²¹. The authors were not denying that a piece of literature is causally linked to an author, in fact they affirmed this; "A

²¹ "The Intentional Fallacy" in William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (London: Methuen, 1970), 3.

poem does not come into existence by accident. The words of a poem ... come out of a head, not out of a hat" ("IF", 4)²². Rather, they were concerned about the prevalent tendency to judge the quality of a work of art based on the intention of its author. In agreement, Wellek asserts that "there seems to me a simple truth in the old view that a successful work of art is a whole in which the parts collaborate and modify one another"²³. For Wimsatt, Beardsley, and Wellek there is something structural inscribed in the text itself, which discloses its quality (or lack of it) as a literary work of art. Even though the text is derived from an author, it stands alone in assuming the burden of proof as to its literary merit. One of T.S. Eliot's more penetrating analyses points to the insignificant role of the author's emotive state in the existing work:

"... the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man,

²² In another essay, Beardsley wonders if a poem randomly generated by a computer actually has the status of a literary work of art. He concludes that since the computer is programmed with certain words, phrases, etc. and since the computer randomly inserts these programmes into pre-determined sentence structures, the poem is indeed a literary work of art due to its initial generation by and its ultimate selection of the programmer ("The Concept of Literature", in Frank Brady Literary Theory and Structure: Essays in Honor of William K. Wimsatt, 25ff.).

²³ Rene Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: Vol. VI, American Criticism 1900-1950 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 150.

the personality" ("T&IT", 9).²⁴

Authorial intention plays a minor role, if any, in the present status of the literary work.

A misunderstanding of Wimsatt and Beardsley's position occurs when their statements are pulled out of their original context and re-applied in a new system. The most obvious example would be Ricoeur's appropriation of the following statement: "the poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it)" ("IF", 5). The original context of this declaration is against those who wish to privatise critique by appealing to the thoughts and emotions of the author. However, in Ricoeur's application of this passage, he ignores the original context and the quote comes to "mean" quite differently. A central Ricoeurean theme is that the "text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say, and every exegesis unfolds its procedures within the circumference of a meaning that has broken its moorings to the psychology of its author" (H&HS, 201). The original

²⁴ In another section of the same essay, Eliot states, "For it is not the 'greatness', the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts" ("T&IT", 8).

intent of Wimsatt and Beardsley was polemic; it was against those who wished to search for a poem's literary merit outside of the work itself. Yet, however extreme the re-application may seem, Ricoeur is careful to note that he holds in tension two separate poles; firstly, what he calls the "semantic autonomy" of the text with secondly, the "hypostatizing of the text as an authorless entity" (IT, 30). To stress one aspect of the origination of a text, that is, the text broken from the psychology of its author, without remembering that a text originates as discourse, is to err to the opposite extreme. This is the extreme which Ricoeur understands Derrida to have fallen prey to. He states, "to hold, as Jacques Derrida does, that writing has a root distinct from speech ... is to overlook the grounding of both modes of discourse in the dialectical constitution of discourse" (IT, 26). Ricoeur's theory opposes such systems which focus on textual autonomy without recognising the text as "sculpted" by a particular "maker" (IT, 33ff).

It has been alleged by Stephen Moore and others that New Criticism errs exactly to this extreme. In an essay heralding the benefits of structuralism, Frederick Pottle cites a "dictum reported to me many years ago as having been made at a meeting of the Modern Language Association"²⁵.

²⁵ Frank Brady et al (eds.), Literary Theory and Structure: Essays in Honor of William K. Wimsatt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 21, fn.11.

This second-hand report asserts that "every poem is anonymous; and between the materials of the poem and the poem itself the difference is absolute" (Ibid., 7)²⁶. This dictum seems to have been generated from a chapter entitled "Literature and Biography" in Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature. In this chapter, the authors are hesitant to ascribe any "critical importance" to the biographies of authors in the process of the interpretation of those authors' texts. They assert that "no biographical evidence can change or influence critical evaluation [of a text]"²⁷. Whilst biographies may help in questions of "literary history, i.e. the tradition in which the poet was placed, the influences by which he was shaped, the materials on which he drew" (Theory of Literature, 79-80), they are otherwise unhelpful and may interfere with the proper reading of a text²⁸. This proper reading would be a reading of the text

²⁶ Wimsatt also recalls a meeting he attended at the University of Indiana which was attended by many literary critics. He recalls that at this meeting, "the main theoretical concern was the authoritative exploitation of a healthy doctrine that Richards had already asserted with emphasis in 1942 ... that a poem has a kind of internal, linguistic life of its own, independent of things its author may have intended, or thought of, or not thought of, during the process". Instead of ignoring this abuse of his work, Richards added that "if a poem has a life of its own, even a capacity for self-defense, it is the important job of critics and educators to assist that defense by correct interpretation" W.K. Wimsatt, "I.A.R.: What To Say About A Poem" in Day of the Leopards: Essays in Defense of Poems. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 246.

²⁷ Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (London: Jonathan Cape, 1949), 80).

²⁸ Wimsatt also acknowledges that certain materials on which the author used can be helpful in the understanding of literary work: "Such avenues of access to the poet's process of composition [his variant

as it exists, not an analysis of the emotions and/or dispositions of the author. Paul Elmer More's analysis of Byron's poem "Fare Thee Well" is cited as an example of the precarious nature of emotive/dispositional analysis, which could lead one to commit the "intentional fallacy". In More's analysis, he thinks it a "pity" that Byron's poem "shows not traces of the tears which ... fell on it". Engaging More's lamentation, Wellek wryly comments that "the poem exists; the tears shed or unshed, the personal emotions, are gone and cannot be reconstructed, nor need they be" (Theory of Literature, 80). For Wellek and Warren, it is "Fare Thee Well" which should be subjected to analysis, not speculation concerning Byron's emotional state at the time he wrote the poem.

Wimsatt and Beardsley's emphasis on offering a critique of the text rather than the author attempted to avoid the privatisation of critique and establish a type of open forum for adjudicating the possible worth of a particular poem. They write,

"the poem belongs to the public. It is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and it is about the human being, an object of public knowledge. What is said about the poem is subject to the same scrutiny as any statement in

notebook], a favorite kind of resort for the biographical detective, may also I believe be legitimately enough invoked by a teacher as an aid for exposition". What To Say About A Poem [C.E.A. Chap Book], (Saratoga Springs, NY: Skidmore College and College English Association, 1963), 12.

linguistics, or in the general science of psychology" ("IF", 5).

New Critical emphasis on "close readings" kept the literary critic focused on the text. This, in turn, allowed 1) all interpreters equal access to the work (it truly "belonged to the public) and 2) avoided privatisation of the critical endeavour.

I Ib. The Heresy of Paraphrase

The second half of Pottle's remembrance of the "MLA dictum" concerns the reportedly indistinguishable relationship between the materials of the poem (the structure, the way it is written) and the poem itself (the words). An analysis of Cleanth Brooks's essay, "The Heresy of Paraphrase"²⁹, can help us to unpack this issue of the relationship between structure and content in the literary work of art (represented by the "poem") which would ultimately provide the foundation for the New Critical tenet of the indispensability of the literary work.

In this essay, Brooks argues that a poem is judged to be meritorious not only because of the subjects discussed (its content) but also because of the structuring of the poem

²⁹ Chapter 11 in The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry, (London: Dennis Dobson, 1947).

itself. For Brooks, structure is not simply the "metrical pattern or the sequence of images". He proposes that an understanding of poetic structure needs to be extended to include the relationship between the form and its content³⁰. He suggests, with Kant, that "the structure obviously is everywhere conditioned by the nature of the material which ... sets the problem to be solved, and the solution is the ordering of the material" (Urn, 159). A proper approach to the interpretive endeavour must account for this indissoluble relationship between structure (form) and content. He maintains that this relationship is so inextricable that all attempts to paraphrase are merely, "convenient ways to referring to parts of the poem. But such formulations are scaffoldings which we may properly for certain purposes throw about the building" (Urn, 162). Brooks does acknowledge certain referential merits of paraphrasing. In an essay analysing Eliot's The Waste Land, Brooks refers to the process of scaffolding as necessary³¹. However, he cautions that "it is highly important that we know what we are doing

³⁰ Brooks' acknowledges his indebtedness here to Kant's Critique of Judgement.

³¹ "I prefer, however, not to raise just here the question of how important it is for the reader to have an explicit intellectual account of the various symbols and a logical account of their relationships. It may well be that such rationalization is **no more than a scaffolding to be got out of the way before we contemplate the poem itself as poem.** But many readers (including myself) find the erection of such a scaffolding valuable- if not absolutely necessary...", from "The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth" by Cleanth Brooks in A Collection of Critical Essays on "The Waste Land", edited by Jay Martin (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), 59.

and that we see plainly that the paraphrase is not the real core of meaning which constitutes the essence of the poem" (Urn, 160).

The "heresy of paraphrase" occurs when one fails to recognise this essential difference between, to extend his metaphor, the scaffolding and the building. This failure can lead one to believe that the scaffolding (the paraphrase) thrown about the building is more essential (a distillation of the poem's 'real' meaning) than the building itself (the poem). When this occurs, reference to the poem itself becomes secondary and the primary referent becomes its paraphrase³². This rendering of the paraphrase as primary "is to refer it to something outside the poem ... (thus) doing even more violence to the internal order of the poem itself" (Urn, 164). If the paraphrase is understood as capturing the essence of the poem, then the danger is that the poem itself may become dispensable, but not without great cost. The focus on the indispensability of the poem finds its philosophical justification in his theory of metaphor and in his understanding of meter.

IIC. Theory of Metaphor

³² A useful parallel can be drawn here with Karl Barth on the "provisionality" of theology. Barth insists "Theology guides the language of the Church, so far as it concretely reminds her that in all circumstances it is fallible human work..." (Church Dogmatics I/1, 2).

Simply put, Brooks maintains that attempts at paraphrasing simply exchange one set of metaphors for another. However, since a paraphrase is an exchange of metaphor for another metaphor, there is no basis for thinking it would be more adequate than the original. The illusion occurs in thinking that one can translate metaphors into propositions. However, Brooks notes that

"as his proposition approaches adequacy, [the interpreter] will find, not only that it has increased greatly in length; but that it has begun to fall back upon metaphors of his own in attempt to indicate what the poem 'says'. In sum, his proposition, as it approaches adequacy, ceases to be a proposition" (Urn, 198).

Indeed, the further paraphrasing moves away from the original metaphor, the less adequate it becomes because the secondary metaphor can never exhaust the pregnant meaning of the primary metaphor. This exchange of metaphors will always occur with a lamentable loss of nuanced meaning.

The influence of this essay can be seen in the work of Paul Ricoeur. His "interpretation theory" also depends on a strong notion of pregnancy of metaphorical/symbolic meaning. He resists the restating of metaphors into propositions because of the loss of meaning in the transcription. For Ricoeur, metaphors are not merely "ornaments of discourse", rather they help re-configure and re-shape our notion of reality. They also add to our understanding of reality,

rather than re-stating this understanding in a novel way. He calls this non-transcribable, metaphoric meaning, the "surplus of meaning". He maintains that

"real metaphors are not translatable. Only metaphors of substitution are susceptible of a translation which could restore the literal signification. Tension metaphors are not translatable because they create their meaning. This is not to say that they cannot be paraphrased, just that such a paraphrase is infinite and incapable of exhausting the innovative meaning" (II, 52).

Just as in Brooks' theory, the metaphor remains indispensable because of its resistance to propositional restatement due to its "inexhaustibility" or "surplus of meaning".

IIId. Theory of Meter

Brook's insistence on the indissoluble union between structure and content in the poem is explicated in terms of meter. He understands the metrical structure of poetry to be akin to that of a play. Poems, like plays, are dynamic, and within the poem the "playing out" of the tensions leads the reader to the conclusion. Brooks states that the "conclusion of the poem is the working out of the various tensions- set up by whatever means- by propositions, metaphors, symbols. The unity is achieved by a dramatic process, not a logical" (Urn, 207). The playing out internally of the poem's metrical tensions, provides the unity of form and content.

The influence of this New Critical "tenet" can be seen in the work of Paul Ricoeur. In a recent essay, Ricoeur proposes that it is "precisely the narrative composition, the organizing of the events in the narrative, that is the vehicle for, or better, that foments the theological interpretation"³³. Ricoeur notes that there are structural clues in the gospel of Mark which point to the redactional emphases of the writer. He states that the "most striking feature of the gospel narrative lies in the indissoluble union of the kerygmatic and the narrative aspects" ("IN", 239). This echoes Brook's insistence on the unity of structure and content in pushing this link into the interpretive process itself. For Brooks, the unity is provided in the playing out of the internal, metrical tensions within the poem. For Ricoeur, narrative unity is provided in the redactional emphases which are viewed through the particular narrative structure³⁴.

IIe. Some Major New Critical Tenets

New Critical (Wimsatt, Wellek, Warren, Brooks) "close readings" found their genesis in Eliot's literary theory

³³ "Interpretive Narrative" in The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory, edited by R. Schwartz (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 238.

³⁴ I will discuss Ricoeur's exposition of the "followability" of a narrative as related to its emplotment and his notion of the "synthesis of the heterogeneous" in the second section of this chapter.

which focused on the poem rather than the poet for uncovering meaning.

Brooks' essay on the "Heresy of Paraphrase" (1947) provided philosophical justification for this redirection of critical concern. His appropriation of Kant's discussion on form/content along with his theory of the pregnancy of meaning (particularly in metaphors) helped formulate the New Critical tenet of the indispensability of the literary work. These concerns kept the focus on the structure of the text itself. Wellek and Warren's book, Theory of Literature (1949), expanded the previous essay into a literary theory which continued the reversal of authorial focus and refocused criticism onto the text rather than other external factors: biographies, historical reconstruction, or unconscious intentionality. Wimsatt and Beardsley's work on the "Intentional Fallacy" (1970) continued the reversal of the trend to focus on authorial intention as disclosing the "meaning" of a text. The text came to be viewed as a material entity, an urn or an icon, which was internally coherent and provided the necessary clues as to its particular literary merit.

I have also attempted to identify specific instances in which these emphases have contributed to Ricoeur's theory of interpretation. Ricoeur directly appropriated the essay

"Intentional Fallacy" yet counter-balanced it with his notion of the "fallacy of the absolute text". Brook's "Heresy of Paraphrase" seems to have been more influential than Ricoeur acknowledges. It reflects many of the same concerns as Ricoeur's own theory of the "surplus of meaning" and his insistence on the inexhaustibility of the metaphor. His latest work on interpreting theological narratives adds a further dimension to the "surplus of meaning" by recognising the integral unity between structure and content. This newer work also, ironically, brings him close to the concerns of theologians interested in narrative, particularly those of Hans Frei.

III. Hans Frei and the New Critics

Frei recognises his own debt to Karl Barth, Gilbert Ryle and Eric Auerbach; three thinkers who have helped him to shape his particular hermeneutical approach. In the arena of literary criticism, Auerbach's work on **mimesis** helped Frei to formulate the category of "realistic narrative"³⁵, which he subsequently applied to biblical interpretation. He was similarly indebted to other literary critical figures whom he met initially whilst a student and later a professor at Yale University. Several of these figures have been discussed

³⁵ Frei describes this as "that kind in which subject and social setting belong together, and characters and external circumstances fitly render each other", The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 13-14.

above as "New Critics" (Wellek, Warren, Wimsatt and Brooks), whilst others practised "deconstruction" (mainly Paul de Man).

Early in his writing career, Frei was interested in how the identity of an agent is known through a narrative. With the breakdown of the literal, ostensive reference of the biblical text³⁶, re-focusing on the text as "realistic narrative" attempts to overcome the problems of reference and truth. Firstly, the question of reference is suspended initially for an analysis of "what the text says". The problem of the equivocation of sense with reference is thus overcome by suspending the question of reference. Secondly, the question of the truth of a text is a secondary consideration to be dealt with **after the hermeneutical enquiry**. The truth-value of a text also does not depend on its ostensively referring³⁷. However, Frei did want to assert that in one particular instance, the identity of Jesus Christ, the truth-value of the text **is** dependent on its capacity to ostensively refer³⁸. What Frei needed to

³⁶ This was the thrust of his work in Eclipse of Biblical Narrative, "a description and explanation of the ways in which the older realistic and figurative approaches to these stories broke down" (EBN, 10).

³⁷ I will argue similarly in the next section that Ricoeur's engagement with French structuralism leads him to a new formulation of the notion of "truth".

³⁸ This is one instance where Frei's having been influence by Barth reveals itself. Barth claims that "God's revelation in its objective reality is the person of Jesus Christ" (CD 1/2, 172) and that this is a "real event accomplished in space and time as history within history" (CD 1/2, 177). The sign of the "Miracle of Christmas" corresponds

explain, however, was 1) why only this portion of the narrative is ostensibly bound and 2) how one can determine the 'thrust' of the text. That is, why does Frei privilege the reading of the biblical texts as disclosing the identity of a particular character, viz. Jesus. For Frei to be consistent, he would also have to offer a defence of why the realistic sense of the text is the most obvious³⁹.

Frei's first published work, which was later to be re-published as The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases for Dogmatic Theology, was an early attempt to appropriate philosophical terminology for identifying agents in a narrative (specifically Jesus in the Biblical narrative). Frei followed the philosopher Gilbert Ryle in rejecting a dualistic notion of personhood. Ryle's thesis in The Concept of Mind is that this mind/body dualism gets its impetus due to Descartes' Meditations. This dualistic theory, given the title "Ghost in the Machine", was so prevalent that Ryle refers to it as the "accepted theory". Ryle's constructive proposal depends on a type of "behaviouristic" theory of "mind" and of personhood. From

"noetically and ontically" with what it signifies, the mystery of Christmas (CD 1/2, 182). Furthermore, Barth's Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum (Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme) demonstrates a correspondence between the Christ preached and ostensive referrals to him.

³⁹ David Kelsey maintains that in personal discussions with Frei on this issue, Frei argued that there was something inherent in the structure of the text which pointed to a realistic reading (October 1993).

this, Frei maintained that characters in a story could be identified, based on their actions in a story. The categories "intention-action" and "self-manifestation" were adopted from Ryle and appropriated for following narrative structure.

In 1967, Frei was invited to deliver a lecture at Harvard Divinity School in which he would lay out his theological leanings. In the text of this lecture⁴⁰, Frei indicates specific sympathies in the shaping of his hermeneutical approach. Remarking on the field of literary criticism, he states that he finds himself "more in agreement with the 'newer critics' (like William Empson, William Wimsatt, Cleanth Brooks) as well as with the more moderate representatives of the same group (like Rene Wellek and Austin Warren) and with the historians of literary style like Eric Auerbach ..." (T&N, 33). He understands the work of the "New Critics" and that of Auerbach as concerned with issues of normative interpretation rather than with "archetypal experiences reflected in literature" (T&N, 33). He cites the work of Northrop Frye and Joseph Campbell as dealing with this latter issue⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Reprinted as "Remarks in Connection with a Theological Proposal" in Theology and Narrative, 26-44).

⁴¹ The whole discipline of phenomenological hermeneutics could have been included in his attack, but reference to this hermeneutical endeavor is curiously omitted.

Within the realm of "normative" interpretation, Frei distinguishes further. Firstly, there are those who are concerned with discerning authorial intention, which then provides the framework for hermeneutics. Following this route would be the work of E.D. Hirsch. Secondly, there are those who are concerned with the structure of the narrative "as given" which provides the proper framework for interpretation. He views the former approach as validating interpretation by attempting to uncover the connection between the author's intended meaning and the finished product, namely the text. Frei finds this endeavour "highly speculative" and clearly places his sympathies with the latter approach. He views this latter approach as maintaining that the "formal structure of the narrative itself is the meaning, not the author's intention nor an ontology of language nor yet the text's impact" (T&N, 34). It is this insistence on the primacy of the narrative which forms a distinctive feature in Frei's hermeneutics and which helped theologies which focus on narratives emerge as a viable option on the theological scene.

The Harvard lecture is important for this study on two counts. Firstly it reveals where Frei's specific allegiances (which at times are unlikely bed-fellows) tend to lie. Secondly, coupled with another early yet obscure essay⁴², it

⁴² Originally published in an obscure journal called The Christian Scholar, it is now reprinted as "The Accounts of Jesus' Death and

provides the missing conceptual link in Frei's thought; namely, why a reader ought to privilege a reading of the Biblical narratives as "realistic narrative". Frei's main focus in "The Accounts of Jesus' Death and Resurrection" is on how one goes about determining the "unsubstitutable identity" of the "crucified Jesus with the risen Lord" (T&N, 58). He appeals to genre analysis for the identification. Frei claims that the form/type of literature of the resurrection account is "literally not of the type of a mythological tale ... but something much more like the realistic novel" (T&N, 59). The focus on form/structure and his rejection of authorial intention is a New Critical concern, whilst the analysis of "realistic novel" belongs to the Auerbachian approach. Several problems crop up immediately with this latter position. The bible is a set of religious texts and reading them as one would read a novel, realistic or not, does not seem to be an obvious interpretive strategy. The texts deal with, as Bultmann says, "magic and wonders, supernatural beings... to read the Bible as any other book is not obvious". In addition, there have been many objections against a theory of a unity of textual sense; namely some Freudian interpretations and specifically,

Lacanian exegesis⁴³.

Whilst sharing this New Critical agenda was clearly not problematic for Frei in the late 1960's, as early as 1979 and culminating definitively in 1986, Frei completely withdrew his support for what he perceived the New Criticism to be.

In an unpublished and undated essay⁴⁴ the tenuous link between Frei and the New Criticism becomes explicit. In a short work of remarkable clarity, Frei lays out his hermeneutical stance in detail. As usual, he is sceptical of wholesale hermeneutical endeavours⁴⁵, a position developed

Resurrection" in Theology and Narrative (46-91). As to the novelty of the essay and the obscurity of the journal, see David H. Kelsey "Biblical Narrative and theological anthropology" in Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation, ed. Garrett Green, (142, fn. 10).

⁴³ This issue is explored in chapter two with reference to Peter Brooks' Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative.

⁴⁴ Simply titled "Hermeneutics and Beardslee" in Hans Frei Papers, Manuscript Group No. 76. Special Collections, Yale Divinity School. I believe the essay was written around 1979-1981 because of immediate references to Richard Rorty's Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.

⁴⁵ I have reason to believe that this was due to the influence of his friend and literary-critical colleague, Paul de Man. One of de Man's more influential works was Resistance To Theory; a manifesto against any wholesale attempts at a general hermeneutics. De Man writes that literary theory "contains a necessarily pragmatic moment that certainly weakens it as theory but that adds a subversive element of unpredictability and makes it something of a wild card in the serious game of the theoretical disciplines" (Resistance to Theory [Forward by Wlad Godzich] "Theory and History of Literature, Vol.33" (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 8). As a result, the "resistance to theory is a resistance to the use of language itself or to the possibility that language contains factors or functions that cannot be reduced to intuition" (IBID., 12-13). Hans-Georg Gadamer's Truth and Method also influenced Frei on this issue.

explicitly in relation to the work of William Beardslee⁴⁶. Frei wishes he could participate in Beardslee's quest for a general hermeneutical theory, yet he states that it is precisely "a foundational endeavour (which) I mistrust deeply. I want my hermeneutics to allow me to mean with my texts in independence from the reality-bearing of the texts and the hermeneutics" ("HB", 6). Frei maintains that general hermeneutical theories have difficulty in dealing with differing types of texts. He states,

"the Bible includes all kinds of texts to which different hermeneutical rules may apply. For example, I may want to read a letter in a different way from the way I read a story- non-narratively, that is- even if the same person crops up in the tale and in the correspondence, viz. Jesus Christ. In other words, I hope nobody thinks of something called 'narrative sense' as kind of a hermeneutical absolute" ("HB", 4).

This citation is important in that Frei consciously resists the tendency to view his own hermeneutical theory as a theory of narrative. Whilst narrative is certainly an important component, Frei wants the liberty to include other hermeneutical approaches, including deconstruction⁴⁷, when dealing with other types of texts.

⁴⁶ The entire essay uses Beardslee's Literary Criticism and the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970) as a foil. This was an influential book in a fledgling field.

⁴⁷ "And so I take off my hermeneutical hat to Professors Beardslee and Ricoeur, but at the same time wave an equally friendly yet arms-distance maintaining hello to my structuralist, poststructuralist, and deconstructionist companions" ("Hermeneutics and Beardslee", 7).

Frei traces the root of the Beardslean problem back to a statement in which Beardslee proposes that the "transcendent is encountered beyond the ethical rather than the aesthetic". Frei dismisses this assessment as a "moot question for me. Hermeneutically ... I'd rather leave that aside; I don't know what the transcendent is doing in the first place messing around in my modest second-order rules exhibited in the first-order use of language, and nothing but language" ("HB", 4). Beardslee's error, in Frei's perception, is not only his desire for a general hermeneutic but also his desire to link hermeneutics to moral enterprises. In this essay, Frei cites F.R. Leavis as the "scariest example" of this tendency and subsequently, this same indictment is handed down to the "New Critics". Whether or not Leavis is correctly placed in the company of the New Critics (or at least seen as a British precursor), is debatable. However, Frei's analysis of the link between Leavis/Eliot and the American New Critics on the issue of a desire to view narratives as moral enterprises holds. I will now turn to an analysis of this link, which can be viewed as a sometimes hidden agenda.

IIIa. A Hidden Agenda?

I began the chapter with an analysis made by Stephen Moore concerning Frei's affiliation with the New Criticism.

Moore notes that "Frei himself, scarcely acknowledges New Critical influences in his book [The Eclipse]" (Literary Criticism, 11). Moore surmises that due to the prevalence of New Critical ideas in the United States. during the mid-1970's, Frei felt no obvious need to state explicitly a commonly held position (Literary Criticism, 11). Frei actually had stated his leanings towards New Critical figures as early as 1967. However, as noted above, this essay was, until recently, practically inaccessible. Similarly, whilst Frei did "cautiously" admit his tendency to support New Critical ideas, he also recognised that he was "still a babe in the woods" in regards to literary theory (T&N, 33). His caution may have been partly due to his limited knowledge of the field coupled with something about the New Critical agenda which made Frei apprehensive about claiming full acceptance. I propose that this was precisely the problem and it manifested itself in 1986 with a complete disavowal of the New Criticism.

In an essay written in 1986⁴⁸, Frei analyses several hermeneutical approaches which claim to rely on a **sensus literalis** in the interpretation of texts. In a section captioned, "Prospects for the Literal Sense", Frei aims his guns at the New Criticism. His understanding of the New

⁴⁸ "The Literal Reading of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does it Stretch or will it Break" in Theology and Narrative, pp. 117-152.

Critics is that they

"claim that the text is a normative and pure 'meaning' world of its own which, quite apart from any factual reference it may have, and apart from its author's intention or reader's reception, stands on its own with the authority of self-evident intelligibility" (T&N, 140).

Frei began to view New Criticism as having moved far from being a helpful theory which stressed "close readings" of the text whilst insisting on maintaining its narrative structure. New Criticism's emphases had led to a view of texts as having no reference to reality and thus, as essentially self-referential. Frei's critique continues by drawing parallels between New Criticism and the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur⁴⁹ and its theological application by David Tracy.

I will now delineate some of Frei's perceptions of the New Critical problem. Firstly, he notes the problem of the self-referentiality of the text and its failure to imitate the world (the mimetic function of texts). Frei calls this view "artificial" (T&N, 141) since the biblical texts **must** refer beyond themselves. Theologically, Frei (and Lindbeck⁵⁰) is committed to Barth's view that the text

⁴⁹ I have outlined some of the more obvious parallels between Ricoeur and the New Criticism above. Frei's drawing out of these parallels and his subsequent critique of Ricoeur is one of the focusses of chapter III/1.

⁵⁰ One thinks of the closing words of The Nature of Doctrine, "Only in some does one see the beginnings of a desire to renew in a posttraditional and postliberal mode the ancient practice of absorbing the universe into the biblical world. May their tribe increase" (ND,

invites the reader to dwell in the world it creates. The text shapes the world of the reader⁵¹. If the text does not refer to reality in any manner, then it would have no grounds for inviting us to enter into its "strange new world". Critically, Frei is committed to Auerbach's distinction between Homeric epics and the Bible. Auerbach claims that a distinctive feature of the biblical text is that "it insists it is the only real world, it is destined for autocracy. All other scenes, issues and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it ... the history of all mankind ... will be subordinated to it"⁵². The biblical texts claim to reference the real world in a way unlike any other type of literature; uniquely and definitively.

Secondly, in the post-Gadamerian world, Frei insists that to claim that the act of reading is inconsequential to the interpretation of a text would be philosophically naive (he calls it "artificial" once again). Frei states, "if a narrative should 'not mean but be', avoiding paraphrase as the proper means to the realization of this ideal comes close to enthroning verbal repetition as the highest form of

135).

⁵¹ cf. Karl Barth, "The Strange New World Within The Bible" in The Word of God and the Word of Man, translated by Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928).

⁵² Eric Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature [Translated by Willard R. Trask] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 15.

understanding" (T&N, 141). This is an adamant rejection of a strong notion of the "heresy of paraphrase" and of an overemphasis on the consequential doctrine of the "pregnancy of meaning".

Finally, Frei attacks the importation of Christian theology into hermeneutical theories. He proposes that the New Criticism appeals to a literal reading "because and to the extent that it is in fact a disguised Christian understanding of them, and not a reading under a general theory" (T&N, 143). This is the essence of the complaint that Frei made of F.R. Leavis several years before; moral theorising cleverly disguised as hermeneutical theory⁵³.

It is at this juncture that Frei advocates the "cultural-linguistic" approach proposed by George Lindbeck⁵⁴.

⁵³ While Eliot was a profoundly religious man, Brooks maintains that he never confused religion with poetry.

"The primary role of poetry is to give us an account of reality, not to argue a means for reshaping it. To be more specific: if a culture is sick, the poet's primary task is to provide us with a diagnosis, not to prescribe a specific remedy. **For all of his intense interest in the problems of our culture, and in spite of the fact that he himself was deeply committed to a doctrinal religion, Eliot was careful never to confuse poetry with politics or religion**" ("T.S. Eliot:...", 330).

and he continues in another essay,

"He is so much a man of his own age that he can indicate his attitude toward the Christian tradition without falsity only in terms of the difficulties of a rehabilitation; and he is so much a poet and so little a propagandist that he can be sincere only as he presents his theme concretely and dramatically" ("The Waste...", 86).

⁵⁴ Lindbeck describes the cultural-linguistic approach in regards to the way doctrines are used as "the function of church doctrines that becomes

The formal/structural analysis of the texts which had previously privileged a "realistic narrative" reading of the gospels, gives way to an emphasis on the community's way of reading. Frei stands in agreement here with David Kelsey's analysis, "to call a set of texts 'scripture' is, in part, to say that they ought so to be used in the common life of the church as to nurture and preserve her self-identity"⁵⁵. However, at the end of the "Literal Reading ..." essay, Frei curiously appeals to a "Christian" midrash for adjudicating among issues of interpretation. This appeal is made out of necessity; for once the interpretive power is pulled from the text itself, that is, the structure of the text to privilege interpretation in a certain way (namely, realistic narrative), appeals to either a 'literal sense' or a 'plain sense' is a dangerous affair⁵⁶. Perhaps this realisation is what prompted B.S. Childs to warn against attempts at using

most prominent ... is their use, not as expressive models or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action" (ND, 18).

⁵⁵ David Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology (London: SCM Press, 1975), 150.

⁵⁶ Kathryn Tanner's contribution to the Frei **festschrift** is an example of what can happen to these types of appeals. Tanner identifies the reading of the text as "realistic narrative" with the "plain reading" which over time gained credibility and thus becomes the "traditional reading". This traditional reading implies a decision of the community to privilege this sense of construing the text. Then in a typical move reminiscent of a "hermeneutic of suspicion", Tanner questions why this sense ought to be privileged, especially because it is "traditional". See "Theology and the Plain Sense" in Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation, ed. Garrett Green, pp. 59-78).

midrash "as a text-creating reality"⁵⁷. His warning is specifically aimed at Frei's proposal.

IV. Final Conclusions

Stephen Moore was correct in his judgement that Hans Frei was certainly influenced by New Critical ideas. However, his proposal as to what constitutes New Criticism seems to be slightly off-centre. Similarly, Frei's conclusion that New Criticism claims a "normative and pure 'meaning' world of its own" also seems to be mistaken. However, one could argue that Frei's **perception** of the New Critical endeavour, viz. maintaining the autonomy of the text's conveyed world, is not without historical foundation. Deconstruction in the arena of literary theory followed closely on the heels of New Criticism. Loaded with its notions of the free play of texts and the self-referentiality of language, it seemed to be a natural and/or logical progression of the New Critical enterprise.

Rene Wellek expends considerable effort in his History of Modern Criticism, rejecting the charge that New Criticism laid the conceptual framework for deconstruction. Countering the charge with textual evidence, I will turn once again to

⁵⁷ B.S. Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1993), p.20.

the "New Critics" surveyed previously.

Cleanth Brooks understands the task of the poet to "unify experience. He must return to us the unity of the experience itself as man knows it in his own experience. The poem, if it be a true poem is **a simulacrum of reality...**" (Urn, 173: emphasis mine). As Wellek maintains, "the supposed consequence of any view of the unity, self-reflexiveness, and integration of a work of art ... poses a false dilemma. A poem may have coherence and integrity without losing its meaning or truth. **The very nature of words point to an outside world**" (History VI, 150: emphasis mine). New Critical thought clings to a Neo-Kantian notion of the nature of language⁵⁸. Brooks in writing of T.S. Eliot's vision states, "the primary role of poetry is to give us an account of reality, not to argue a means for reshaping it⁵⁹". Ricoeur stays out of the dilemma of the self-referentiality of language by appropriating a version of a Cassirean notion of "symbol". Whereas metaphor is "a free invention of discourse", symbols are "bound to the cosmos" (IT, 61).

⁵⁸ This would not be so surprising since Ernst Cassirer would have been part of the Yale philosophy faculty when the Yale "New Critics" began to write. I will sketch the parallels between Cassirer and Ricoeur on language below.

⁵⁹ Cleanth Brooks, "T.S. Eliot: Thinker and Artist" in T.S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, edited by Alan Tate. (New York: Delacorte Press, 1966), 330.

Frei was initially dependent on the New Criticism's insistence on the primacy ("indispensability") of the literary work, the "close readings" which developed out of this and the rejection of authorial intention as a vehicle to access the meaning of a work. However, as his thought matured, he noticed a tenuous link between New Criticism and Christian theology becoming explicit. Whilst Austin Warren asserted that "the business of the poet is to produce "objective correlatives" for thought, the imaginative illusion of a view of life" ("Eliot's...", 280), he was opposed to the notion of "salvation by poetry". Whilst it was true that poets had begun to delve into concerns similar to those of religion, most New Critics rejected the notion that poetry had replaced religion. And whilst Frei's analysis may not seem well-founded, his perception of the New Critical enterprise led to his disassociation from it.

I have attempted to sketch some of the major concerns of New Criticism. This agenda included "close readings" of the texts, the indispensability of the literary work and a rejection of authorial intention as supplying the main interpretive schema. This analysis of New Criticism came as an interaction with the statement made by Stephen Moore that Frei's Eclipse was a "major conduit through which New Critical ideas have flowed into gospel scholarship" (Literary Criticism, 10-11). The second half of this section sketched

the formal relationship that Frei acknowledged with the New Critics. I now intend to provide some textual evidence⁶⁰ for this relationship.

IVa. The Hermeneutical Rule is New Critical

Firstly, T.S. Eliot's dictum of "close reading" could not find a more proper home than in this continually reiterated statement, "the aim of an exegesis which simply looks for the sense of a story (but does not identify sense with religious significance for the reader) is in the final analysis that of reading the story itself" (*IJC*, xv). Frei's hermeneutic was a reflection on what he referred to as "second-order rules exhibited in the first-order use of language" ("HB", 5). As a discipline, Frei understood hermeneutics as attempting to uncover the **meaning** of the text rather than its **truth-value**; viz. either the text's claim to reference reality or in its weaker form, its claim to true interpretation (cf. "HB", 3). In fact, one scholar feels that Frei is **so insistent** on this point (hermeneutics deals with meaning rather than truth) that he accuses Frei of a type of formalism: "to accuse Frei of formalism would be like throwing Br'er Rabbit into the briar patch. How a story means is, on his showing, a function of its specific

⁶⁰ The textual evidence will be provided from an analysis of Frei's initial work published as The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology.

narrative structure"⁶¹.

Secondly, Frei's continual insistence on the **primacy** of the narrative is inextricably bound to a New Critical agenda. In defending a hermeneutic which is concerned with the meaning of a text, Frei states "to do so without regard for the narrative pattern would make these convictions as thin and uncommunicative as it is to paraphrase the meaning of a poem or a novel by distilling it out and separating it from its language and imagery or its story and then presenting it in a didactic form" (IJC, 47). It is obvious that the thoughts and language here belong to Cleanth Brooks in the essay "Heresy of Paraphrase"⁶², which likewise is dependent on Kant's notion of the inseparability of form and content.

William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's essay, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1954), states at the outset that "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art ..."⁶³. In a similar statement, Frei asserts

⁶¹ Stephen Crites, "The Spatial Dimensions of Narrative Truth-telling" in Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation, edited by Garrett Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 99. I deal with the accusations against Frei concerning the status of "meaning" and "truth" in chapter III.

⁶² Brooks states that "it is highly important that we know what we are doing and that we see plainly that the paraphrase is not the real core of meaning which constitutes the essence of the poem" (Urn, 160).

⁶³ "The Intentional Fallacy" in William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (London: Methuen, 1970), 3.

that "we are bound to judge the success of a piece of writing by the integrity or credulity of the characters" (*IJC*, 144). Brooks also argued in "The Heresy of Paraphrase" that a poem is judged to be meritorious not only because of the subjects discussed (its content) but also because of the internal, formal structuring of the poem itself. Additionally, Frei focuses only on the text without any "additional" information. This view culminates in an outright rejection of authorial intention as a method to access the "meaning" of the text⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ Frei's opposition to intentionality will be dealt with below since this is a major theme in both his and Ricoeur's work. It could be argued that this opposition points to an equally dependent reliance outside of the sphere of literary theory, namely on the work of both Gilbert Ryle and Peter Strawson.

I/2. "Paul Ricoeur and Structuralism: A new meaning of the notion of truth?": Traces Ricoeur's early moves from phenomenological analysis of texts dealing with fallibility and symbolism towards a focus on hermeneutics. Through an emendation of the structuralism of Genette, Gremias and narratology, the move to post-structuralism allows for 'meaning' to exist outside of textuality. A reformulation of the notion of 'truth' as disclosed by narratives becomes a 'way-of-being-in-the-world'; an openness to possibility.

I. Introduction

This section will examine the figures involved in the development of Ricoeur's exposition of the notions of temporality, emplotment and truth in relation to biblical texts. The investigation will focus on an analysis of Ricoeur's contention that his utilisation of structuralism's insights into temporality, whilst accounting for its limitations, combined with certain strands of Germanic philosophy, allows for a more balanced account of the relationship between textuality and reference. This investigation is thus closely linked to the prior chapter which uncovered Frei's dependence on the New Criticism and his later break with its methodology.

Paul Ricoeur's work in Time and Narrative⁶⁵ is the culmination of years of dissatisfaction with the prevailing models of textual interpretation, specifically structuralism.

⁶⁵ Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, [Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellaur], (Chicago: Chicago University Press, vol.1- 1984, vol.2-1985, vol.3-1988).

His main tenet which threads the volumes together is that a structural analysis of a narrative, whilst it is beneficial, is nonetheless incapable of dealing with the temporality of emplotment within those narratives⁶⁶. Ricoeur traces this problem to the "major tendency of a modern theory of narrative" which attempts to "dechronologize" and "relogicize" all elements of narratives, including the plot. However, in Ricoeur's analysis, the attempt to "dechronologize" narratives is destined to fail because the temporal aspects of narratives cannot be re-configured into a purely formal description. Ricoeur's theory leads him to bracket the notion of "truth". It is at this point that this chapter turns toward a discussion of how Ricoeur arrived at this stance.

Ricoeur's eclectic literary-critical approach finds itself upon the work of the French structuralists Gerard Genette and A.J. Greimas. Genette's work on "narrative discourse" and Greimas work on "discourse analysis" gives Ricoeur the co-ordinates within which temporality can be added to his theory of emplotment. However, Ricoeur expands Genette's theory by making a crucial distinction (between storied time and real time) and by adding another

⁶⁶ Ricoeur writes in the preface to Time and Narrative, "The Rule of Metaphor and Time and Narrative form a pair ... the meaning-effects produced by each of them belong to the same basic phenomenon of semantic innovation. In both cases this innovation is produced entirely on the level of discourse, that is, the level of acts of language equal to or greater than the sentence" (T&N, preface ix).

(temporality). These two emendations are ultimately what allows for the world of the text to connect up with the world of the reader (at least in theory) whilst dealing with the problem of emplotment.

Ricoeur's self-understanding is that of a philosopher. This can be understood in terms of two separate methodological pre-suppositions. Firstly, Ricoeur wishes to be understood as working within the confines of philosophical analysis, not theological investigation. Secondly, he wishes to keep the two disciplines separate and distinct. This chapter will analyse two of his investigations into biblical narratives, namely "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" and "The Bible and the Imagination". The question to focus the investigation will be "To what extent does Ricoeur succeed in keeping the two disciplines separate?" I propose that his ideal is difficult to sustain (tenuous at best) since his stance towards certain literary-critical methodologies (especially structuralism) and to some degree his reliance upon Nietzsche and Heidegger has pre-determined the final form of his work on narrative⁶⁷. I will now turn to an analysis of the work of Gerard Genette and Ricoeur's subsequent expansion of Narrative Discourse.

⁶⁷ The philosophical issue of Ricoeur's reliance upon Nietzsche and Heidegger will be dealt with in the second chapter.

II. Gerard Genette's structural analysis

Gerard Genette's Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method⁶⁸ has been hailed as "one of the central achievements" of structuralism and as the "centerpiece of the study of narrative"⁶⁹. Jonathan Culler also wrote in 1980 that the book is "invaluable because it fills [the] need for a systematic theory of narrative" (NRD, 7). The book along with its companion volume, Narrative Discourse Revisited, are important for this study because Genette is one of the major figures within French Structuralism with whom Ricoeur dialogues⁷⁰.

Genette's analysis begins with a distinction within the analysis of narrative temporality, namely "story time" and "narrative time"⁷¹. Genette proposes

"to use the word **story** for the signified or narrative content, to use the word **narrative** for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and to use the word **narrating** for the

⁶⁸ Gerard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method. [Translated by Jane Lewin, Forward by Jonathan Culler], Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Culler in Gerard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, 8.

⁷⁰ This can be found especially within T&NII, chapters 3,4, and conclusion.

⁷¹ Genette bases this distinction on Gunther Muller's essay "Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit", the former being narrative time and the latter story time.

producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place" (NRD, 27).

Thus, "story time" is that time which is followed and lends to a reading in succession whereas "narrative time" is that time within the story which does not necessarily happen coincidentally with the "story time"⁷².

Genette argues that there are three connections which determine the relation between story time and the 'pseudo-time' of the narrative. These are order, duration and frequency⁷³. I will focus on the category, **order**, which Genette uses to deal with the phenomenon of **anachrony** in the story since this is what distinguishes Ricoeur's work from that of "classical French structuralism". The category 'order' consists of anachronies such as **flashback**, **foreshadowing**, and beginning a story **in medias res**. Genette recognises that the procedure of attempting to categorise these

"narrative **anachronies** (as I will call the various types of discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative) implicitly assume[s] the existence of a kind of zero degree

⁷² Seymour Chatman's analysis of time in narratives begins with a similar distinction between "discourse-time-- the time it takes to peruse the discourse-- and story-time, the duration of the purported events of the narrative", Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 62.

⁷³ Within his analysis of "story-time", Seymour Chatman adopts Genette's categories of order, duration, and frequency with little or no significant modification.

that would be a condition of perfect temporal correspondence between narrative and story. This point of reference is more hypothetical than real" (NRD, 35-36)⁷⁴.

He argues that the entire corpus of Western literature uses anachrony as a literary device and thus is a proper subject of enquiry.

Genette initially distinguishes between two types of anachronies, **prolepsis** and **analepsis**. **Prolepsis** is defined as the "narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later". **Analepsis** is defined as "any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment" (NRD, 46). These anachronies are sometimes referred to as flashforward (prolepsis) and flashback (analepsis).

Genette identifies a "first narrative" and a "subordinate narrative" within every anachronic narrative. Some analepses are related to the first narrative by either enriching it or adding information to it whereas others must merge their temporality into that of the first narrative (the "subordinate narrative"). Genette calls the former analepses, external, the latter internal (NRD, 49-50).

⁷⁴ Seymour Chatman argues in a similar vein: "These distinctions [anachrony] are based on the **assumption** of a single story-strand, which bears the temporal center of gravity (so to speak)", (Story and Discourse, 66: emphasis mine).

Within internal analepses, Genette makes a further distinction. **Completing analepses** are "pure and simple, that is, breaks in the temporal continuity" (NRD, 51). They function to elaborate on the section of the narrative referred to in the text. **Paralipses** are partial ellipses which "do not skip over a moment of time but ... [they] **sidestep** a given element" (NRD, 52) of the narrative.

Genette also distinguishes between complete and partial prolepses. **Completing prolepses** are "those that fill in ahead of time a later blank" whereas **repeating prolepses** "double a narrative section to come" (NRD, 71). However, he concedes that he "find[s] hardly any examples of completeness, and it seems in fact all prolepses are of the **partial** type" (NRD, 77).

Seymour Chatman's analysis of the forms of anachrony generally follows that of Genette with a significant modification. Chatman argues that "[e]xposition is a function rather than a sub-class of analepsis or prolepsis. That function is to provide 'necessary information concerning characters and events existing before the action proper of a story begins'"⁷⁵. His analysis identifies analepses and prolepses (both internal and external) as functions of the

⁷⁵ Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Fiction (New York, 1959), p. 684 cited in S. Chatman Story and Discourse, p.67.

form of anachrony rather than a form itself.

In the above section, I have attempted to lay out the theoretical matrix within which a large section of Ricoeur's work in Time and Narrative: Volume 2 (fictional literature) operates. This matrix is important for three reasons. Firstly, both Genette and Ricoeur rely on "close readings" of French novels (particularly those of Marcel Proust) to derive their findings. Secondly, both theorists assume that "narrative" is meaningful and this "meaning" can be accessed, if only partially, through structural analysis. Finally, and most importantly for the larger project, in incorporating Genette's structuralist work into his broader theory of narratology, Ricoeur proposes "**the** interpretation" of a Proustian novel (T&NII, 135: emphasis mine). This statement is significant because it is partly through the application of structural insights that Ricoeur arrives at what he considers "the correct interpretation" of a work. If Ricoeur's theory can be shown to de-limit the boundaries of interpretation that a work can itself service, then it would be a valuable tool against the excesses of a view which posits the self-referentiality of language.

III. Ricoeur's Analysis of Genette

Ricoeur begins his assimilation of Genette's

structuralism by focusing on those aspects of the matrix which he wishes to emend. He directs his objections at the foundation of Genette's system; namely, the distinction between "story time" and "narrative time". While Ricoeur accepts this as a necessary distinction, he criticises Genette's failure to link up these two conceptions of time with "real time". He writes, "First, the **Zeiterlebnis** (temporal experience) is set out of bounds. All that remain are the relations internal to the text between utterance, statement, and story (or diegetic universe)" (T&NII, 82). Ricoeur proposes that within this model, a polarity is created in Genette's matrix between the diegetic mode (pure narrative) and the dramatic mode (instantiation of experience). Because of this polarity, Genette can refer to the "narrative's capacity for autonomy" (NRD, 85). However, Ricoeur maintains that Genette's polarity sets up a false dichotomy. Narratology can be employed to answer not only the "How?" of literature (the diegetic mode) but also the "What?" (the dramatic mode). Admittedly, Ricoeur postpones the analysis of this procedure until he specifies exactly where Genette's theory is mistaken. For now, it will suffice to state that Ricoeur needs to expand the prevailing understanding of the role of narratology which he can then mesh with a radically altered theory of truth. Only after this emendation will he argue that his advances upon Genette's structural analysis allow his theory to break the

threat of an autonomous textual world and ultimately, correlate with and expand human experience.

IIIa. Remembrance of Things Past

Ricoeur uses Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past to analyse the fictive experience of time with Genette's matrix in mind. He proposes that "Proustian analysis is not a gratuitous game. It is governed by the meaning of the work as a whole" (T&NII, 83). For obvious reasons, Genette's matrix and its inability to link the textual world with the real world (**Zeiterlebnis**) makes Ricoeur "uneasy" (T&NII, 86). Ricoeur identifies the failure in Genette's system as this:

"... for lack of a notion like that of a world of the text ... [Genette's] recourse to the notion of narrative voice is not sufficient to do justice to the fictive experience the narrator-hero has of time in its psychological and metaphysical dimensions" (T&NII, 86).

Ricoeur proposes that the **experience** of the fictional narrator connects up with the "real" world through the world projected by the text. Ricoeur can maintain this position (although he must propose a schema in which this coheres) whereas Genette's matrix cannot because of the prior decision to place **Zeiterlebnis** outside of the scope of narratology⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ Ricoeur writes, "To pose this question is to ask whether we must not

Ricoeur concludes his analysis of the major inadequacy of a pure structuralist analysis with an enigmatic statement involving the **intention of the author of the Proustian text**:

"Over and above the discussion of the interpretation of Remembrance proposed by Genette, the question remains whether, in order to preserve the **meaning** of the work, it is not necessary to subordinate the narrative technique to the **intention** that carries the text beyond itself, toward an experience, no doubt feigned but nonetheless irreducible to a simple game with time" (T&NII, 87).

So, what is Ricoeur appealing to here? It is important to recognise that Ricoeur distinguishes between textual intention, which is the author's intention inscribed in the text, and mental intention, which is the psychological intention of the author. Authorial intention is detectable in a text as textual intention (the shape the text takes) whereas mental intention is inaccessible and thus, not detectable⁷⁷. Ricoeur is arguing that Proust intended to convey an **experience**, not simply to create a textual world which, ultimately, he would have difficulty connecting up with the "real" world.

do justice to the dimension that Muller, recalling Goethe, named **Zeiterlebnis**, and that narratology, by decree and as a result of its strict methodology, sets out of bounds" (T&NII, 87).

⁷⁷ This highly controversial area of Ricoeur's thought has been recently attacked (cf. Wolterstorff, Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the claim that God Speaks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 8).

These concerns about authorial intention are founded upon the analysis in Interpretation Theory⁷⁸. Ricoeur maintains this stance toward discourse: "A message is intentional, it is meant by someone, the code is anonymous and not intended" (IT, 3). "To mean is both what the speaker means, i.e., what he intends to say, and what the sentence means, i.e., what the conjunction between the identification function and the predicative function yields. Meaning, in other words, is both noetic and noematic" (IT, 12). However, there is a distancing which occurs between the author and the discourse when it becomes inscribed. "Discourse is the event of language ... Events vanish while systems remain" (IT, 9). Ricoeur calls this phenomenon, *distanciation*. He argues that a recognition of *distanciation* requires the position that "mental meaning can be found nowhere else than in discourse itself. The utterer's meaning has its mark in the utterance meaning" (IT, 13). While the author's marks are still contained within the discourse, they are really only recognisable in the crafting; the form the discourse ultimately takes. The link between author and text is left tenuous: "(t)he utterance meaning points back towards the utterer's meaning thanks to the self-reference of discourse to itself as an event" (IT, 13). Discerning what the author "meant" in a "non-psychological" sense becomes the Ricoeurian

⁷⁸ Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse Theory and the Surplus of Meaning. Fort Worth, Texas: T.C.U. press, 1976.

problem of hermeneutics; this is what leads to the "conflict of interpretations"⁷⁹.

Within this theory of discourse, Ricoeur proposes that "time lost-regained" is "the interpretation" (T&NII, 135) of Remembrance of Things Past. Ricoeur recognises initially that Proust uses the theme "time lost-regained" in three separate yet related senses:

"time regained, we might say, is the metaphor that encloses differences 'in the necessary links of a well-wrought style'⁸⁰. It is also the recognition, which crowns stereoscopic vision. Finally, it is the impression regained, which reconciles life and literature" (T&NII, 151).

It is this final sense of temporality which successfully connects the world of the text to the world of the reader: a fusing of both horizons. It is this final connection of temporality which, Ricoeur proposes, transcends the limitations of structural analysis. This supplement to structuralism requires the reader to recognise the text as confrontational and not simply a reflection of one's own interpretive bias.

⁷⁹ The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics (Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy) [translated by several authors and with an introduction by the editor Don Ihde] (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

⁸⁰ An obvious allusion to Cleanth Brooks' essay, "The Well-Wrought Urn".

In the above section, I have discussed Ricoeur's analysis of the shortcomings of Genette's temporal matrix. In particular, Ricoeur focuses on Genette's failure to incorporate **Zeiterlebnis** into the matrix which only includes "story time" (**erzählte Zeit**) and "narrative time" (**Erzählzeit**)⁸¹. This failure, while restricting the scope of narratology to a diegetic investigation, has had enormous consequences in recent literary history. I will demonstrate below that this notion of the autonomy of the text can lead one to posit a purely self-referential view of language and ultimately leads to a radical deconstruction. I also propose that Ricoeur recognises this very danger and proposes that fictive texts link up with the "real world" through narrative world projections. We shall now turn to Ricoeur's expansion of the role of narratology. Later, I will investigate Ricoeur's alternative theory of truth which combined with narratology's expanded role, attempts to save textuality from self-referentiality by fusing the world of the text with the world of the reader.

IIIb. Ricoeur's adaption of the role of narratology

In Ricoeur's work in Time and Narrative, volumes I & II, the configuration of both history and fiction has been

⁸¹ Seymour Chatman also maintains Gunther Muller's distinction between *Erzählzeit* and *erzählte Zeit* which had been adopted by Genette.

investigated as the "art of composition" (T&NII, 156). However, Ricoeur wants to merge the two investigations into an understanding of narratology extended beyond the limits imposed by Todorov (1969). He contends that the current work in historiography, particularly in the work of Hayden White, allows narratology to be extended to the genre of history. Ricoeur asserts, "(h)istoriography and literary criticism are both called upon and are invited together to form a grand narratology, where an equal right would be given to historical narrative and fictional narrative" (T&NII, 156). The configuration of time leads to a "grand narratology" for three reasons. Firstly, people use narratives in ordinary discourse⁸². Secondly, both fiction and history depend on emplotment to configure time. Finally, there is a "kinship between methods of derivation" due to "new narrative practices" (T&NII, 157). Ricoeur's investigations into configuration in both historical narrative and fictional narrative was based on a prior "plea for the precedence of narrative understanding over narratological rationality" (T&NII, 156). While involved in this exposition, he has consciously bracketed the enquiry into "truth" while his

⁸² This conclusion corresponds with the work of Hayden White who maintains that "[s]o natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report on the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent- or, as in some domains of contemporary Western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused". "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), 1.

concern has been focused on the "meaning" of the text. Ricoeur concludes that in his investigations, "the universal character of the formal principle of narrative configuration was thereby confirmed, to the extent that what this understanding confronts is the emplotment, taken in its most extreme formality, namely, the temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous" (T&NII, 158). This ability to understand is a recognition that temporality is fused with emplotment. This in turn helps the interpretive process by giving a framework within which a valid interpretation can be posited.

I will now map the route by which Ricoeur expands and thus reformulates the role of narratology. He takes as his "guiding concept" (T&NII, 154) the mimesis of action. He understands mimesis as not strictly the imitation of action, but as incorporated into the larger Greek notion of **muthos**. It is through understanding mimesis as **muthos** that one arrives at a broader notion of emplotment. He writes,

"I claim that the modern novel demands of literary criticism much more than a subtle reformulation of the principle of the synthesis of the heterogeneous, by which I formally defined emplotment. It [the modern novel] produces in addition an enrichment of the very notion of action, proportional to that of the notion of emplotment" (T&NII, 156).

The problem, as Ricoeur proposes, is that a narrow definition of emplotment (the synthesis of the heterogeneous) cannot allow for the various types of **anachrony** identified by

Genette's analysis. Ricoeur expands his definition of emplotment to include "discordant concordance", thus allowing for the various forms of ellipses, including partial ellipses. By this expansion, Ricoeur can now extend the overarching category "mimesis of action" to sections of emplotted temporal narrative (**Erzählzeit**) which do not follow chronologically the **erzählte Zeit**, or storied time.

While Genette asserted that all of Western literature contains anachrony, Ricoeur focuses rather on the analysis which provided the distinction between narrator and character in the novel. This analysis allowed critics to posit the distinction between point of view (narrator) and narrative voice (character). This distinction is crucial for it led to a distinction in genre; between the epic and the novel. Goethe, Schiller, Hegel and the recent work of Mikhail Bakhtin, analyse the epic as a high form of literature, removed from everyday life whereas the novel is a low form of literature, contemporary with everyday, modern life (T&NII, 155). However, Ricoeur notes Northrop Frye's observation that both forms of literature are still classified as fiction. Furthermore, Aristotle would recognise the mimetic quality of both genres, because both imitate history regardless of high heroic status, the equality of the hero or comedic value. Ricoeur places the distinction between the two genres on the level of the narrator. The novelist is a "creator of tales"

which requires "rigorous formal discipline" whereas the "epic storyteller" relates a narrative that contains "its own internal completion" (T&NII, 155-156). Yet Ricoeur maintains that the novel contributes to an "enrichment" of the mimesis of action; that is, it corresponds to reality.

IV. Ricoeur on the problem of temporality in narrative

In an essay entitled "Narrative Time"⁸³, Ricoeur wished to explore what a contribution a theory of narrative could offer to a phenomenology of time experience and vice versa. This essay laid the ground work for the investigations in Time and Narrative. Ricoeur proposes that "my suspicion is that both anti-narrativist epistemologists and structuralist literary critics have overlooked the temporal complexity of the narrative matrix constituted by the plot", ("NT", 167). It is necessary to firstly examine the sequential phases of development in the thought of one prominent "structuralist" critic which Ricoeur utilises, namely, A.J. Greimas. In many ways, Greimas' journey has been one which has been seminal for the narrative analysis of Paul Ricoeur and I will therefore spend some time elaborating Greimas' journey through structuralism into post-structuralist thought.

⁸³ Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Time" in On Narrative. (Edited by W.J.T. Mitchell). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

IVa. A.J. Gremias "On Meaning"

Gremias' seminal essay "On Meaning"⁸⁴ is a series of comments on his approach known as "discourse analysis". He begins by distinguishing between North American and French structuralist approaches to interpretation. In what he calls "North America", Gremias maintains that structuralism asserts the existence of meaning but that one cannot speak about it. In contradistinction to this position, the French structuralists maintain that "meaning happens to be the essential dimension of language" ("OM", 539). Gremias then argues that the French position is thus a post-structuralist position due to its anti-agnostic presuppositions. Gremias is identified as a structuralist because he has been interested with meaning as identified through structure. He develops this thought as "meaning defined first of all as translation or transcoding then as orientation or intention" ("OM", 539). Upon analysing this terminology, I understand Gremias to be asserting that meaning is firstly a recognition of the essential structures inherent in the text. This is certainly the early emphasis in his career. However, as Gremias understood the limitations inherent in his position, he incorporated into his theory a dimension which could account for temporality in narratives.

⁸⁴ New Literary History, Volume 20 (Spring 1989), 539-551.

In the essay "On Meaning", Gremias notes several significant steps in his construction of a universal semiotic theory. He maintains that his theory, based on the "Saussurian postulate of a structured world, apprehensible in its significations can, indeed, contribute to the elaboration of a unified methodology for the Humanities and Social Sciences" ("OM", 541). His initial move was a unification of the work of Levi-Strauss and Vladimir Propp. From Levi-Strauss, Gremias took the paradigmatic structure of his anthropological methodology; from Propp he took the "syntagmatic" or "syntactic" component. This unification allowed Gremias in 1970 to formulate a universal semiotic theory which he believed would encompass the ability to comprehend the deep structures inherent in all narratives. Another component in Gremias' theory is the interest in the modal and aspectual functioning of verbs in what he calls the "narrative syntax". This position entails the recognition that any type of narrative grammar must be a "modal grammar". In fact, he expounds his theory as "the whole grammar is composed of modalities; the rest is simply content, semantics" ("OM", 542). Because of his pre-occupation with the modalities inherent in the semiotic system, he analyses Propp's theory into three semiotic parts: 1) semiotics of manipulation, 2) semiotics of action, 3) semiotics of sanction. Gremias has recently focused most of his attention on this second concern which deals with the conditions

necessary for the performance of an action. This recent focus has led Gremias to assert that in post-structuralist investigations "[n]arrativity was seen as not simply narrativity but as the syntactic form of the organization of the world. This is the decisive turn which separates us from semiologists, who continue to analyse literary texts and who then are transformed into Derrideans and Foucaultians, for example" ("OM", 543). The "us" whom Gremias has in view is specifically his colleague Roland Barthes and himself.

IVb. Ricoeur's extension of Gremias

Ricoeur makes significant advances on Gremias' conclusions by proposing that the major problem anti-narrativists and structuralists face is what he calls the "illusion of sequence". This problem is eminent owing to the observation that in narratives, sequence is not always equated with chronology. Ricoeur's basic premise in "Narrative Time" is that narrativity and temporality are related in a language game or form of life. He asserts "[i]ndeed, I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent" ("NT", 165). Thus, a phenomenological analysis of narrative starts from temporality and moves through degrees of temporal

organisation. Ricoeur's observations are based on part one of Being & Time where Heidegger locates the phenomenon of time as a series of linear "nows". In "Narrative Time", Ricoeur notes three distinct yet intertwined levels of temporality:

- A) time as that "in" which events take place.
- B) Historicality: an emphasis on the past and the subsequent extension of life through repetition. This continuity allows objective history to be grounded in historicality.
- C) "plural unity of future, past, and present" which is the deepest level of time. This analysis is rooted in Heidegger's notion of "care" which coheres the various tenses of temporality.

Ricoeur's analysis of Heidegger culminates in the proposal that the role of narrativity is determined by the narrative plot. He defines "plot" as "the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events in any story" ("NT", 167). Ultimately it is the plot which stands at the intersection of time and narrative. Thus, in Time and Narrative, Ricoeur focuses most of his energies on synthesising the temporal aspect of narrative into a construal of emplotment.

V. The status of 'Truth'

Picking up on his bracketing of the notion of "truth", Ricoeur proposes that if historical narrative is "true" (as opposed to fiction) then on one question, namely the

configuration of time, they merge. Turning to the "dysemmetries", he notes that fiction is "richer in information about time" than is history (T&NII, 158). He proposes that this claim can be substantiated in two correlative ways. Firstly, history attempts chronology; rarely using anachrony. Placing this within Genette's terminology, one can say that historical narrative rarely, if ever, uses the internal analepsis, paralipsis. Secondly, historical narrative attempts to make "time-spans and their corresponding speeds extremely heterogeneous" (T&NII, 158-159). I understand this to mean that fictional literature is both a chronological and an anachronied reverie⁸⁵. I will now turn to Ricoeur's preliminary sketch of the notion of "truth".

Ricoeur asserts that the boundary between configuration and refiguration is crossed when the world of the work intersects the transcendence immanent in the text. His revised notion of truth is thus expanded to include "transformation" and "disclosure" of the "actual" world of action. This potential of texts to transform and/or disclose the "real world" (**Zeiterlebnis**) occurs in the confrontation between text and reader: "at the intersection of the world projected by the text and the life-world of the

⁸⁵ Ricoeur puts it eloquently: "Everything [in fictional narrative] occurs as though fiction, by creating imaginary worlds, opened up an unlimited career to the manifestation of time" (T&NII, 159).

reader" the literary text⁸⁶ acquires not only meaning but "asserts its claims to truth" (T&NII, 160). Thus, the refiguration of time occurs where the "referential intentions of the historical narrative and the fictional narrative interweave" (T&NII, 160). Ricoeur has thus sketched new parameters within his agenda; a reformulation of the notion of "truth".

What are the implications of both Genette's and Ricoeur's analyses for biblical narrative? The impact of this study will turn towards an analysis of biblical narrative and its components. Simply put, does biblical narrative have the components of a modern novel or does it fit into the simpler notion of emplotment as the "synthesis of the heterogeneous"? Whilst it is clear that biblical narrative contains peripeteia⁸⁷ and recognition (both combine to form Aristotle's definition of 'plot') and certain instances of anachrony, can one properly distinguish between the novelist (the creator of tales) and the storytellers of

⁸⁶ For Ricoeur, the category, "literary texts", would include both fictional narrative and historical narrative. John Searle also asserts that "the literary is continuous with the nonliterary. Not only is there no sharp boundary, but there is not much of a boundary at all. **Thus Thucydides and Gibbon wrote works of history which we may or may not treat as works of literature**" John Searle, "The logical status of fictional discourse" in Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979), 59.

⁸⁷ "Peripeteia" is defined by Aristotle as "the reversal of the fortunes of the characters" (On Poetry and Music, Translated by S.H. Butcher, Edited by Milton C. Nahm. [New York: Macmillan/Library of Liberal Arts, 1956]), 9.

the biblical narratives? How does Ricoeur's distinction relate to biblical narrative?

In the above section, I have attempted to sketch both the similarities and dissimilarities between fictional and historical narrative. Ricoeur privileges fictional literature through structuralist analysis. Because of its use of the entire range of anachronistic devices he asserts not only that fiction is "richer" than historical narrative but that it also may access "truth" in its transforming and disclosing power.

**Va. Poetics: the link between literariness and
scripture**

Ricoeur's decision to subsume scripture into the category of poetics has its genesis in the work of French literary criticism. For Ricoeur, the category "poetics" is used to "designate ... the totality of [literary] genres" ("HR" 100). In French literary theory, poetics is defined as "a discipline dealing with these kinds of studies which are not connected with the idiosyncratic properties of individual works, and which can only be a general theory of literary forms"⁸⁸. Thus, the realm of investigation in poetics is "the

⁸⁸ Gerard Genette, "Criticism and Poetics" in French Literary Theory Today [edited by Tzvetan Todorov, translated by R. Carter], (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 9.

general laws which govern the functioning of literature, its forms and varieties"⁸⁹. The implication of introducing poetics as a discipline is that it is "opposed to interpretation or ... criticism"⁹⁰. Within the discipline of poetics, the object of study is the literary text itself and solely investigates literary discourse as opposed to other forms of discourse. Todorov maintains that "[i]t is not the literary work itself that is the object of poetics: what poetics questions are the properties of that particular discourse that is literary discourse"⁹¹. Peter Brooks understands "poetics" as a sort of meta-critical discipline: "Poetics must offer a systematic understanding of literary discourse as that which comprehends its individual manifestations, and it must understand in systematic fashion its own discourse on literature"⁹². This focus on literary discourse as such prompts Ricoeur to assert that

"the literary genres of the Bible do not constitute a rhetorical facade which it would be possible to pull down in order to reveal some thought content

⁸⁹ Tzvetan Todorov, "Introduction" to French Literary Theory Today [edited by Tzvetan Todorov, translated by R. Carter], (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2.

⁹⁰ Tzvetan Todorov, "Introduction" to French Literary Theory Today [edited by Tzvetan Todorov, translated by R. Carter], (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2.

⁹¹ Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction to Poetics, [Translated by Richard Howard, Forward by Peter Brooks], (Brighton: Harvester Press Limited, 1981), 6.

⁹² Peter Brooks in Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction to Poetics. [Translated by Richard Howard, Forward by Peter Brooks], (Brighton: Harvester Press Limited, 1981), ix.

that is indifferent to its literary vehicle ... the confession of faith expressed in the biblical documents is directly modulated by the forms of discourse wherein it is expressed" ("HR", 91).

Placed within this conceptual framework, Ricoeur's continual reactions against attempts to "sublimate" and "rationalize" the meaning of biblical narratives seems justified. Jonathan Culler writes, "poetics asserts that interpretation is not the goal of literary study. Though the interpretation of works may be fascinating and personally fulfilling, the goal of literary study is to understand literature as a human institution, a mode of signification"⁹³. Poetics is ultimately concerned with how "meaning" is made possible in language.

Vb. Ricoeur and Referentiality

Ricoeur understands the function of hermeneutics to be discerning the "meaning" of the text. It is "only the meaning [that] rescues the meaning, without the contribution of the physical and psychological presence of the author" (HHS, 200)⁹⁴. Thus, textual meaning is not to be understood

⁹³ Jonathan Culler in Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose [Translated by R. Howard, Forward by Jonathan Culler], (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 8.

⁹⁴ Ricoeur suggests that even for the writer of a text, there is an obvious distance from the author and what was inscribed at a particular time ("distanciation"). Ricoeur proposes that once it is written, the text has taken on a life of its own, and

...the text's career escapes the finite horizon

as the result of authorial intention but is rather a reference to a world disclosed by the text (most often, the "world in front of the text"). Many scholars stop reading Ricoeur at this point and conclude that he is referring to **all** texts as bearing this "disclosing" ("poetic") function. However, I contend that he clearly rejects this extension.

Ricoeur's rejection of authorial intention should more correctly be understood as a rejection of "Romantic" hermeneutics which found fertile soil in Dilthey as a "psychologizing and historicizing" hermeneutic (HHS, 140). While a Ricoeurian hermeneutic is interested in "renouncing any attempt to grasp the soul of an author", he asks "shall [we] restrict ourselves to reconstructing the structure of a work?" (HHS, 140). Ricoeur wants to avoid structuralist excesses of looking only at the linguistic system without dealing with the questions of sense and reference.

Ricoeur follows Frege in distinguishing sense as "ideal object which the proposition intends, and hence is purely immanent in discourse" (HHS, 140). The reference is "the

lived by its author. What the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say, and every exegesis unfolds its procedures within the circumference of a meaning that has broken its moorings to the psychology of the author (HHS, 201).

What allows the reader to understand the "meaning" of the text is, more correctly, the "meaning" of the words. The intentions of the author can no longer be held to bear on what this particular text "means".

truth value of the proposition, its claim to reach reality" (HHS, 140). Thus, "the world of the text designates the reference of the work of discourse, not what is said, but about what is said. Hence the issue of the text is the world the text unfolds before itself" ("HR", 100). This distinction avoids excesses in interpretive schemes which focus solely on the text in relation to itself. Yet, he admits that "only discourse (as opposed to language⁹⁵) intends things, applies itself to reality, expresses the world" (HHS, 140).

Ricoeur differentiates between two types of discourse, oral and written. In oral discourse, "reference is determined by the ability to point to a reality common to the interlocutors" (HHS, 141). Even if this "reality" is not present, the interlocutors are able to project its presence spatio-temporally. In written discourse, Ricoeur asserts that there is 1) "no longer a situation common" to the reader and author and 2) there are "no longer the concrete conditions of the act of pointing present" (HHS, 141). He

⁹⁵ This is Ricoeur's essential difference between language and discourse: language is the system of words, discourse is the application of the system so that the language "intends things". In an essay, "The Problem of Double Meaning", Ricoeur notes that "a sign does not have, or is not, a fixed signification but a value in opposition to values: it results from the relation between an identity and a difference" (IT, 69). Thus, discourse finds its limits only in relation to the other words which help establish a type of "transcendable" univocity due to the "surplus of meaning". Another distinction which could be drawn is that discourse situates itself temporally, while language is atemporal.

concludes that the "role" of "most" literature is to destroy the ostensive world and create a "new" world for the reader to inhabit. He defines this two-edged function (destructive and creative) of literature as the "poetic" function. However, he is clear that the poetic function is not merely a class or genre of literature but a function of "most" written works.

Ricoeur notes that the poetic function of language "seems to glorify itself at the expense of the referential function of ordinary discourse. Nevertheless, there is no discourse so fictional that it does not connect up with reality" (HHS, 141). While it may seem that Ricoeur is equivocating the referential function with an ostensive reference, he is, in fact, not. He speaks of the "eclipse of ostensive or descriptive reference" and maintains that this is 1) "not the abolition of all reference for 2) discourse cannot fail to be about something" (IT, 36). The reference or "something" of written discourse could be the "world in-front-of the text".

Ricoeur suggests that there are two "orders of reference". First order reference is "descriptive, constative, didactic discourse". In terms of myth, Ricoeur calls this the "invitation to gnosis" (SE, 165). The myth helps us to understand our reality. While it may put a

different spin on "reality", it makes reference to our world nonetheless. Second order reference is the world "not only at the level of manipulable objects, but ... a type of 'being-in-the-world'" (HHS, 141). Second order reference is to a world offered or painted by the text which invites the reader to inhabit. This projected world is the "world proper to **this** unique text" (HHS, 142). Furthermore, language, "in its poetic function abolishes the type of reference characteristic of such descriptive discourse, and along with it the reign of truth as adequation and the very definition of truth in terms of verification..." ("HR", 101). Applied to symbol and metaphor, Ricoeur states that "the symbol gives rise to thinking" (SE, 349).

Ricoeur's emphasis on the **poetic function** of texts has led him into a difficult position concerning ostensibly referring texts. Ricoeur clarifies the types of texts which he recognises as able to function on the "second order" of reference. He states that it is

"through fiction and poetry, new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up ... 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" (HHS, 142).

and

...all fictional literature whether lyrical or narrative [are poetic texts which]... speak about the world. But not in a descriptive way. [...] We ought to enlarge our concept of the world, therefore, not only to allow for non-ostensive but still descriptive references, but also non-ostensive and non-descriptive references, those of poetic diction. [...] It is this enlarging of our horizon of existence that permits us to speak of the references opened up by the text or of the world opened up by the referential claims of **most** texts (1974:37, emphasis mine).

Ricoeur speaks solely about fictional literature here. He also implies (via the phrase "enlarging our horizon") the possibility of three types of texts. There are 1) fictive texts which non-ostensively refer yet still have a descriptive function; 2) fictive texts which non-ostensively and non-descriptively refer (poetry); and 3) non-fictive texts which ostensively refer. While initially it seemed as if Ricoeur wanted to assert that **all** discourse breaks **all** ostensive reference (via the poetic function of texts), he makes exceptions in the cases of the 1) "descriptive referential function of ordinary language" and 2) "above all, scientific discourse" ("HR", 100). Furthermore, his continual use of the word "most" (HHS, 141) and the qualifying category "fiction" (*Ibid.*; "HR", 101)) at least implies the possibility of the existence of other types of texts (i.e. those without a poetic function, namely non-fictional texts which ostensively refer).

Those texts which Ricoeur has, at least, allowed the possibility of existence would, I submit, be classified as

"historical" or scientific. In distinguishing between demythologization and demythization, Ricoeur states the difference as demythologizing as the application of criticism to the myth. In doing so, there is "an irreversible gain of truthfulness, of intellectual honesty, and therefore of objectivity" (SE, 350,352). Demythologization separates the "historical and the pseudo-historical" without dispensing with the myth in narrative (Ibid.).

It is in Ricoeur's magnum opus (Time and Narrative) that we can view the unfolding of these fine distinctions in his thought. That is, one can look at how his distinction among text-types plays out on the narrative level and observe whether or not he makes allowance for a truly "ostensively-referential" text.

In speaking of Aristotle's Poetics, Ricoeur defines three levels of mimetic function. **Mimesis-1** involves the recognition that "the composition of the plot is grounded in a pre-understanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character" (T&NI, 54). **Mimesis-2** is a reading of narratives, as if they had a historical reference⁹⁶.

⁹⁶ **Mimesis-2** bears close resemblance to what Frei calls the "history-likeness" of texts. As George Hunsinger notes,

...for Frei, the category "fiction-like" is strictly a formal category which as such remains non-committal about the narrative's truth or fiction. To say "fiction-like" is thus not quite the same as saying "fictional"

Mimesis-3 is "the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader⁹⁷; the intersection, therefore, of the world configured by the poem and the world wherein real action occurs and unfolds its specific temporality" (T&NI, 71). These three forms of mimesis apply to texts with poetic functions.

Ricoeur traces many of the problems of ostensive referencing back to Locke and Reid (T&NII, 11-14). They sought to "purge every figurative and decorative element" from language and it could thus be used in its proper sense, "to convey the knowledge of things" (T&NII, 11). Ricoeur suggests this view culminated in the theory that "the art of fiction then turns out to be the art of illusion" (T&NII, 13). The upshot of this position was that for a piece of literature to be non-illusory, it had to be ostensively-referential. Frei's The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative also details the disastrous effects the Lockean project had on Biblical hermeneutics.

yet true", especially if the latter could be construed as meaning "historically fictional, yet theologically true" (cited in "Hans Frei as Theologian: The Quest for a Generous Orthodoxy" in *Modern Theology* (8:2, April 1992), fn. 12.).

Thus, one can say that the biblical narrative may be history-like but this has no bearing on whether or not the narrative is "historically factual". For Frei, the literal sense of a realistic narrative does not mean that the narrated event has actually occurred; **the only exceptions being the narratives of the passion and resurrection of Jesus**. These narratives are factual occurrences reported closely to the way they happened. Yet, it is important to note that Frei proposes that the interpreter assumes historical factuality of the other narratives unless evidence is given to the contrary. Ricoeur does not.

⁹⁷ This bears resemblance to Gadamer's phrase, "fusion of horizons".

It is at the end of the third volume that Ricoeur finally deals with the difficult problems that historical narrative presents. He admits "indeed, only historians can, absolutely speaking, be said to refer to something 'real', in the sense that that about which they speak was observable to witnesses in the past [ostensively refer to events]" (T&NIII, 157). However, he feels uncomfortable with the term "reference" because of what he calls the "interweaving of history and fiction" (T&NIII, 180ff). This "interweaving" describes the process of the re-figuration of the past by historians. That is, no historian objectively reports facts that correlate purely with the ostensive world. In English, the phrase, "the winners write the history books" seems to be the sense of this "interweaving". Thus, "in order to signify something like productive reference in the sense ... of a productive imagination, the problematic must free itself once and for all, from the vocabulary of reference" (T&NIII, 158). What then is the function of history if it is not to report facts and events from the past?

In describing this relationship between fiction and history, Ricoeur notes that history provides a type of framework in which to emplot a fictive narrative within time and space. Similarly, fiction allows the historian to "re-configure" spatio-temporal events. "Fiction is placed in the

service of the unforgettable. It permits historiography to live up to the task of memory" (T&NIII, 189). We could describe the former as historicized fiction, the latter as fictive history.

For Ricoeur, fictive history ought to be viewed "not only from the angle of what is done, unchangeable, and past" (T&NIII, 216) but as opening possibilities for the present. He refers to this as "the idea of being-affected by the past" (T&NIII, 221). What does the past refer to: "the past is revealed to us through the projection of a historical horizon that is both detached from the horizon of the present and taken up into and fused with it" (T&NIII, 220). It is tradition which insures "reciprocity between effective-history and our being-affected-by-the-past" (T&NIII, 227). Tradition functions as a "presumption of truth" (Ibid.) which bridges the problems of communication and understanding. Tradition purports to advance truth-claims while historical research acts as a verifying body. History is able to be re-shaped by the analysis of critique of ideologies present in the texts and by the fruits of historical research. Tradition and historical research are thus complementary partners. Following Gadamer, Ricoeur asks, "how could hermeneutics carry out its task if it did not make use of historiographical objectivity as a means for sifting through dead traditions..." (T&NIII, 224). The job of the

hermeneutician is thus to "understand in a different way ... [with] a historical consciousness" (T&NIII, 224).

I now turn to an analysis of some of the problems associated with the configuration of emplotment in other writers. I will locate the problem of narrative temporality and the configuration of the plot in the work of several narrative writers, namely Peter Brooks, and Hayden White. I begin with an analysis of the problem of temporality in Ricoeur for in the next chapter, I will discuss how this is related to his construal of identity. I will then place Peter Brooks within the discussion of the problem of temporality within the larger discussion of emplotment and then analyse Hayden White's application of a form of a "hermeneutic of suspicion" to the status of narratology in general. I will conclude with an analysis of John Searle's challenge to Ricoeur's dismissal of authorial intention as a key to discerning emplotment.

VI. Peter Brooks' analysis of emplotment with reference to time

With concerns paralleling those of Ricoeur, Peter Brooks' final chapter in Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative⁹⁸ argues in retrospect that certain

⁹⁸ Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.

formalist approaches to interpreting literature, viz. 'narratology'⁹⁹, "do not provide- and generally do not seek to provide- an understanding of the dynamics of narrative, of what impels its movements of transformation, and thus its engagement with human memory and desire and its status as a form of thinking" (RP, 319). Whilst the observations made by literary structuralists Greimas, Genette and Propp are invaluable and necessary, they fail to account for the psychic needs and motivations of readers. Specifically, structuralism cannot account for the phenomenon of the followability of a narrative (Ricoeur) or the emergence of a plot in a narrative (Brooks). Structuralism has "neglected the temporal dynamics that shape narrative in our reading of them, the play of desire in time that makes us turn pages and strive toward narrative ends" (RP, xiii). Brooks' work endeavours to demonstrate that "plot is the principal ordering force of those meanings that we try to wrest from human temporality" (RP, xi). What is notable about this analysis is that Brooks maintains several positions coincidental with and by extension can be used to supplement the work of Ricoeur. I will now focus on these parallel concerns.

Firstly, plot always exists in narratives even if it is

⁹⁹ Narratology is defined by Brooks as the "organized and coherent analysis of narrative structures and discourse" (xiii).

consciously made arbitrary by the author. Thus, even a novel devised with an ambiguous plot such as Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! has a followable narrative though the plot appears in a very fragmented form. Brooks maintains that **even in** instances of literature which are consciously anti-plot, there is a residual of 'plot' which attempts to "disappoint the reader's normal expectations concerning the plotted narrative, yet nonetheless carrying reading forward by way of plotted narrative elements" (RP, 315). Brooks' notion of plot is articulated as:

"Plot is, first of all, a constant of all written and oral narrative, in that a narrative without at least a minimal plot would be incomprehensible. Plot is the principle of interconnectedness and intention which we cannot do without in moving through the discrete elements-incidents, episodes, actions-of a narrative" (RP, 5).

It is, thus, impossible for a narrative to exist without some form of plot. His concerns run parallel to those of Ricoeur who also understands plot as the intersection of time and narrative, and that which yields characterisation.

Secondly, intentionality in texts extends to the reader as well as to the author. Brooks adopts Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism to include author and reader in the plotting of the narrative's intent. The reader is "forced to engage in plotting, if not toward the creation of meaning, at least in exploration of the conditions of narrative meaning"

(RP, 316). Incorporating the work of Walter Benjamin, Brooks also recognises that some plots are only fully discernable after the completion of the narrative. This does not point to the non-existence of the plot but rather indicates that a plot is intricate and only fully realised in retrospect; that is, after the decided ending point of the author. This ending of narrative was seen in the 19th century to be the fulfilment of the narrative plot, however, postmodernity has given up this assumption as naive and literary endings are now often viewed as arbitrary. Brooks maintains that "the difference of the postmodern is ... a greater explicitness in the abandonment of mimetic claims, a more overt staging of narrative's arbitrariness and lack of authority, [and] a more open playfulness about fictionality" (RP, 317). Whilst Brooks does not understand this new understanding to diminish the teleological drive of narrative, it does concur with a main tenet of deconstruction. Both of these positions intersect with Ricoeur's theory of the surplus of meaning and the inexhaustibility of the symbol. If endings are viewed as arbitrary stopping points, then the semiotic system cannot have exhausted meaning because the narrative is never finally and exhaustively interpreted. The text continues to challenge the reader because it is ultimately the reader who finds the significance of the plot (albeit through narrative devices of emplotment).

Finally, the psycho-analytical research of Sigmund Freud has a potentially enormous significance for the study of literature. Indeed, Brooks cites Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle as a 'masterplot' which he then uses to formulate a dynamic model of plot. Brooks maintains that Freud's insights into the cause-effect relationship within the psychological states of his patients is equally applicable to the process of discerning plots in narratives. As in psychoanalysis, certain events trigger certain reactions whilst in retrospect these events can be tagged as signposts. Brooks argues that a similar pattern works on the level of the narrative. These signposts can, in turn, be followed to formulate a plot **even if** the plot is not discernable until after such-and-such events have occurred. This ability of hindsight (as well as foreshadowing, flashback and other narrative devices) allows for a dynamism in the text not accounted for by many structuralist theorists.

Ultimately, Brooks is concerned with essentiality of both narrative and plots. "Narrative is one of the ways in which we speak, one of the large categories in which we think. Plot is its thread of design and its active shaping force, the product of our refusal to allow temporality to be meaningless, our stubborn insistence on making meaning in the world and in our lives" (RP, 323). This conclusion reflects the similar position of Hayden White who maintains that "to

raise the question of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself"¹⁰⁰.

In conclusion, "plot" is recognised by both Ricoeur and Brooks as the intertwining of time and narrative. It is the temporal dimension which gives narrative its dynamism and its teleological drive. Both theorists agree that structuralism has "neglected the temporal dynamics that shape narrative in our reading of them, the play of desire in time that makes us turn pages and strive toward narrative ends" (RP, xiii).

VII. Hayden White's view of emplotment in historical narrative

Hayden White contends in his book Metahistory¹⁰¹ that the writing of history "contains a deep structural content which is generally poetic, and specifically linguistic, in nature, and which serves as the precritical paradigm of what a distinctively 'historical' explanation should be" (ix [preface]). Furthermore, "the historian performs an essentially **poetic** act, in which he **prefigures** the

¹⁰⁰ "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), 1.

¹⁰¹ Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973).

historical field and constitutes it as a domain upon which to bring to bear the specific theories he will use to explain 'what was really happening' in it" (Metahistory, x [preface]). This contention maintains that the act of "writing history" is a misunderstanding. It is partly a misunderstanding on the part of the reader who reads 'historical accounts' as 'true' and partly a misunderstanding on the part of the writer who fails to account for his/her situatedness in relation to that event.

After his close analysis of Nineteenth-century history writing, White concludes that the modes possible in any form of historical writing "are in reality **formalizations** of poetic insights that analytically precede them and that sanction the particular theories used to give historical accounts the aspect of an 'explanation'" (Metahistory, xi-xii [preface]). This position contends that there is no epistemological reason for favouring one version of a historical account over another. They are both equally valid. Rather, as White contends, we prefer one construal of 'history' over another for purely aesthetic or moral reasons.

I find myself in disagreement with White on two issues. Firstly, I am dissatisfied with White's emphasis on 'history writing' as a 'poetic act'. I rather insist on a distinction

between what I have called previously¹⁰² "historicized fiction" and "fictive history". To make this distinction between these two representations of reality with a historical interest is integral to this discussion. Secondly, I am concerned about the implications of White's methodology: viz. a radical "hermeneutic of suspicion". I will deal with this issue later in the analysis. I propose that the biblical narratives can provide us with an example of both "historicized fiction" and "fictive history". Initially, The Book of Jonah reads like a historically accurate account of a later Jewish prophet's encounter with the Ninevites and ultimately, God. However, in light of archaeological data recovered from the ancient city of Nineveh, modern readers now know that Nineveh was not so enormous as described in the book¹⁰³. In fact, the city was not very significant in terms of size. This prompts the question, "why did the writer exaggerate the size of the city"? A literary-critical approach may help provide an

¹⁰² In my analysis of Paul Ricoeur's theory of referentiality in textual interpretation, I noted that he distinguishes between what I have called 'historicized fiction' and 'fictive history'. History provides a type of framework in which to emplot a fictive narrative within time and space. This would be the theoretical explanation of "historicized fiction". Conversely, fiction allows the historian to 'reconfigure' spatio-temporal events. As Ricoeur states, "fiction is placed in the service of the unforgettable. It permits historiography to live up to the task of memory" (T&NIII, 189). This approach I have labelled "fictive history".

¹⁰³ The relevant passage is Jonah 3:2-3: "'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it that message that I tell you'. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth".

answer to this question. In each of the four "chapters" in the book, the word translated as "great" appears only once. This literary device lends emphasis to the main nemesis of Jonah in each chapter. While this may satisfy the hermeneutician interested in literary approaches to narratives, it effectively throws into doubt the entire question of the ostensibly reliable historicity of the book of Jonah. As a result, several Biblical scholars read this text primarily as historicized fiction.

On the other hand, the Acts of the Apostles reads similarly to a "historical account". However, it is not necessarily the way the book reads that is important, it is the data collected about the events in the narrative which ultimately adjudicates the claims. Thus, following the coherence of Paul's journeys and the viability thereof (at least in sequential probability; that is, one could pass through y on the way to z from x within a certain spatio-temporal framework but not z on the way to y from x) one can piece together a coherent narrative that fits into the ostensive world. The infusion of fictive elements into the narrative are merely literary devices which do not impinge on the credibility of the narrative. Incorporate into this procedure certain archaeological evidence, intra- and intertextual verification, and then one is prepared to weigh

the evidence. If the narrative is plausible on these counts, then it may be fictive history. One's beliefs about the author must also come to bear. If I believe that the author of the Acts of the Apostles was a disingenuous utilitarian who was creating these narratives to trick me into believing him, then I would probably dismiss them as historicized fiction. However, if I think the author is primarily sincere and probably credible, then I may also be persuaded that these narratives are fictive history.

The difficulty arises when one recognises that a text may contain both historicized fiction and fictive history. One reason could be the conflation of sources; another the poisoning of primary sources through inaccurate record-keeping. Yet another valid reason could be dogmatic. The point is that the author's commitment to the credibility of a text needs to be examined. This entire procedure, being so long and arduous, would probably only be employed on texts dealing with issues of "ultimate concern". Most often, only sections of this method of scrutiny would be employed.

Both Frei and Ricoeur dismiss authorial intention as the primary hermeneutical focus. In doing so, they leave the text as the ultimate arbitrator of what consists a "good interpretation". What would motivate such a concern? From the outset, Frei would have dismissed the entire question as

off-centre. This is not to say that inquests into the historicity of all narratives are arbitrary and the questions surrounding this are irrelevant, but it is rather a defining of the parameters by which these inquests are made. Thus, Frei's decision to apply the "historicity" question is dependent on the weightiness of the claim. For Frei, within the biblical narratives, only the passion/crucifixion/resurrection sequence fits into this category. Cashing out the category "weightiness of the claim" proves difficult for Frei's theory because he provides no ground rules. In terms of the biblical texts, it is may be because our faith is of "maximal concernment" (Locke) or of "ultimate concern" (Tillich). He is not clear about this. Yet, he concedes that when reading a story (including the biblical story), we ought to suspend judgement concerning the ostensibly referential character and treat the text as a coherent projected world. The questions concerning the historicity of the account based on the weightiness of the claims made therein are rather introduced subsequent to the reading of the story.

Ricoeur goes even further than Frei. His distinction between ostensibly referential texts and "poetic" texts, although it can be made, recognises most texts, including all literary texts, as "poetic". Thus, for Ricoeur, all biblical texts are "poetic" in the sense that they do not refer to the

ostensive world, though they may incorporate ostensive references their story. However, I find this to be a main weakness in Ricoeur's theory. Because of his judgement to view all literary texts as poetic, he cannot suspend judgement on the biblical texts since he has pre-judged them as "poetic". He also cannot fall back on authorial intention as providing a clue since most texts, certainly all literary texts, roam free of their author.

VIII. John Searle on intentionality

John Searle would focus his concerns on another aspect, namely the intentionality behind the narrative. The authorial intent is what supplies the clue to the "weightiness of the claims" made in the text. For Searle, one decides on the effect of the claim dependent on the author's stance toward the text, an illocutionary act he calls an assertion¹⁰⁴. Assertions follow a specific set of rules. These are

- 1) the essential rule: the maker of an assertion commits himself to the truth of the expressed proposition,

¹⁰⁴ An assertion is outlined by Searle as "the point or purpose of the members of the assertive class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. All of the members of the assertive class are assessable on the dimension of assessment which includes **true** and **false**" (John Searle, "A taxonomy of illocutionary acts" in Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 12).

2) the preparatory rules: the speaker must be in a position to provide evidence or reasons for the truth of the expressed proposition,

3) the expressed proposition must not be obviously true to both the speaker and the hearer in the context of utterance,

4) the sincerity rule: the speaker commits himself to a belief in the truth of the expressed proposition" 105.

Applying these rules in terms of how one discerns whether a writer "commits himself" (rules 1,4) and/or is "in a position to provide evidence or reasons" (rule 2) is more difficult. For Searle, a fictional writer is not committed to a statement made in a novel. The author is not committed to these assertions because she cannot meet the qualifications set forth in the rules. Yet she is, at face-value, making an assertion or rather, she is "pretending ... to make an assertion ... in the second sense of 'pretend', to pretend to do or be something is to engage in a performance **as if** one were doing or being he thing and is without any intent to deceive" ("LSF", 65). It is precisely at this point that Searle's view assumes the very thing that White's theory effectively rejects, namely the sincerity of the author. Searle's contention is that the author is pretending to make an assertion. From this, Searle derives the conclusion that since the verb "pretend" implies intent on behalf of the

¹⁰⁵ John Searle, "The logical status of fictional discourse" in Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979), 62.

author, "the identifying criterion for whether or not a text is a work of fiction must of necessity lie in the illocutionary intentions of the author. There is no textual property, syntactical or semantic, that will identify a text as a work of fiction¹⁰⁶" ("LSF", 65). There are rather "a set of extra-linguistic, non-semantic conventions" ("LSF", 65) which "suspend the normal operation of the rules relating illocutionary acts and the world" ("LSF", 66). The intention of the author is to invoke these "non-semantic conventions" to the aid of the interpretation of the text, which in this case, is fictional. This raises the question "how does one recognise that the author is pretending, thus invoking these conventions which suspend authorial commitment to the text?". Searle is unusually quiet about this but does compare the theory to a Wittgensteinian language-game. These conventions are recognisable because they violate the normal rules of the non-fictional textual game. So, ultimately, it is these non-semantic, extra-linguistic conventions (the context?) which rescue the sense.

In another essay entitled "Literal Meaning"¹⁰⁷, Searle

¹⁰⁶ "... the **illocutionary act** is pretended, but the **utterance act** is real ... [thus], the utterance acts in fiction are indistinguishable from the utterance acts of serious discourse, and it is for that reason that there is no textual property that will identify a stretch of discourse as a work of fiction" ("LSF", 68).

¹⁰⁷ John Searle, "Literal Meaning" in Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

clearly defines the context as the device of closure of the sense of a narrative. He writes, "there seems to be no way to eliminate the contextual dependence of literal meaning since it is built into other forms of intentionality on which literal meaning depends" ("LM", 136). Intentionality in reference to pretending to make an assertion is cashed out as the semiological context of the semantical claim. Thus, for Searle, "there is no way to eliminate the contextual dependence of the sentence 'the cat is on the mat' without breaking the connections between that sentence and the **perception** that the cat is on the mat, or the belief that the cat is on the mat, and it is on such connections that the meaning of the sentence depends" ("LM", 136). These connections are broken by the non-semantic conventions employed by the author. However, as noted by Searle, these conventions cash out as the context. So, while Searle is clear that there is no textual property which defines fiction as such, it is the context of the assertions made which leads one to question the commitment of the author to this stance.

Returning to a point made above, namely that Searle assumes the very premise that White attacks- the sincerity of the author, I will now turn to elaborating the implications of White's theory. If, as White contends, all "history" writing is ultimately "poetic", then instead of what we call history, we have a tradition of historians acting both

consciously and unconsciously, disingenuously. Indeed, one of White's concerns is that the "historian" lay bare the pre-suppositions he/she is working with. However, if all history is ultimately jettisoned into a broader theory of fiction, this hardly seems necessary. The writing of history within this framework, would be an attempt to persuade the reader that the historian's construal is not only accurate but that it reflects reality. However, if all history is ultimately historicized fiction, this plea from White to lay bare one's pre-suppositions becomes meaningless since the goal of the "historian" would be to persuade others that one's construal is 'the' accurate representation of reality.

White may reply by agreeing but by making the distinction that these pre-suppositions may be unconscious and thus, unintentional. The procedure of laying bare one's pre-suppositions would allow the reader to be more informed about the author and his/her ideological positioning. This declaration would focus mainly (almost exclusively) on one's political positioning¹⁰⁸. In distinction from Frei and Ricoeur and in agreement with Searle, authorial intention bears heavily on the interpretation of the text. It would likewise be the duty of the reader to recognise the author's

¹⁰⁸ Following Karl Mannheim's analysis in Ideology and Utopia, White recognizes "four basic ideological positions: Anarchism, Conservatism, Radicalism, and Liberalism" (Metahistory, 22).

methodology of configuration¹⁰⁹, form of argument¹¹⁰, and choice of emplotment¹¹¹. These categories all impose a certain form on the data being conveyed: a form which White recognises as always arbitrary and sometimes manipulative¹¹². My concern with White's proposal is with the implications of this theory. Simply put, "why extend the historian's manipulative configuring to political positioning yet not extend this to all areas of life namely, race, gender, colour, religion, etc.?" It would seem plausible that if it is possible to both consciously and unconsciously manipulate the writing of history, then all factors impinging upon human-situatedness must be taken into account. Following this implication, all texts would then be mono-perspectival; somewhat autobiographical. Indeed, the implications are disastrous for narratives which are an essential part of being human¹¹³. Viewed in this manner, all discourse could

109 White identifies "four principal modes of historical consciousness on the basis of the prefigurative (tropological) strategy which informs each of them: Metaphor, Synecdoche, Metonymy, and Irony" (Metahistory, xi).

110 White lists the "modes of Formism, Organism, Mechanism, and Contextualism" (Metahistory, x).

111 Following Northrop Frye's analysis in Anatomy of Criticism, White lists "at least four different modes of emplotment: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire" (Metahistory, 7). He concedes that there may be more modes of emplotment, "such as the Epic", but recognises these four.

112 White writes, "I should also stress that a given historian's emplotment of the historical process or way of explaining it in a formal argument need not be regarded as a function of his **consciously held** ideological position" (Metahistory, 24: italics mine).

113 "To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture, and, possibly, even on the

be seen as discourse ultimately with the self- the dialectic never extending beyond the horizon of the writer. Human communication would then be viewed as a manipulative enterprise which has as its **telos**, manipulation and ultimately domination of the other.

IX. Concluding Remarks

Ricoeur and Brooks both recognise the major limitation of a structuralist account of narrative is its failure to account for the "fluidity of temporality" or the "flux of time". White locates the problem inherent in structuralism as a misunderstanding of the nature of narrative itself. These two competing models overlap in one essential area, the role of the author in the interpretation of the narrative. Ricoeur dismisses authorial intent as a key to uncovering the psychological motivations of authors. Brooks' is less hesitant to hold such an extreme position, recognising that Freud's work bears on the question of authorial intent. White picks up the unconscious psychological motivations of the author as the "key" to interpreting texts. However, whereas White is inherently suspicious of these authorial motivations, Searle is less sceptical. Searle understands

nature of humanity itself" (Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987], 1).

authorial intent to cash out into a series of extra-linguistic, non-semantic conventions recognised by the rules of language. These issues bring the discussion of intent to a higher level, namely, "can authorial intent be understood as 'textual intent'?" Ricoeur uses this terminology and it occurs, albeit sublated, within Searle's theory.

Chapter Two:
Application of the methodology to
"narrative identity"

II/1 "Frei and Narrative Identity"

II/2 "Ricoeur and Narrative Identity: Is
emplotment the key or the problem?"

II/1. "Frei and Narrative Identity": This chapter focuses mainly on IJC where Frei argues that Jesus' unsubstitutable identity is rendered by the text. Frei borrows from Strawson and Ryle to formulate an intention-action and self-manifestation rubric (however, the latter breaks down into the former). The identity of Jesus is determined by enacted intention and subsequent 'revelation' through the passion/crucifixion/resurrection sequences. It is here that Jesus is "most fully himself". Frei, however, wavers in the conclusion: "Better to think of Jesus as resurrected than not to".

The chapter includes an extended dialogue with Maurice Wiles, Stephen Crites, Michael Goldberg and Ronald Thiemann (an extension of Frei's hermeneutic to include 'God' in the disclosed identity).

I. Introduction

In my critique of Frei in chapter one, I challenged his assertions that the text is ostensibly bound in disclosing the identity of Jesus in the passion/crucifixion/resurrection sequence whereas in other sections of the gospel narrative, it is merely "history-like" and does not necessarily ostensibly refer. I maintained that for Frei to be consistent, he would have to offer a defence of why the realistic sense of the text (at this juncture) is the most obvious. I concluded the study with Frei's claim that the form/type of literature of the resurrection account is "literally not of the **type** of a mythological tale ... but something more like the realistic novel" (T&N, 59: emphasis mine). I noted that two problems cropped up immediately with this position. Firstly, the Bible is a religious text and the strategy of reading it as one would read a novel,

realistic or not, does not seem to be obvious. The texts deal, as Bultmann says, with "magic and wonders, supernatural beings... to read the Bible as any other book is not obvious".

Secondly, I wish to address another issue which arose implicitly from the research; namely, is Frei guilty of special pleading in the case of the resurrection account? These are the two of the issues I intend to deal with in this section. I will discuss Frei's construal of narrative identity. Then I will also fill out the discussion with two other major types of narrative proposals for understanding theology; namely those of Ronald Thiemann and Stephen Crites. Finally, I will deal with some critiques of narrative theologies and I will ascertain the validity of them in light of the research.

II. Frei's construal of narrative identity, viz. Jesus Christ

This, then, is the identity of Jesus Christ. He is the man from Nazareth who redeemed men by his helplessness, in perfect obedience enacting their good in their behalf. As that same one, he was raised from the dead and manifested to be the redeemer. As that same one, Jesus the redeemer, he cannot **not** live, and to conceive of him as not living is to misunderstand who he is (IJC, 149)¹¹⁴.

¹¹⁴ This sounds strikingly similar to Karl Barth who writes: "The Lord whose memory [the Gospels] enshrine is not a dead Lord. He is not only unforgettable for the community, but it thinks of Him as the one who still is what He was" (CDIV/2, 163). I will explore the relation of Frei's thought and its relation to both Barth and the ontological argument in

Frei's seminal work on the issue of narrative identity was The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases for Dogmatic Theology. The essay was initially concerned with making the notion of Christ's "presence" intelligible without appealing to a doctrine of "revelation". He asserts that

"... 'revelation' is not a wholly unambiguous or satisfying central concept for stating what Christianity is all about ... it is construed by Neo-Orthodox Theologians as a way of intellectualizing the relation between God and man by riveting it to the phenomenon of consciousness or one of its several derivatives ... then 'revelation' turns out to be so non-informative as to lack all content" (IJC, viii).

It is enough to say that Frei viewed his endeavour to introduce the category of "presence", as a failure¹¹⁵. Ironically, the usefulness of the essay never lay in his promotion of the new category of "presence" but rather in Frei's careful exposition of how a reader comes to view Jesus as the "unsubstitutable identity" focused on by the gospel narratives.

further detail below.

¹¹⁵ Writing the preface of the essay issued as a book in 1975, Frei's says of the category "presence": "If I [now] found in the process of theological reflection about Jesus Christ that I had to refer to "presence" as a technical category, I would confine myself to saying that **if** one thinks about him under this rubric one cannot conceive of him as **not** being present. Further than that I would not go" (IJC, ix).

Frei acknowledges his debt to the formulation of his category of personal identity to Gilbert Ryle and P.F. Strawson. In his 1959 volume, Individuals¹¹⁶, Strawson argued that "identification rests ultimately on location in a unitary spatio-temporal framework of four dimensions, to the conclusion that a certain class of particulars is basic¹¹⁷ in the sense I have explained" (Individuals, 39). In addition, the "framework" for object identification is part of the object itself, it is not extraneous. However, not every category lends to the composing "framework" of the object. "Material bodies constitute the framework" (Individuals, 39) because they are observable and endure through time. Thus, for Strawson, material bodies are the basic particulars (cf. Individuals, 87). He continues to draw out the implications of this theory by proposing that the concept of the person is "primitive". He maintains that "the concept of the pure individual consciousness ... cannot exist as a primary concept in terms of which the concept of a person can be explained or analysed" (Individuals, 102). Thus, the concept of a "person" combines both states of consciousness and states of affairs (bodily characteristics, movements, etc.).

Strawson's theory is affirmed in Frei's basic

¹¹⁶ P. F. Strawson, Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics (London: Methuen and Co. LTD, 1959).

¹¹⁷ Strawson uses the word "basic" to mean "ontologically prior" or "not caused".

formulation of personal identity: "the specific uniqueness of a person [is] ... the very 'core' of a person toward which everything else is ordered", (IJC, 37). However, Frei was not interested in developing a speculative account which formulated notions of identity via states of consciousness, ontology, etc. He viewed these speculative enterprises as erring in two differing ways. Firstly, he was wary of theological constructions which attempted to explain what it is like to be **a person**. Frei understood the work of Bultmann and Tillich as following this manner of investigation. Frei contends that these existential theologies ultimately fail because the ontological question overrides the investigation into the storied character, viz. Jesus Christ. Thus, identity description moves beyond a formal question and into the arena of speculative ontology. For Frei, this is a secondary concern and is not the primary concern of hermeneutics which deals solely with the "meaning" of the text.

Secondly, following the work of Strawson and Ryle, Frei is aware of attempts to explain the consistency of Jesus' actions by reference to the consistency of his inner disposition. He contends that this endeavour also operates outside of the realm of formal questioning because it attempts to reconstruct an unavailable set of intentions; it adds information to the story that the narrative does not

contain. He cites the failed "quests" to reconstruct the historical Jesus as examples of this misguided approach¹¹⁸.

Frei contends that a character's narrative identity is much more accessible to the reader than originally thought. He states that the parameters of enquiry are "from within belief and, in regard to this as well as other philosophical questions, **purely formal and descriptive**. We take the presence and identity of Jesus for granted, just as we do human presence and identity", (*IJC*, 42: emphasis mine; also 63). Within narratives, "a person's identity is the self-referral, or ascription to him, of his physical and personal states, properties, characteristics, and actions", (*IJC*, 38). Thus, what counts as "identity" is the disclosure of Jesus via events in the narrative, which become most sharply focused in the passion-resurrection sequence.

Frei proposes an intention-action and self-manifestation scheme to help answer the formal questions of 'What is the person like?' and 'Who is he?'¹¹⁹. His exegetical method for discerning Jesus' identity is one "that looks for the Gospel's significance in the narrative structure itself",

¹¹⁸ Frei focuses on James M. Robinson's New Quest of the Historical Jesus (*T&N*, 37ff.) as the most drastic attempt to reconstruct the historical Jesus.

¹¹⁹ This is derived from Henry James' remark in The Art of Fiction, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?".

(IJC, 47). Within the narrative, intention-action takes as its central premise that a "person **is** what he **does** centrally and most significantly", (IJC, 92). Admittedly, Frei finds himself at a loss to explain how external factors help shape the identity of a person but he admits that these factors do. He states, Jesus' identity "... is given in the mysterious coincidence of his intentional action with circumstances partly initiated by him, partly devolving upon him.", (IJC, 94). This function of identity description is provided by the other axis of self-manifestation. "**Self-manifestation** description tries to point to the continuity of a person's identity throughout the transitions brought about by his acts and life's events", (IJC, 127). The persistence (self-continuity over a period of time), elusiveness (the maintenance of past events in the development of character), and ultimacy (the ascription of characteristics to a specific person) complete the identification procedure via intention-action descriptions. I will now turn to an exposition of how this theory works when applied to narratives.

The goal of "...knowing the identity of any person involves describing the continuity of the person who acts and is acted upon through a stretch of time. But it also involves describing the genuine changes, sometimes to the very core of a person's being, that occur both in that person's character and in the circumstances of a story",

(IJC, 88). This function is performed by the self-manifestation description which, via sequential time-narration, holds the continuity of the character together. Frei formulates the axiom as such: "... the hermeneutical rule for irreducible identification in a narrative text [is that] you follow the diachronic, not the synchronic line, you narrate him or her because he/she is not a separable subject/substance from his/her depiction in or as his/her story" ("HB", 5).

Frei's intention-action schema is indebted to Karl Barth's way of viewing Jesus. Like Frei, Barth's theology is indebted to Anselm. He writes of the significance of the ontological argument in the second Preface to Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum, "... in this book on Anselm I am working with a vital key, if not the key, to an understanding of that whole process of thought that has impressed me more and more in my **Church Dogmatics** as the only one proper to theology"¹²⁰. Barth argues that Anselm's "proof" is not the argument for the existence of God, but rather the "proof" comes after understanding:

"As **intelligere** is achieved it issues in **probare**. Here we can give a general definition: what to prove means is that the validity of certain propositions advocated by Anselm is established

¹²⁰ Karl Barth, Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum (Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme) [trans. by Ian W. Robertson] (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick Press, 1975), 11.

over against those who doubt or deny them; that is to say, it means the polemical-apologetic result of **intelligere**" (Anselm, 14).

The resulting implications of this way of understanding theology is that "there is for [the Gospel writers] no post-Easter Jesus who is not absolutely identical with the one to whose pre-Easter existence this limit [of humanity] belonged" (CDIV/2, 250). Thus, Barth challenges the reader to think of a unified Jesus Christ: "If we are to think of the speaking of Jesus as understood in the Gospel tradition, we must abandon completely the current distinctions between logos and ethos, or speaking and action, behind which there usually lurk the differentiations of knowledge and life, theory and practice, truth and reality" (CDIV/2, 194). For Barth, the character 'Jesus' in the biblical narratives is the same as the 'personality' Jesus; "his life was his act, and it has therefore the character of history" (CDIV/2, 193). Jesus enacts his intentions which are, in a strong sense, speech-acts; "This man does not only speak. He accomplishes what he says. He makes actual what he declares to be true" (CDIV/2, 192: exegesis on Mt. 11:28). Both Frei and Barth identify the "Jesus of the narrative" with the "actual personality Jesus". They are one and the same, and as I argue below, Frei extends this to all depictions of Jesus, biblical or not.

IIa. Genre

Frei understands the major difference between the literary account given in the Gospels concerning a dying-rising Saviour and those given in Gnostic and other literary accounts is to be that of **genre**. He maintains that the genre of the passion-crucifixion-resurrection sequence is unlike that of Gnostic accounts, mythological tales or contemporary literary "Christ-like figures" in that the Gospel accounts fully identify Jesus as the one who was crucified and resurrected. Jesus is the same person both before and after the narrated sequence¹²¹.

Firstly, Frei maintains that the Gospel narrative is not a "Gnostic" account for two reasons: 1) it deals simply and exclusively with the story of Jesus of Nazareth, whether it is fictional or real and 2) the manner of Jesus' activity (Jesus was not guilty, he was not self-alienated, there was salvific efficacy because of Jesus' death, and the obedient helplessness of Jesus redeems others) is unlike the Gnostic accounts.

The passion-crucifixion-resurrection sequence is also not a mythological account. "The Gospel story [and its

¹²¹ Karl Barth suggests, "It is a tribute to the power of this self-revelation that it could shape the recollection of His life and death as it undoubtedly did, and to such an extent that we cannot separate in practice between a pre-Easter and a post-Easter picture of this man in the New Testament" (CD IV/2, 159).

literary structure of the account] is a demythologization of the saviour myth because the saviour figure in the Gospel story is fully identified with Jesus of Nazareth", (IJC, 59: [cf. 140]). As Frei continues to develop this thought in the Identity, he attempts to show that Jesus' identity is singular and cannot be substituted for anyone else. After laying out this argument, he uses it against those who would identify the Gospel sequence as myth by affirming that "unsubstitutable identity gained in unsubstitutable circumstances is simply not the stuff of mythological tales", (IJC, 139). Lastly, his use of the category realistic narrative bolsters the defence against a mythological reading of the sequence. He maintains (against Strauss¹²²) that "the realistic or history-like quality of the narrative, whether historical or not, prevents even the person who regards the account as implausible from regarding it as mere myth" (IJC, 143). Furthermore, "myths refer not to specific events but to general cultural conditions and kinds of group consciousness" (EBN, 239).

¹²² Frei understands D. F. Strauss to have been affiliated with the "mythical school" which represented with the greatest consistency one hermeneutical extreme- that of the completely historical understanding of an author" (EBN, 234). Strauss' conclusions derive from this contention that the [gospel] writers' intention was indeed literal ... but that this intention itself has to be understood historically ..." (EBN, 234-5). Thus, the disconnection in Strauss' Life of Jesus between the 'historical Jesus' and the 'Christ of faith'. This was disastrous for the reading of biblical narrative, the meaning of which became associated with "... the time-conditioned consciousness from which it was written and which it expresses" (EBN, 235). Ultimately, Frei contends, "the real meaning of the narrative biblical texts [sic] for Strauss was the mythical rather than realistic consciousness they expressed ..." (EBN, 237).

Finally, the Biblical narrative cannot simply be a literary account because "redemption is cosmic in scope [via] certain stylized elements" (IJC, 63). These stylistic features of the text include Messianic titles, miracles, preaching, death, and resurrection. "The Gospel story is different from both because its 'type' is wholly derived from the specific and unsubstitutable identity of Jesus Christ" (IJC, 82). I take this statement to be an indirect reference to C.S. Pierce's distinction between "type" and "token". Simply put, a sentence "type" could be something like "Jesus was a man". The "token" would be an instantiation of this sentence "type". Thus, if I use the sentence in a context other than that of the Gospels, I would be using this sentence as a "token". If my analysis is correct, I read Frei as wanting to maintain that all sentence "types" making reference to "Christ-like figures" are really "tokens" and derive their intelligibility specifically from the Gospel narrative.

IIb. Special Pleading?

Another point is raised concerning the status accorded by Frei to the nature of the passion/crucifixion/resurrection narrative. Frei understands this section to be ostensibly

referential¹²³, raising questions concerning historical factuality. Frei concludes in the study that "... at the crucial climax of the resurrection, fictional description, providing direct knowledge of his identity in, with and through the circumstances, merges with factual claim, whether justified or not" (IJC, 145). This enquiry will be concerned with the possibility of Frei "special pleading" in the case of this sequence.

Frei contends that "[Jesus'] identity is revealed in the mysterious unity of his own decision and determination with the circumstances and events of his passion and death" (IJC, 105). The background for Frei's theory is found in The Concept of Mind. It was here that Gilbert Ryle concluded that "I find out most of what I want to know about your capacities, interests, likes, dislikes, methods, and convictions, by observing how you conduct your overt doings, of which by far the most important are your sayings and writings"¹²⁴. Frei, in appropriating Ryle's theory, does not search for Jesus' identity "in back of the story nor supply

¹²³ It is in the "third and last stage in the story's structure ... this part is most generally agreed to reflect actual events with considerable (though not absolute) accuracy" (IJC, 132-133).

¹²⁴ The Concept of Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 61. It is important to note that in the entire Frei corpus, he very rarely quotes Ryle yet Ryle's arguments found in CM are imbedded heavily in Frei's hermeneutic. An example of Frei's obvious reliance on Ryle (and Austin): "A person's identification with his words ... [his] 'performative utterances', is perhaps the most acute form of the unity between subject and his self-manifestation" (IJC, 97).

it from extraneous analytical sources" (IJC, 138). Rather, Frei proceeds in identifying what was "most characteristic" about this storied character Jesus. After a close analysis of the narrative, Frei concludes that Jesus was "fundamentally obedient" (IJC, 107)¹²⁵.

Frei also appropriates Strawson's theory that not all characteristics are suitable for the framework of individual identity depiction, only those which endure through time. Frei couples his theory with Ryle's formulation of self-manifestation which incorporates persistence, elusiveness and ultimacy as those enduring categories for identity depiction. Thus, in accordance with these two theories, "if obedience is to be understood as specific enactment of an intention, one needs a sequence of cumulative, unbroken events within a story" (IJC, 109). Frei proposes that it is in the last section of the Gospel narrative where the identity of Jesus, as obedient to the will of the Father, becomes most clear. Frei states that "(i)f we regard the Gospel narratives simply as such- i.e. as a story (whether fictional or real)- the individual, specific, and unsubstitutable identity of Jesus

¹²⁵ Although this path is not developed by Frei, viewing Jesus as fundamentally obedient is of critical importance for doctrinal formulation. Firstly, if Jesus' obedience can be viewed as an unbroken, continuous sequence, it can help to dispel adoptionist Christological formulations. Secondly, this sequence can help to refute views that Jesus was merely the victim of bad fortune. That is, the circumstances around him were uncontrollable, he was murdered and then divine characteristics were ascribed to him by his followers.

in the story is most fully set forth in his resurrection appearance" (IJC, 49). The self-manifestation of a character requires a time-sequence to verify that the characteristics narrated are not simply aberrations of character. Frei maintains that a close reading of this "unbroken narrated time-sequence" discloses Jesus' character unlike any other section of the Gospel narrative¹²⁶. He concludes that "the narratives' increasing stress on the rising curve or dominance of God's activity over that of Jesus reaches its apex, not in the account of Jesus' death, but in that of his resurrection (IJC, 120). This is the point in the narrative where Jesus is seen to be "most fully himself". Frei concludes that it is the realistic nature of these narratives which ultimately points to their likelihood in history. However, his explanation of the way the narrative shifts from a stylized form to a highly realistic form **does not** provide adequate justification for understanding this section as ostensive or "true". Rather, Frei's conclusions seem to repudiate his own method and his appeal to the mergence of the story with questions of factuality ("justified or not") seems logically unfounded.

III. Ronald Thiemann: Revelation and Theology

¹²⁶ Karl Barth would not agree with Frei as to the "difference" posited during the passion-crucifixion-resurrection sequence. He asserts, "For all its glaring contrast, the story is seen by [the Evangelists] as a single whole. And in spite of the change of setting, the approach and occurrence of the passion do not involve any basic change in the narrative, not even a change of narrative style" (CD IV/2, 251).

Thiemann is a "postliberal theologian" whose account of narrativity is admittedly, heavily dependent on the prior work of Frei. His work on the gospel of Matthew, is in many ways, a close reading of the gospel within the interpretive matrix set out by Frei in The Identity. However, Thiemann makes several advances on Frei's conclusions which are important when studying the influence of literary theory on theological investigation.

Thiemann notes two specific gains associated with the use of narrative within theological construction. Narrative "integrates a central literary genre in scripture with an organizing theological image". Narrative also "provide(s) the language by which we specify personal identity"¹²⁷. Thiemann's construal of narrative identity closely follows Frei's analysis in The Identity. Firstly, he employs Frei's "intention-action" model, while discarding the "self-manifestation" axis. Thiemann maintains that the "intention-action" schema does the entire work of both axes and therefore, "self-manifestation" is an unnecessary and ultimately, problematic category¹²⁸. Secondly, Thiemann is

¹²⁷ Ronald Thiemann, Revelation and Theology (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 112.

¹²⁸ Cf. (R&T, f.n.1, pp.182-183): "If we are seeking formal tools of personal identification, the intention-action model seems to allow talk of the 'ascriptive center' and thus of the self's persistence and

as insistent as Frei on a close reading of the text itself before importing any extraneous categories into the hermeneutical enquiry. He states that a "close textual analysis guided by clear textual warrants ... requires in turn a limitation of the material to be discussed" (R&T, 113). Consequently, his examination of the Gospel of Matthew is "text driven" in regards to narrative identification; he follows the "story" of Matthew's narrative as closely as Frei's constant focus on the passion/crucifixion/resurrection sequence. However, whereas Frei did not focus on a specific "Gospel" story, Thiemann sticks solely to Matthew's account¹²⁹.

Thiemann's central thesis can be construed as this: by following the Matthean narrative, God's identity as the God of Promise can be ascertained. While this is admittedly a different focus on the text than that of Frei (Frei was concerned with the identity of Jesus Christ), I can see **no essential methodological difference** between either writer's close readings. In fact, at times, Thiemann's language is indistinguishable from Frei's language. I will now turn to his analysis.

ultimacy ... However interesting such speculation [concerning the self's elusiveness] might be it seems necessary neither for the task of personal identification nor for the broader task of theology".

¹²⁹ Thiemann's account could be seen as the exegetical application of Frei's second-order reflections on narrative.

Thiemann's narrative analysis departs from the observation that the Gospel of Matthew "begin(s) with the most general and stylized depictions of Jesus and progresses toward greater specificity until Jesus' identity as a particular individual who uniquely fulfills the role Son of God becomes clear in the crucifixion and resurrection sequence" (R&T, 114). This continual movement towards a "realistic" narration sequence culminates in those events which constitute narrative insight into Jesus' unsubstitutable identity which transcends purely formal identification of the character Jesus. Jesus' identity is depicted in those narratives which focus on his 1) obedience to the Father and 2) powerlessness to affect the circumstances which ultimately led to his crucifixion.

The first locus of Jesus' depicted identity (his obedience), Thiemann specifically attributes to the narrative insight given in the Garden of Gethsemane scene. He notes that this is "one of the few times in the Gospel the interior life of Jesus [is portrayed] and serves as an important source of the claim that he is the obedient Son of God" (R&T, 127). Frei also maintains that in the "Garden of Gethsemane" pericope, we are allowed a glimpse into Jesus' interior self. He states, "what we are given in this narrative, then, is access to the storied Jesus' intention at a crucial point" (IJC, 114). Frei's enigmatic statement raises the question,

"Who is this 'storied Jesus'?" Frei is once again reiterating that the formal identity depiction of Jesus does not involve any assertions concerning factuality. Thus, it is only through the story that the reader has access to a situation in which the character Jesus struggles with being obedient. Although he does not explicitly state this, pure obedience in the midst of the circumstances on the part of the storied Jesus would be unrealistic, thus making the account seem created or fabricated. The second locus of identity depiction is in Matthew's account of the powerlessness of Jesus. Thiemann states that "Jesus' character becomes most sharply articulated when he no longer controls his own action. His purposive and obedient exercise of mission bring him to Jerusalem when he no longer controls his own action" (R&T, 130). Both Frei and Thiemann lean conceptually on Auerbach's exposition of "historical forces"¹³⁰. In this section, there is a "'mergence' between divine action and the 'historical forces' at their common point of impact- Jesus' judgement and death" (IJC, 116). These historical forces are those that are outside of the control of Jesus and which along with the workings of the

¹³⁰ This phrase "historical forces" belongs to Eric Auerbach and is used in reference to the passion sequence of Jesus. Auerbach writes, "A tragic figure from such a background, a hero of such weakness, who yet derives the highest force from his very weakness, such a to and fro of the pendulum, is incompatible with the sublime style of classical antique literature" Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 42.

Frei could have also used this concept to bolster his argument for the distinctiveness of the Biblical genre.

Father, help to define and shape his character.

Thiemann advances Frei's construal of narrative identity by teasing out a conclusion which is only implicit in Frei's work. Both authors conclude that Jesus' actions via his obedience to the Father enact both his and the Father's intentions. Frei maintains that this intention-action scheme coupled with Jesus' self-manifestation disclosed within the continuity of the narrative persuades one to consider Jesus as "factually raised, bodily if you will, than not to think of him in this manner" (IJC, 150). Thiemann pushes this conclusion further in adding that "to call God 'Father' is to identify him as the one who raised Jesus from the dead" (R&T, 134). Indeed, if God's intention to raise Jesus was enacted, then Thiemann is correct to speak of God the "Father" as "prevenient". The immediate impact of this move has enormous consequences for theology. If one takes the narratives as providing the theological matrix for Christian doctrine, then theological investigation remains intrinsically bound to the canonical texts themselves.

The influence of Karl Barth lies behind this method of theological investigation. Thus, Thiemann sounds strongly Barthian when he states:

"Theology would be well advised to follow the logic of Matthew's identifying description by locating its justificatory account of God's

prevenience neither in the **prolegomena** to theology nor in a separate doctrine of 'God's Word' but within its account of God's identity. **The doctrine of revelation ought to be a subtheme within the doctrine of God**" (R&T, 137)¹³¹.

Rather than importing extraneous disciplines into Christian theological constructions (especially philosophical frameworks), Barth and Thiemann insist on the primacy of theology done as textual investigation within the Christian church.

At the outset, I explained Frei's unease with the concept "revelation". This led him to propose another category "presence" which he ultimately felt was equally inadequate. Frei rejected the notion that conceptual terminology could be formulated as a type of meta-

¹³¹ Barth writes about God's revealing of himself: "Even in the form he assumes when he reveals himself God is free to reveal himself or not to reveal himself. In other words, we can regard his self-unveiling in every instance only as his act ... Revelation always means revealing even in the form or means of revelation. The form as such, the means, does not take God's place. It is not the form, but God in the form, that reveals, speaks, comforts, works and aids ... The fact that God takes form means that God himself controls not only us but also the form in which he encounters us. God's presence is always God's decision to be present" (CD I/1, 321).

And again: "God is who he is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, supreme, the one true Lord; and he is known in this entirety or he is not known at all. There is no existence of God behind or beyond this entirety of his being" (CD II/1, 52). Both quotations are cited in George Hunsinger, How To read Karl Barth: the shape of his theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 77 & 79.

language¹³². Rather, the "truth to which we refer we cannot state apart from the biblical language which we employ to do so ... The narrative description there is adequate. 'God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself' is an adequate statement for what we refer to, though we cannot say univocally how we refer to it" ("Response", 210). Thiemann's proposal concerning the status of a doctrine of revelation would seem to be congenial to Frei. Subsumed within a doctrine of God, "revelation" becomes dependent on the narrative depictions referring to God. For example, Thiemann makes reference to the "hiddenness of God" as "not some elusive self lurking behind or beyond the narrative depiction. Rather, God's hiddenness is simply a quality of God which the shape of the narrative itself indicates" (R&T, 139). This insistence on the primacy of the narrative depiction as the focal point of theological assertions is one shared by both Frei and Barth.

In conclusion, I would maintain that Thiemann's account of narrative identity (viz. Jesus Christ) is virtually synonymous with that of Frei. However, I would argue that Thiemann expands Frei's work in two distinct areas. Firstly, Thiemann allows the passion/crucifixion/resurrection sequence

¹³² "I do not think the concept 'fact' ... [or] 'probability' is theory-neutral ... I think those terms are not privileged, theory-neutral, trans-cultural, an ingredient in the structure of the human mind and of reality always and everywhere for me ..." ("Response to Narrative Theology" in Theology and Narrative, 211).

to provide an **account of God** as well as depicting the identity of Jesus. This is significant because it pushes the limits of Matthew's "story" and ultimately requires the reader to formulate a conception of what God may be like; "storied" or actually. If, as Thiemann argues, the narrative depicts God as "prevenient", this necessarily implies that God can fulfil his promises¹³³. Conversely, "to acknowledge the biblical narrative as God's promise is to believe that the crucified Jesus lives"¹³⁴. Thiemann teased out the implications of Frei's work on the identity of Jesus into a doctrine of God. In this way, Thiemann's work is an extension and a complement to Frei's investigation.

Secondly, Thiemann's refurbishment of the concept "revelation" seems to fit Frei's criteria of adequacy precisely because it sticks to the narrative depiction and does not claim to be meta-linguistic. In the background of this theological proposal is the Barthian concern with philosophy usurping theology. The major gain associated with a theology which generates from the narrative and does not claim to be linguistically infallible is that it can adapt itself to the changing conceptual apparatuses adopted

¹³³ Thus the subtitle of Thiemann's book, "The Gospel as Narrated Promise".

¹³⁴ "Radiance and Obscurity in Biblical Narrative" in Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation, edited by Garrett Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 38.

by the church¹³⁵.

IV. Stephen Crites: "The Narrative Quality of Experience"

Stephen Crites' account of narrativity begins with the universality of cultural forms. For Crites, these cultural forms are "a necessary mark of being human, i.e. capable of having a history ... They are the **conditions** of historical existence; their expressions are moulded in the historical process itself into definite **products** of particular cultures"¹³⁶. Crites proposes that one of these cultural forms is the story¹³⁷. The story provides the necessary framework for the articulation of human experience. Hence, Crites proposes that the "formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative" ("NQE", 66). He is not alone in this proposal. Hayden White states that

"to raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of

¹³⁵ This point is argued forcefully by George Lindbeck in chapter four of The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age, pp.73-90.

¹³⁶ "The Narrative Quality of Experience" in Why Narrative?, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann's, 1989), 65.

¹³⁷ Crites seems uninterested in attempting to "prove" the viability of his background theory of cultural forms. It is an assumption he admits; "I do not know how to go about probing any grandiose thesis. To me, I confess, it seems self-evident, in the sense that once the appropriate distinctions are made it becomes obvious" ("Narrative Quality of Experience", 6-66).

culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself. So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the way things really happened that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent ... or refused"¹³⁸.

An analysis of Crites' account is difficult since he gives few clues as to the genesis of this theory of cultural forms. It seems, however, that he depends heavily upon two philosophers; namely Kant and the Neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer. Kant argued in the Critique of Pure Reason that the human consciousness structures the sense-data of experience. Thus there is no such thing as unmediated or pure experience; all sense-data is mediated through the consciousness. I will now analyse how Cassirer applied Kant's thought to his theory of cultural forms.

Ernst Cassirer, in his three-volume work The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms¹³⁹, enquired into this ability of the consciousness to structure sense-data. In these volumes, Cassirer notes that in the history of the problem of being, a shift occurred within the philosophy of perception. He states, "the fundamental concepts of each science ... are regarded no longer as passive images of something given but

¹³⁸ "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in On Narrative, edited by W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 1.

¹³⁹ Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms vols. I-III (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-1957).

as symbols created by the intellect itself" (PSFI, 75). This new understanding destroyed the prevailing "copy theory" model. It was through Kant's "revolution in method" (PSFI, 78) that we came to realise that the "Ding-An-Sich" was essentially unknowable; though Cassirer maintained that the thing-in-itself does exist. Rather, all knowledge was seen to be filtered through the "categories" which are present as a type of grid in the mind. It follows that if my linguistic creations represent more than what is "just there", then I am creating a symbolic system. Following Charles Hendel, he proposes that, "instead of assuming that our knowledge represents absolutely what is real, suppose we proceed with the idea in mind that whatever reality we do know is precisely such as 'conforms to' our human ways of knowing" (PSFI, 3). Thus, through perception, my mind receives the sense-data from outside myself and configures it according to this "Kantian" grid ("laws") in my mind.

On this model, it follows then, that all beings live in a mediated reality. However, a being can live without being conscious of reality being mediated. Thus, Cassirer maintains that a person can never achieve unmediated reflection: "No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see, as it were, face to face. Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man's symbolic activity

advances"¹⁴⁰. Even within conceptualisation (the highest form of the activity of the consciousness), no person can achieve pure, unmediated knowledge. He states, the "perception of life is not exhausted by the mere perception of things, the experience of the 'thou' can never be dissolved into an experience of the mere 'it', or reduced to it even by the most complex conceptual meditations" (PSFIII, 62-3). Reality is always mediated and expressed in the symbolic forms. The symbol is something that exists in its own right and yet refers beyond itself to something else. Thus, for Cassirer, all reality is mediated and any reflection upon reality (conceptualisation) is likewise mediated. He finds this liberating: "Human nature as a whole may be described as the process of man's progressive self-liberation. Language, art, religion, science, are various phases in this process. In all of them, man discovers and proves a new power- the power to build up a world of his own, an 'ideal world'" (Essay On Man, 228).

Crites' account follows a similar pattern. He proposes that "every sacred story is a creation story: not merely one that may name creation of world and self as its 'theme' but also that the story itself creates a world of consciousness and the self that is oriented to it" ("NQE", 71). This view

¹⁴⁰ Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 25.

is radically different from Auerbach's analysis that the biblical world is "tyrannical- it excludes all other claims" (Mimesis, 14). Rather, the "sacred story does not transpire within a conscious world. It forms the very consciousness that projects a total world horizon, and therefore informs the intentions by which actions are projected into that world" ("NQE", 71). It is on the basis of this "projected world horizon" that the myth creates sense for human existence. The basis for Crites' construal of the necessity of the narrative form of the myth is based on his view of the modalities inherent within time.

"I want to suggest that the inner form of any possible experience is determined by the union of these three distinct modalities [past, present, future] in every moment of experience. I want further to suggest that the tensed unity of these modalities requires narrative forms both for its expression (mundane stories) and for its own sense of the meaning of its internal coherence (sacred stories)" ("NQE", 77).

This statement finds its foundation in Cassirer who maintained that the articulation of temporal-spatial experiences depends on language; although not necessarily narrative forms.

Crites understands Ricoeur to hold the position that "symbols are in some sense primitive in experience, and that myths and other narrative forms are secondary constructions that assemble the primal symbolic material into stories

[however] ... such a view seems to presuppose an atomism of experience" ("NQE", 81: fn. 12). Crites' analysis is based on his reading of The Symbolism of Evil. I contend, however, that in relation to other writers on myth (Levi-Strauss, Eliade, Jung, Freud, Bultmann), Ricoeur has the most balanced view of myth. He advocates "demythologization" but not "demythization": "What [needs to be] deconstructed here is not so much myth as the secondary rationalization that holds it captive, the pseudo-logos of myth"¹⁴¹. While advancing this deconstructive method, Ricoeur stresses that the myth must never be separated ("distilled") from its narrated form. The myth and its narrated form are indissolubly bound. Crites' view is striking similar when he asserts that "the truth of a story is in its narration" ("SD", 114). Ricoeur's methodology attempts to preserve the myth while advancing past the mythical worldview (its etiological function) which he finds (along with Bultmann) to be no longer tenable. He writes, "Demythologization ... is the will to shatter the false scandal constituted by the absurdity of the mythological representation of the world by a modern man and to make apparent the true scandal, the folly of God in Jesus Christ, which is a scandal for all men in all times"¹⁴². Although the myth loses its power of explanation,

¹⁴¹ "The Demythization of Accusation" (Translated by Peter McCormick) in The Conflict of Interpretations (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 335-336.

¹⁴² "Preface to Bultmann" (Translated by Peter McCormick) in The

it gains an explorative function. Myth is then viewed as a symbol which gives rise to thinking¹⁴³. This allows humans to find meaning in life and overcome the ambiguities of life (Tillich via Heidegger). When myth is not taken literally and is viewed as a way of making sense out of life, then the myth is effective. This theory is conceptualised by Ricoeur as the "second naiveté" (cf. SE, 352-354).

I propose that Crites' criticism would be more accurately aimed at Bultmann who reinterprets myth in terms of existential categories. The problem with his programme of "demythologization" is that it attempts to "demythicize" the myth. That is, he distils the "truths" from the myths and re-casts them in other language. However, like art, myth resists such quick interpretation. Ricoeur's notion of the "surplus of meaning" inherent in language and myth does not allow either to be easily translated into another, more propositional form. In fact, in Ricoeur's "Preface to Bultmann" he notes the flaw in Bultmann's programme as the failure to distinguish between demythologizing and demythicizing¹⁴⁴.

Conflict of Interpretations. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 389.

¹⁴³ The concluding chapter in Ricoeur's The Symbolism of Evil (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) is entitled "The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought" (pp.347-357).

¹⁴⁴ "Preface to Bultmann" (Translated by Peter McCormick) in The Conflict of Interpretations. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 388.

V. Critiques

Va. Maurice Wiles

Having looked at three distinct construals of theologies concerned with narrative, three objections still need to be dealt with. Firstly, Maurice Wiles objects that narrative is an inadequate rubric for constructing theological investigation. He maintains that "narrative" is too constricting a category and will not allow theology to adapt to the changing needs of Christian theology. I contend that Frei (and by association, Thiemann) does not advocate narrative or any other category as a "universally" valid rubric. Wiles' critique would be much more applicable to more "foundational"¹⁴⁵ theories of narrative, viz. Crites. Secondly, I recall my initial dissatisfaction with Frei's failure to provide a coherent theory concerning the "followability" of the narrated world of the text. While Thiemann does address the issue, his theory also seems inadequate. Crites does not address this concern. He presupposes narrative "followability" because of his view that narrative is a necessary expression of human existence. Finally, Michael Goldberg, a Jewish Rabbi and theologian,

¹⁴⁵ I mean "foundational" here in the sense that Crites views narrative as a necessary expression of human existence.

launches a critique against narrative theology on the grounds that it ignores the character of YHWH in the Hebrew Scriptures. He focuses on the discontinuity of God between the "testaments". His non-foundational theory of truth allows him to maintain that the Scriptures are unintelligible outside of their cultural context unless a form of a "hermeneutic of suspicion" is employed. His final objection is directed towards Frei and his failure to re-link the discipline of hermeneutics with questions of facticity and ultimately truth.

Maurice Wiles reacts strongly against those theologians who wish to use the concept "narrative" as the central rubric for a new form of theology¹⁴⁶. Wiles maintains that it should be the "canon" that is given "distinctive status". This would allow Scripture to "stand apart in its historic singularity from the changing patterns of Christian belief, and so to serve as a potential source of prophetic correction over against the ever-present danger of Christians' being carried along uncritically by the beguiling streams of contemporary thought" ("Narrative Limits", 54). While it is true that Frei advocated a close reading of narratives, especially in terms of identifying agents within them, it is

¹⁴⁶ Maurice Wiles, "Scriptural Authority and Theological Construction: The limitations of Narrative Interpretation" in Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation, ed. Garrett Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 42-58.

not true that Frei wanted to formulate what others have described as a "narrative theology". In fact, Frei distances himself from such efforts¹⁴⁷. In one passage, Frei actually dismisses the view that narrative is a universal hermeneutical rule applied regionally:

"I am deeply concerned about the specificity of narrative texts. There are all sorts of texts, and the Bible includes all kinds of texts to which different hermeneutical rules may apply ... In other words, I hope nobody thinks of something called 'narrative sense' as a kind of hermeneutical absolute" ("HB", 4).

Frei's hermeneutical contention is rather that "it is not likely that we shall be able to get beyond the descriptive accounts presented to us in the Gospels concerning the resurrection and the relation of God's and Jesus' actions", (IJC, 125). As a result, one major limitation of narrative is that one will never be able to discern much about the historical Jesus, outside of the text itself. Jesus' "identity is grasped only by means of the story told about him" (IJC, 87).

Vb. Is a story followable?

The weakest link in the proposals of both Frei and

¹⁴⁷ He states "it is never easy and usually not desirable to transform a literary description, such as a narrative sequence, into an **explanatory** scheme using abstract concepts and categories", (IJC, 125).

Thiemann in regards to narrative identity lay in their analysis of where Jesus' "unsubstitutable identity" is revealed. Both maintain that in the "unbroken sequence" of the passion-crucifixion-resurrection narrative, Jesus is shown to be who he actually is¹⁴⁸. His identity is intrinsically bound to his 1) obedience to the Father and 2) his enactment of the Father's will via his powerlessness. Frei writes,

"Jesus' very identity involves the will and purpose of the Father who sent him. He becomes who he is in the story by consenting to God's intention and by enacting that intention in the midst of the circumstances that devolve around him as the fulfilment of God's purpose" (IJC, 107).

I propose that for Frei and Thiemann to be consistent, they would need to put forth an account which takes seriously the problem of the "followability" of a narrative¹⁴⁹. However, neither theologian does.

Paul Ricoeur deals with this issue of "followability" in

¹⁴⁸ Strawson states that "particular identification in general rests ultimately on the possibility of locating the particular things we speak of in a single unified spatio-temporal system" (Individuals, 38).

¹⁴⁹ Thiemann attempts to show that "the [biblical] stories are coherent [they illumine a followable world] and that they function to invite the reader into the world of the tale" ("Radiance...", 38). However, his 'close reading' of the text does not have a conceptual framework to operate within. Though he draws from Alter's Art of Biblical Narrative and takes into account Kermode's concept of "peripeteia", he fails to propose a theory which accounts for this stated "coherence" in the narratives.

the initial volume of Time and Narrative (1983). In chapter five, entitled "Defenses of Narrative", he follows W.B. Gallie in formulating the concept of the "'followability' of a story ... [which he understands to be] a structural principle of narrative" (T&NI, 149). A story moves in a certain direction; towards a **telos**. Within this movement of the plot, the reader is "'pulled forward' by the development, as soon as we respond to this force with expectations concerning the completion and outcome of this whole process" (T&NI, 150). Ricoeur's theory allows the reader's expectations to be either the same or quite different from the actual outcome/ending of the story. Citing Gallie, he agrees that "to follow a story is 'to find [the events] intellectually acceptable after all'" (T&NI, 150). Thus, "followability" is not concerned with the "lawfulness of a process [but rather with] the internal coherence of a story which conjoins contingency and acceptability". It is not dependent upon "a psychology of reception [but a] logic of configuration" (T&NI, 151). Thus, it is the configuration and internal coherence of the narrative, while taking into account various types of "peripeteia", which allows the story's "followability"¹⁵⁰.

Vc. Goldberg: Are the "testaments" pointing to the

¹⁵⁰ I will examine Ricoeur's relation to this notion of "followability" more in depth in the next section of this chapter, as it seems to be the linchpin in his theory of narrative.

same God?

Michael Goldberg also launches an incisive critique against those theologians wishing to use narrative as a central hermeneutical principle. Goldberg's critique of narrative theology is comprised of several major objections. I will focus on the three which I find most relevant for this study. Firstly, Goldberg focuses on the discontinuity between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Secondly, like Thiemann, he advocates a non-foundational approach which has some consequences differing from those of Thiemann. Thirdly, he reproaches Frei for his unwillingness to deal with the issue of "truth" and thus of historical factuality. I will now expound each of these objections in turn.

Firstly, Goldberg objects to Thiemann's study in Revelation and Theology as glossing over the real issue of the discontinuity in character between the God of the Hebrews (YHWH) and the God of the New Testament who is incarnate in Jesus Christ. Goldberg maintains that a theology which claims to be Christian, must be faithful to both the Hebrew tradition and the Christian re-interpretation of that tradition. Moreover, a Christian narrative theology must

"produce the specific story-grounded warrants- for example, the continuities of story line, theme, and characterization- that show that in the storied

life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the character ultimately to be acknowledged **as** "God" coheres with the character **of** God previously manifested through certain characteristic actions performed on Israel's behalf, **particularly** those actions paradigmatically recounted in Israel's "master story" of the Exodus"¹⁵¹.

Goldberg's analysis of Thiemann's work is that although a base continuity may be established between the "testaments" in terms of the depiction that God is indeed a promising God, "an essential discontinuity may nevertheless remain, especially if the two stories differ markedly ... in their respective depictions of **what** it is God promises and, moreover, **how** God then acts to keep faith with what he promises" ("God", 356). Goldberg proposes that if this is indeed the case, then how much change in YHWH's character is allowable before one begins to understand YHWH to be a different God than the one depicted in Matthew's gospel. In fact, Thiemann's refusal to appropriate Frei's axis of self-manifestation in character identity may be due to his inability to postulate "persistence" (one of the three categories which comprise self-manifestation) of the character "God" over the narrative time-sequence. Goldberg contends that this discontinuity in character depiction is so great that "the character of the work and person of Jesus

¹⁵¹ Michael Goldberg, "God, Action, and Narrative: Which Narrative? Which Action? Which God?" in Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology, Edited by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann's, 1989), 349.

Christ appears to be strikingly **out of character** for the One, who ... became acknowledged as Israel's Lord and God" ("God...", 360). This task of unifying the "two testaments" is not a new one, but one which, as Goldberg rightly points out, has not been adequately addressed by narrative theologies.

Secondly, Goldberg challenges Thiemann's work from a philosophical position of "non-foundationalism". What he seems to mean here is that hermeneutically, the adjudication of truth-claims can only occur from within a specific tradition. Thus, while absolute truth may exist, it is not accessible (in its pure form) to humans. Truth is always mediated and consequently, there is no "Archimedean point" for the adjudication of truth-claims outside of one's own tradition; hermeneutics does not, then have the status of a "meta-language"¹⁵².

Goldberg castigates Thiemann for not attempting to critically analyse the Matthean account. He notes that Thiemann, "whose articulation of Israel's prior saga seems so thoroughly **and uncritically** dependent on Matthew's telling of it, seems never even to have imagined that the two

¹⁵² Goldberg appeals to several radically different philosophers (Cavell, Wolterstorff, Kuhn) who share two common positions: "1) knowledge of the world is possible, but 2) such knowledge can neither be gained nor justified from a totally unconditioned, non-perspectival position". Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), p.277:fn.5.

narratives my hold out fundamentally differing visions of **the particular nature and the specific enactment** of the divine promise" ("God", 356). Goldberg understands that the process of articulation of a narrative theology needs to employ a form of a "hermeneutic of suspicion"¹⁵³. For Goldberg, the New Testament's reading of Israel's saga portrays a very different "god" from that of a 'Jewish' reading and ultimately, one needs to suspect Matthew's interpretation of "YHWH"'s depicted actions. If Matthew's perspective is taken as accurate, then "from a Jewish viewpoint informed by the Exodus story ... had God acted in the way attributed to him by the gospel, he would have in the process revealed the character of both himself and his promises as being far from trustworthy, indeed, as being inconsistent and untrue" ("God", 364). This would then, undermine all that Thiemann had intended to discern about the characteristics of God depicted in Matthew's gospel!

Finally, Goldberg challenges Frei's position that hermeneutics ought to be concerned only with "meaning" and not "truth". Goldberg begins with the concession that "there are narratives whose meaning cannot be stated apart from the story, whose meaning cannot be gotten except through the

¹⁵³ Indeed, Richard Hays has been trying to reconcile the re-contextualised use of "Old Testament" quotations in the New Testament [Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)] and Brevard Childs has been attempting to establish continuity between the testaments [A Theology of the Old and New Testaments (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992)].

story, whose meaning is the story" (Theology and Narrative, 242). While this is true, Goldberg understands Frei's position to be untenable because of the very nature of theological investigation. He maintains:

"For the biblical narratives which portray a historically conditioned reality, the historical facticity of the events narrated in those stories must affect the truth of any claims which have them as their basis. For stories such as these, the question of 'whether it really happened' cannot be ignored without theological peril" (Theology and Narrative, 185).

Goldberg presses Frei on this issue because he understands religious truth-claims to be based on "factuality"; it is not a hermeneutically irrelevant question¹⁵⁴. This is the very issue which I pressed Frei on earlier. My conclusion was that Frei understood hermeneutics (not theology) to be interested in "meaning" not "truth" except in the passion/crucifixion/resurrection sequence. It is in this sequence that formal identity depiction (the "storied Jesus") merges with factual assertion (this is the way "Jesus" actually is). I concluded that Frei's account does not satisfactorily explain why this mergence is necessary. I conclude then, in accordance with my own conclusions, that

¹⁵⁴ For Frei, it does not seem to be either: "...the issue of reference is hermeneutically, though probably not theologically irrelevant" ("Hermeneutics and Beardslee", 4-5). Auerbach speaks out stronger than Frei on this issue: "... the Elohist, had to believe in the objective truth of the story of Abraham's sacrifice-the existence of the sacred ordinances of life rested upon the truth of this and similar stories" (Mimesis, 14).

Goldberg's critique holds.

VI. Concluding Remarks

In this section, I have outlined Frei's approach to narrative identity and its extension by Thiemann. Frei's account of Jesus' identity as "fixed" (via the two-pronged analysis of intention-action and self-manifestation) attempts to subvert accounts which probe into the psyche of Jesus or which reduce the gospel narratives into a mythical story.

Crites' analysis of the primacy of narrative is strikingly similar to Ricoeur's account and that of Hayden White. In the following section, I will analyse just how different Ricoeur's account is from that of Frei. Whereas Frei understands the gospel narratives to disclose the identity of Jesus, Ricoeur's account is broader and deals with more of the biblical narratives. Thus, his account is not restricted solely to the disclosure of Jesus' identity but also to that of the believer.

Wiles and Goldberg both critique Frei. Wiles' objection that narrative is not the central organising category appropriate to theology but rather "canon" seems misleading. I have argued that Frei was not offering "narrative" as a new theological rubric but was rather attempting to redress an imbalance. Goldberg's critiques seem more incisive although

they are directed at Thiemann rather than Frei. However, as I have argued above, there is no essential methodological difference between the accounts. Thus, I conclude that Goldberg's critique applies, **mutatis mutandis**, to Frei's hermeneutic.

II/2. "Ricoeur and Narrative Identity: Is emplotment the key or the problem?": This chapter traces similar themes with Ernst Cassirer's notion of symbolism and the Neo-Kantian ideals of the inexhaustibility and necessity of symbolisation. There is a dialogue with Hayden White on form and content, Peter Brooks on 'followability' in narrative, and John Searle's critique of intentionality (applies to Ricoeur's distinction between authorial intention and the inscription thereof).

Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity is formulated through 'listening' to those texts a person has focused upon. 'Personal identity' is both formed and derived from 'narrative identity'. I give an exposition of Ricoeur's notion of 'narrative identity' and analyse the subsequent incorporation of Nietzsche via Heidegger to apply to one's own identity.

I. An obsession with legitimacy?

In Ricoeur's revised 1986 Gifford Lectures¹⁵⁵, he omits the final two lectures which deal directly with biblical texts. His reasoning for doing so is three-fold; consideration of the length of the work, legitimacy in the philosophical arena, and autonomy of the disciplines. His "primary reason" for not including these two lectures was his concern to maintain "an autonomous, philosophical discourse" (QAA, 24). Ricoeur understands this decision to be in line with his previous philosophical investigations which have led "to a type of philosophy from which the actual mention of God is absent and in which the question of God, as a philosophical question, itself remains in a suspension that

¹⁵⁵ Found in Oneself As Another, [trans. by Kathleen Blamey], (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).

could be called agnostic ..." (QAA, 24). This "agnosticism" allows Ricoeur to function within the philosophical arena without requiring the reader to make any decision regarding his work on biblical texts¹⁵⁶. Secondly, he is concerned about needing to defend his work against the charge of "cryptotheology". If he had included the lectures on biblical texts in a volume dealing "solely" with philosophy, then the charge may be raised that he is adding to "biblical faith a cryptophilosophical function" (QAA, 24). Ricoeur wishes to maintain a distinction between the two disciplines and for the aporias of each to be worked out within their own frameworks¹⁵⁷. He is concerned that appeals to biblical faith could be understood to replace the foundationalism that he so adamantly opposes. He understands biblical faith to be non-foundational because it rests on a "culturally contingent symbolic network" and thus, there is no "Christian morality" but rather a "common morality that biblical faith places in a new perspective, in which love is tied to the 'naming of God'" (QAA, 25). Ricoeur's position in the introductory chapter to Oneself As Another can be understood to be founded

¹⁵⁶ This was a concern of Ricoeur as early as 1979 when he accepts this as a problem arising from his work on biblical texts. He writes, "I agree also with Mudge that I have not yet clearly shown how the intellectual integrity embodied in biblical criticism can be encompassed in this dialectic of testimony without any **sacrificium intellectus**". "Reply to Lewis S. Mudge, in Essays on Biblical Interpretation, (London: S.P.C.K., 44).

¹⁵⁷ Ricoeur does not advocate a "method of correlation" as we shall investigate below. He states in the Introduction, "It must be said that the schema of question and answer does not hold between philosophy and biblical faith" (QAA, 24).

on his prior dealings with biblical texts. In the section below, I will turn the investigation towards an exposition of the originating work upon which this qualifying factor, the autonomy of the disciplines, philosophy and faith, is founded.

In the last chapter, I demonstrated how Ricoeur classifies all literary texts as poetic. Since the biblical narratives are literary, they are thus predetermined to be "poetic". I maintained (along with Hans Frei) that this position posed a problem for the historical veracity of the "truth-claims" within the biblical texts. It is necessary to analyse Ricoeur's notion of truth as applied to biblical texts before giving an exposition of his theory of narrative identity. Ricoeur's radically altered notion of truth suggests a very different reading of biblical texts when deriving one's identity.

II. The reformulation of truth: "truth" as revelation

Ricoeur's central thrust in "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" is to develop a notion of revelation which is on the one hand, "a non-violent appeal" rather than that of a "**sacrificium intellectus**" and on the other hand, does not appeal to a certain "pretentious claim of philosophy", namely, "complete transparency of truth and a

total autonomy of the thinking subject"¹⁵⁸. His strategy for developing this "non-violent appeal" is to attack the privileging of philosophical discourse in reference to two claims of objectivity: objectivity in relation to truth and the objectivity of the individual. Thus he refuses to engage the issue of revelation on two other grounds, namely, that of rational theology and that of existential theology.

Concerning rational theology, Ricoeur states that he will not attempt to "prove" the existence of God. Rather, he understands religious discourse as "fundamental" discourse. "Fundamental" discourse relates "cardinal experiences, as language brings them to expression" ("HR", 96)¹⁵⁹. Ricoeur continues, adding, "the word, God, it seems to me, just belongs to the pretheological expressions of faith ... the experiences of manifestation and of dependence therefore need not be referred to God, and still less serve to prove God's existence..." ("HR", 96). Ricoeur's assertions broaden the gap between his construal of narratives and the work of Frei (and Thiemann).

158 Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" in Essays on Biblical Interpretation, [Edited by L.S. Mudge], (London: S.P.C.K., 1981), 95.

159 Ricoeur's contention would be in direct conflict with that of George Lindbeck who asserts, "a religion is above all an external word ... that molds and shapes the self and its world, rather than an expression or thematization of a preexisting self or of a preconceptual experience" The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 34.

Frei would maintain that God is disclosed through the acts depicted in biblical narratives (though not necessarily that God discloses himself through the narratives) and thus attributing these experiences to encounters with God is to realise how these texts function within the community of believers. Thiemann would go further than Frei. Thiemann would maintain that the depictions of God in biblical narrative, namely God as "prevenient", imply that God can fulfil his promises. Thus, the narrative not only refers to God but informs the reader as to the character of the agent, God¹⁶⁰.

Concerning existential theology, Ricoeur rejects the methodology of apologetic theologies (Pascal, Tillich) and the theological investigations of Kierkegaard. However, this is not to say that Ricoeur is not indebted to these theological investigations, but only that in reference to elaborating a "non-violent" (that is, one which requires no sacrifice of the intellect) construal of revelation, he finds these theological models inadequate.

IIa. Revelation as Manifestation

Ricoeur's elaboration of revelation as a "non-violent

¹⁶⁰ Both Frei and Thiemann's construal of narrative and how this relates to "identity" is discussed fully in chapter II/1.

appeal" is founded on his notion of "truth as manifestation ... which is in no way synonymous with heteronomy" ("HR", 98). His first methodological move is to place revelation within a framework of the function of "scripture". Due to his prior decision to view all literary texts as subsumed within the larger prevailing category of "poetics", scripture performs a "poetic function". In doing so, Ricoeur has allocated to "scripture" a double-function: firstly as poetic (by nature), secondly as revelatory (by function).

The Poetic Function

The poetic function of written discourse has a tri-fold basis: 1) the distanciation of the author from the text¹⁶¹, 2) the fixation of discourse into language¹⁶² and 3) a breaking of the first-order reference (ostensive) to unfold a second-order of reference ("a way of being-in-the-world")¹⁶³. Thus, the poetic function of literature is understood as "the inverse of the referential function understood in a narrow descriptive sense, then in a positive way as what in my

¹⁶¹ "With writing, the verbal meaning of the text no longer coincides with the mental meaning or intention of the text ... In other words, we have to guess the meaning of the text because the author's intention is beyond our reach" (IT, 75).

¹⁶² Ricoeur sees this as a problem: "Because the event appears and disappears, there is a problem of fixation, of inscription" (IT, 26).

¹⁶³ "It is this enlarging of our horizon of existence that permits us to speak of the references opened up by the text or of the world opened up by the referential claims of **most** texts" (IT, 37: emphasis mine).

volume on metaphor I call the metaphorical reference" ("HR", 101). Ricoeur applies his theory of metaphorical reference to biblical texts in the essay, "The Bible and the Imagination"¹⁶⁴. It is both a clarification and an extension of The Rule of Metaphor¹⁶⁵. It is a clarification in the sense that his theory of metaphor and tropes is applied to a reading of biblical texts, namely two parables¹⁶⁶. It is an extension because it bridges the gap between The Rule of Metaphor and his more recent investigations in Time and Narrative. The essay is also self-consciously an attempt to re-work his earlier work in "Semeia" (1978) on "The Narrative Form".

Ricoeur begins the essay by defining imagination as "a rule-governed form of invention" which in turn "give(s) form to human experience" ("BI", 50-51). This dual function of the imagination is what he calls here, and in T&N, fiction. He maintains that "narratives, in virtue of their form, are

¹⁶⁴ "The Bible and the Imagination" in The Bible as a Document of the University (ed. Hans Dieter Betz, trans. David Pellauer) Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981. pp 49-75. This essay was originally a paper given at the William Rainey Harper Conference on Biblical Studies. The conference was held at the University of Chicago in 1979.

¹⁶⁵ Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

¹⁶⁶ The parables of "The Wicked Husbandmen" and "The Sower". These two parables were chosen because of their position within the gospel of Mark; one at the beginning and one near the end. This for Ricoeur implies a sort of continuity, "the incarnate Word's march towards death" ("BI", 57).

all fictions" ("BI", 51). "Thus, all biblical narratives are in fact, fictions though not necessarily fictional.

The imagination is inventive to the extent that it affects reading of texts. What is signified in a narrative is not simply its ostensive reference. In fact, he proposes that

"the act of reading [is] a dynamic activity that is not confined to repeating significations fixed forever, but which takes place as a prolonging of the itineraries of meaning opened up by the work of interpretation" ("BI", 50).

However, Ricoeur is careful to note that this dynamism is "at work in the text itself" ("BI", 50). As seen in his analysis of parables, it is the **imagination** which guides the reader in the breaking of the initial signification (first-order reference) towards a higher level of signification (second-order reference). He suggests that parables are the literary form **par excellence** by which investigation of the signification move is made by virtue of their "literary form". He states,

"the narrative parable is itself an itinerary of meaning, a signifying dynamism, which transforms a narrative structure into a metaphorical process, in the direction of an enigma-expression ... the kingdom of God, an expression that orients the whole process of transgressing beyond the narrative framework while at the same time receiving in return a content of provisory meaning from the narrative structure" ("BI", 52).

Ricoeur has advanced a theory of parable-as-metaphor without addressing the question, "How does one discern that parabolic language is metaphorical?"¹⁶⁷. His angle of attack in this essay is to assert that "the structure embedding one narrative in another narrative is the fundamental framework for the metaphorical transfer guided by the enigma-expression 'kingdom of God'" ("BI", 55). In this and the previous citation, Ricoeur is relying on a term 'enigma-expression' borrowed from Ivan Almeida¹⁶⁸. Unpacking this term, used exclusively by Ricoeur in this essay only, requires an analysis of his definition of metaphor.

IIC. Metaphor

Following Max Black, I.A. Richards and Monroe Beardsley, Ricoeur proposes that metaphor is discovered when an "incompatibility" is uncovered within the semantic range of meaning. He states,

"Incompatibility is a conflict between designations at the primary level of meaning, which forces the reader to extract from the complete context of connotations the secondary meanings capable of making a 'meaningful self-contradictory attribution' from a self-contradictory statement"

¹⁶⁷ Addressing this problem was a major thrust of the "Semeia" essay. Writing of this endeavour, Ricoeur recalls, "I got trapped here by the question, 'what makes us interpret the narrative as a parable?'" (55).

¹⁶⁸ Cited in "Bible and Imagination", 52ff.

(RM, 95).

If the reader can recognise that the statement is not non-sensical because firstly, the attribution is "'indirectly self-contradictory'" and secondly, "'the modifier has connotations that could be attributed to the subject, [then] the attribution is a **metaphorical attribution** or metaphor'" (RM, 95). This change in meaning at the primary level leads to "semantic innovation" (RM, 132). Thus, the metaphor can be re-introduced into language and recognised as intelligible and non-contradictory. Having established Ricoeur's theory of metaphor as semantic innovation, I will now investigate its link with the phrase "enigma-expression".

The "enigma-expression" is a semantic innovation which, like metaphor, begs interpretation. Ricoeur suggests that the phrase, "Kingdom of God", rather than fitting into the ostensive world "transgress(es) the narrative" ("BI", 70). Ricoeur interprets the statement of Jesus, "my kingdom is not of this world", as a limit-expression; it "transports the narrative outside the customary logic of narratives" ("BI", 70). These expressions are recognised through "extravagance of the narrative", and so the enigma-expression "under the pressure of the extravagance of the narrative, thus becomes a limit-expression which breaks open the closed representations" ("BI", 71). Ultimately, Ricoeur asserts that it is the function of such enigmatic statements which

help "to configure" limit-expressions. His use of the concept "limit-expression" is founded upon Kant's work¹⁶⁹.

The concept "limit" is situated within the dialectic between reason and understanding: "(t)his distance, this tension, between 'Reason' as the function of the Unconditioned and 'Understanding' as the function of conditioned knowledge..."¹⁷⁰. The implications of our conditioned understanding is that "the quest for the unconditioned **puts limits** on the claim of objective knowledge to become absolute" (Semeia, 142). Within this dialectic between Reason and Understanding, the concept "limit" recognises that all language about the "Unconditioned" is "indirect discourse, of symbol, parables, and myths" (Semeia, 143).

¹⁶⁹ Kant writes, "... if we stop at [the boundary of all use of reason] we limit our judgement merely to the relation which the world may have to a Being whose very concept lies beyond all the knowledge which we can attain within the world" (Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics that can Qualify as a Science [Translated by Paul Carus] (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1902), 128). He continues, "But this limitation does not prevent reason leading us to the objective boundary of experience, viz., to the reference to something which is not itself an object of experience, but is the ground of all experience" (Ibid, 134). Ricoeur's appeal to "limit-language" agrees to the parameters laid out by Kant yet still recognises the elusive nature of metaphysics when combined with epistemology: "... by the analytical treatment of our concepts the understanding gains indeed a great deal, but the science (of metaphysics) is thereby not in the least advanced, because these dissections of concepts are nothing but the materials from which the intention is to carpenter our sciences" (Ibid, 143).

¹⁷⁰ Paul Ricoeur, "The Narrative Form", Semeia (1975), 142.

Ricoeur is unclear whether limit experiences give rise to limit expressions or not. In his theory, he places limit-concepts between limit-expressions and limit-experiences. This would be the result of the theory being rooted in the Kantian notion of the "categorical imperative". These mediating limit-concepts would allow the interpreter to gain an "approximation" of the meaning of any religious discourse, noting that any approximation would simply be a heuristic device. His preference for approximation rather than the route of analogy taken by among others, Tillich (the "analogia entis"), is a function of the type of discourse. He explains:

"Analogy contains, among other things, the notion of proportionality. I consider my philosophical task to attempt to approximate with my philosophical resources what I receive through another, non-philosophical language, through the polyphony of all non-speculative language, but without ever suppressing the differences. So I never say I can deduce the revelatory claim of the Biblical text from the poetic function in general, although I can approximate what is meant by the claim because I can find something analogous"¹⁷¹.

Rather, than the 'truth' of a narrative being cashed out in terms of verificationist language, Ricoeur appeals (twice) to a "commitment" ("MC", 34:) that is made by the interpreter. We adjudicate via a "network of criteria", "signals of

¹⁷¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation: Minutes of the Colloquy of 13 February 1977" in The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture (Berkeley, CA. 1977, 33). pp.24-36.

quality", and finally an appeal to the Gadamerian category of "taste" (perhaps Polanyi's 'intuitions'). Ultimately, in very non-foundational language, he concludes that "one cannot locate the truth claim in one particular place. It is the mutual fitness, the mutual reinforcement of partial criteria which constitute as a whole a truth claim" ("MC", 36).

Placed within the matrix of narrativity, Ricoeur would understand "truth" as a network of narrative coherence within which the reader picks up on its "signals of quality". This thought reflects the concerns of Kant in the Critique of Judgement and more recently, in regards to "taste", the work of Gadamer.

Ricoeur's exposition of metaphorical reference affects language in two related ways. Firstly, it eclipses the normal ostensive referential function of ordinary language¹⁷². In doing so, it opens up a way-of-being-in-the-world which goes beyond the normal descriptive function of language. This is the heart of Ricoeur's thesis: "My deepest conviction is that poetic language alone restores us to that participation-in or belonging-to an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to subject" ("HR", 101: emphasis

¹⁷² Ricoeur does not hold that in every instance, normal ostensive reference is eclipsed.

mine).

In the above section, I have sketched the methodological base from which Ricoeur's proposal for a "non-violent appeal" to revelation works. French literary criticism gave him structuralist analysis and the category of poetics and he extends these disciplines to an analysis of scripture. He subsequently allocates a double function to scripture, namely a poetic one and a revelatory one.

The analysis will now turn to a distinction between the two functions allocated to scripture, the poetic and the revelatory. Within Ricoeur's definition, in what sense does scripture function as revelation? He understands the poetic function of texts to "disclose" or "manifest" ways of understanding oneself. This turns out to be Ricoeur's definition of textual "truth": "the poetic function incarnates a concept of truth that escapes the definition by adequation as well as the criteria of falsification and verification ... It is in this sense of manifestation that language in its poetic function is a vehicle of revelation" ("HR", 102). What the biblical texts disclose or manifest is a "proposed world, a world I may inhabit and wherein I can project my ownmost possibilities" ("HR", 102: emphasis mine). This proposed world is referred to in biblical texts as "a

new creation, a new Covenant, the kingdom of God" ("HR", 103).

IId. Eric Auerbach on the function of biblical language

An analysis of Ricoeur's methodology reveals his equivocation, until this point, of "truth" with the "manifestation" of a "proposed world" which one may or may not choose to understand oneself within¹⁷³. Eric Auerbach's analysis of the difference between classical Greek literature and the biblical narratives suggests that the "Bible's claim to truth is ... tyrannical- it excludes all other claims ... Far from seeking, like Homer, merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world ..."174. Thus, his analysis concludes that there is a difference in the authorial stance towards the material; the biblical writers were not suggesting a way-of-being-in-the-world, rather they claim exclusive exposition of authentic humanity. It would seem then that Ricoeur's theory has not adequately

¹⁷³ In an earlier essay, Ricoeur recognises that this choice is the choice of faith: "...I should link the concept of faith to that of **self-understanding** in the face of the text. Faith is the attitude of one who accepts being interpreted at the same time that he interprets the world of the text". "Philosophy and Religious Language", Journal of Religion (volume 54 (1974) no.1), 84.

¹⁷⁴ Mimesis; The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, Translated by Willard R. Trask, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 14-15.

accounted for this difference; namely that, the projected world of the Bible claims exclusive interpretation of the self over other forms of literature.

Within Ricoeur's biblical writings, the term "revelation" is explained as, "[i]f 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 by the text" ("HR", 104). He feels that this non-religious definition of the concept of revelation, is in effect, the "non-violent appeal" he espouses. However, Ricoeur concedes that there is a religious meaning of revelation. This religious sense is what separates the Bible from other "great poems of existence. [The Bible] is a unique case because all its partial forms of discourse are referred to that Name which is the point of intersection and the vanishing point of all our discourse about God, the name of the unnameable" ("HR", 104)¹⁷⁵. Ricoeur believes that this revised definition of

¹⁷⁵ This affirmation is reminiscent of Tillich's definition of God as the ground of being, the power of being, or being itself. Tillich concludes his definition with his rendering of the status of God-talk: "After this has been said, nothing else can be said about God which is not symbolic" (Systematic Theology, I [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953]), 265.

Furthermore, Brevard Childs suggests that "... what binds the testaments indissolubly together is their witness to the selfsame divine reality, to the subject matter, which undergirds both collections, and cannot be contained within the domesticating categories of 'religion'. Scripture is also not self-referential, but points beyond itself to the reality of God" (Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, 721).

truth as "manifestation" avoids the positivist excesses of truth defined within a matrix of falsification and verification and likewise avoids the subjective trap of truth as adequation. David Tracy, in his application of Ricoeur's hermeneutic within a specific theological construction, is not so careful¹⁷⁶.

III. The hermeneutical link: "truth" applied to biblical texts

¹⁷⁶ David Tracy, in Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion and Hope (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), defines "Reality" as "what we know through our best interpretations ... [those] interpretations that have carried the right to be called relatively adequate or true" (P&A, 48). It seems that Tracy here has confused (not adequately defined) the distinction between meaning and truth. If reality is in no way objective and merely is the subjective decision or the interpretation (which is 'relatively adequate') of the "particular community of inquiry" (P&A, 29), then one would have difficulty in addressing issues such as "what actually happened in history with whatever degree of certitude is possible" (P&A, 36).

When Barth claims that "God's revelation in its objective reality is the person of Jesus Christ" (CD I/2, 172) and that this is a "real event accomplished in space and time as history within history" (CD I/2, 177), then this seems to exclude "consensual truths" which are "relatively adequate". Rather than allowing one's notion of reality to address issues within the textual world, it would seem more plausible to understand the text as absorbing one's own world and thus the text defines the parameters of what that Reality is. This hermeneutical move thus sidesteps the problem of the self-referentiality of texts by understanding the text on its own terms. Tracy is correct in saying that our take on Reality ought to be understood as a construal, but he is wrong in assigning truth to an interpretation of our configured reality. This places experience as the arbitrator of truth; "truth manifests itself and we experience its rightness" (P&A, 28). Placed within the framework of conversation, Tracy defines truth as, "on the side of the object, as the power of disclosure and concealment in the object itself; and that disclosure is related to truth as an experience of recognition on the side of the subject" (P&A, 28). However, truth as derived from Reality, is not purely subjective, yet our configurations may be. If so, then objectivity in space/time would be sacrificed on the altar of "consent to adequacy".

In the preface to the co-authored Radical Theology and the Death of God¹⁷⁷, Thomas J.J. Altizer and William Hamilton propose a spectrum within which the meaning of the phrase 'Death of God' can be placed. The positions represented range from traditional articulations of atheism, through several versions of a recognition of the need to reformulate 'God-talk' from within the Christian tradition (RT, xi: preface). Whilst one recognises the limited usefulness of such "spectrums", it is helpful to clarify the several ways in which Ricoeur uses the word "atheism" in his 1966 Bampton lectures on "Religion, Atheism and Faith"¹⁷⁸.

I understand Ricoeur to be using "atheism" in two distinct senses. The overriding sense can be formulated as: "That certain concepts of God, often in the past confused with the classical Christian doctrine of God, must be destroyed: for example, God as problem solver, absolute power, necessary being, the object of ultimate concern" (RT, xi). The other sense coincides with Altizer's "eighth" definition: "That the gods men make, in their thought and action (false gods or idols, in other words), must always die

¹⁷⁷ Altizer, Thomas J.J. and William Hamilton. Radical Theology and the Death of God. Indianapolis: Bobs Merrill Co., 1966.

¹⁷⁸ Found in Alasdair MacIntyre and Paul Ricoeur. The Religious Significance of Atheism (Bampton Lectures 1966). New York: Columbia University Press, 1969. ["RAF"] This "early" essay of Ricoeur's is curiously not mentioned in Thiselton: 1992 or Vanhoozer: 1990.

so that the true object of thought and action, the true God, might emerge, come to life, be born anew" (RT, xi)¹⁷⁹. I propose that this first sense would be, for Ricoeur, the **task** of hermeneutics whereas this second sense would be the **goal** of hermeneutics.

IIIa. The task of hermeneutics

Ricoeur understands the significance of the work of Nietzsche and Freud to be their destruction of the illusions and subsequently, the idols of humanity. Nietzsche claimed the God of traditional metaphysics to be an idol; a self-propagation of the "will-to-power". Freud's investigations led him to claim that the "superego" was nothing more than an ideal construction; "thus neither primary nor absolute" ("RAF", 64). Ricoeur appropriates both of these theories which he maintains will allow the philosopher to construct a hermeneutic which when applied to theology, finds its starting point in neither onto-theology nor in Kant's necessarily ethical God. Ricoeur maintains that the hermeneutical insights of both Freud and Nietzsche "undermine this notion of a formalist foundation of ethics. Ethical formalism is seen to be a second-rate rationalization based

¹⁷⁹ Ricoeur is careful to note that "the philosopher's method is not to reconcile in a weak eclecticism the hermeneutic which destroys the old idols with the hermeneutic which retrieves the kerygma" ("RAF", 88). Rather, with Tillich, he maintains that "an idol must die, in order that a symbol of Being may speak" ("RAF", 98).

on a transfer of transcendental-empirical distinctions to the realm of practical reason from the realm of theoretical reason" ("RAF", 77)¹⁸⁰.

Ricoeur's method allows philosophy (and the social sciences) to mediate between the questions which arise from theological investigation and the resulting various conflicting interpretations. He states, "I like to grant philosophy the role of arbitrator, and I have previously attempted to arbitrate the conflict of several hermeneutics in modern culture: the hermeneutics which demystifies and the hermeneutics which recovers meaning"¹⁸¹. Walter Kaufmann proposes a similar reading of Nietzsche; namely that Nietzsche understood the role of the philosopher akin to that of the physician. His analysis was applied to culture's values as a physician applies the knife in surgery with the

¹⁸⁰ Kaufmann's analysis of Nietzsche agrees: "Kant, as is well known, seems never to have questioned the existence of the moral law as a synthetic judgement a priori", Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist. (Princeton: P.U.P., 1974 [fourth edition]), 103. Consequently, Nietzsche opposed to Kant for this very reason: Kant assumed the very issue which Nietzsche questioned. (PPA 103-104). Nietzsche's method takes a more radical route at this juncture. Kaufmann notes that "(i)nstead of rationalizing current valuations which appear to [Nietzsche] as previous 'value creations that have become dominant and are, for a time, called 'truths'', he offers a critique and thus prepares the ground for a new 'value-creation' or 'value-legislation' in the future" (PPA, 109).

¹⁸¹ "The Problem of Double Meaning" in The Conflict of Interpretations (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 62. At this juncture, Ricoeur could be charged with privileging philosophy over theology. This is interesting in light of most accusations that allege exactly the opposite. I investigate these accusations below.

patient¹⁸². Ricoeur is likewise attempting to take seriously the implications of a deconstructive theory as applied to texts without losing the text itself. I will now turn to an analysis of Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God" and how Ricoeur fits this realisation into his hermeneutic.

IIIb. Nietzsche's proclamation of the 'Death of God'

Ricoeur does not attribute the "death of God"¹⁸³ to any particular form of atheism. Rather, this death is prompted by the "very nothingness which dwells in the Ideal, the lack of absoluteness and of the superego" ("RAF", 67). J.P. Stern's reading of Nietzsche substantiates Ricoeur's position: "This 'death' of the Christian God, Nietzsche

¹⁸² Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (Princeton: P.U.P., 1974 [fourth edition]), 109. Taken from Nietzsche's aphorism in The Anti-Christ, aphorism 7.

¹⁸³ It is necessary here to distinguish the thesis of Ricoeur via Nietzsche from the alternate and highly problematic thesis advanced by Altizer and Hamilton. This is crucial because although Nietzsche is used as the starting point for both investigations, they understand the phrase, "death of God", in radically different ways. Altizer and Hamilton understand the "death of God" to mean, "there once was a God to whom adoration, praise and trust were appropriate, possible, and even necessary, but that now there is no God" (RT, x). For these "radical theologians", the Christian God has died in time and space: "We must realize that the death of God is an historical event, that God has died in our cosmos, in our history, in our **Existenz**" (RT, 11). Kaufmann comments that the phrase 'God is Dead' (s.108) "... even brought into being a predictably stillborn movement in Christian theology that created a short-lived sensation in the United States. But most of those who have made so much of Nietzsche pronouncement that 'God is dead' have failed to take note of its other occurrences in his works which obviously furnish the best clues to his meaning" (GS, 167: fn. 108). Ricoeur's use of Nietzsche concurs with Kaufmann's reading and J.P. Stern. I will expound Ricoeur's use of Nietzsche in the text.

identifies with the virtual end of the morality of good and evil, and of all forms of idealism"¹⁸⁴. It will be necessary to unpack what Nietzsche said about the "death of God" to understand how this proclamation fits into Ricoeur's methodology.

Nietzsche's first use of the phrase, "God is dead" is found in The Gay Science¹⁸⁵. In section 343, "**The meaning of our cheerfulness**", Nietzsche comments that "(t)he greatest recent event- that 'God is dead', that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable- is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe" (GS, 279). Walter Kaufmann contends that "(t)his clause is clearly offered as an explanation of 'God is dead'" (GS, 279: fn.3). However, many commentators focus on the later sections of the work, especially "the parable of the madman" (s.125)¹⁸⁶. The setting of this "parable" is within a market place during the "bright morning hours". A madman lights a lantern and asks

¹⁸⁴ J.P. Stern, Nietzsche (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1978), 92.

¹⁸⁵ Frederick Nietzsche, The Gay Science with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs [trans. based on the 2nd edition of **Die Frohliche Wissenschaft** (1887) with commentary by Walter Kaufmann] (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), section 109 (s109). "GS" Citations from Nietzsche's works will indicate the section.

¹⁸⁶ Kaufmann proposes that the origin of "(t)he problem [with discerning the meaning of the phrase 'God is dead'] is created in large measure by tearing a section out of its context, on the **false** assumption that what we are offered is merely a random collection of 'aphorisms' that are intended for browsing" (GS, 182: fn. 20). Kaufmann alludes to the possibility that this failure may be due to the fact that only (s.125), "the parable of the madman", was translated and subsequently anthologized in his first edition of Nietzsche (1950).

the bystanders "Whither is God?". The answer comes from his own lips, "I will tell you. **We have killed him-** you and I. All of us are his murderers ... God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him". Upon getting only astonished looks, the madman smashes his lantern on the ground and while leaving says, "I have come too early ... my time is not yet". The prophetic premise from which Nietzschean philosophy seems to be out-working is this: "God is dead" means that the morality associated with Christianity is no longer viable in the modern world. What emerges from this "dark night", this "blackness" surrounding the loss of God is the superman, who is beyond the categories of good and evil. This loss of morality (a priori) combined with the "de-deification of nature" (s.109: 167-169) once again gives meaning to existence on earth¹⁸⁷.

Nietzsche likens the consequences of the loss of God in culture to a vast ocean, where the person longs for the land that once gave security. "Beside you is the ocean ... But hours will come when you realize that it is infinite and there is nothing more awesome than infinity ... Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more

¹⁸⁷ However, as Kaufmann notes: "To escape nihilism- which seems involved both in asserting the existence of God and thus robbing **this** world of ultimate significance, and also in denying God and thus robbing **everything** of meaning and value- that is Nietzsche's greatest and most persistent problem" (PPA, 101).

freedom- and there is no longer any 'land'" (GS, 180-181). Kaufmann agrees that "(i)t seems paradoxical that God, if ever he lived, could have died. But 'God is dead'; 'we have killed him'; and 'this tremendous event ... has not yet reached the ears of man'-that is an attempt at a diagnosis of contemporary civilization, not a metaphysical speculation about ultimate reality" (PPA, 100). J.P. Stern concludes that "(t)o understand the doctrine [God-less age] in the context of Nietzsche philosophizing is to realize that his serious concern with it arises not from any cosmological speculation, but from his criticism of contemporary ideology" (Nietzsche, 108).

Nietzsche's philosophy is used by Ricoeur to formulate a hermeneutic which destroys the traditional metaphysical starting points but then emerges among the ruins as a guide to constructing a "post-religious" faith. Ricoeur's working hypothesis within "Religion, Atheism and Faith" is that "... (a)theism does not exhaust itself in the negation and destruction of religion; rather, ... atheism clears the ground for a new faith, a faith for a postreligious age" ("RAF", 59). This postreligious faith espoused by Ricoeur is uncovered through a hermeneutic of suspicion which involves a recollection and retrieval of the symbols of Christianity¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁸ His reference to the hermeneutical polarity of suspicion and recoverance is expounded in Freud and Philosophy, and specifically within "RAF", he credits Freud, Nietzsche and Heidegger.

Methodologically, Ricoeur's hermeneutic ventures beyond the reductive hermeneutics of Nietzsche, Freud and Marx to become a creative hermeneutic though it travels directly along the same route. This new form of Christianity is marked by a life under grace and not under law, what he calls an "obedience to Being" ("RAF", 88). Ricoeur declares, "(i)n destroying the shelter offered by religion and liberating men from the taboos imposed by religion, atheism clears the ground for a faith beyond accusation and consolation" ("RAF", 60). Likewise, Nietzsche's sceptical critique deconstructs "all **religious** states and processes, such as sin, repentance, grace, sanctification..." (GS, 122). Ricoeur takes this challenge seriously for he maintains that "it is the responsibility of the philosopher to delve into the character of the present antimony until he finds the level of questioning which makes possible a mediation between religion and faith through atheism" ("RAF", 70). Indeed, "the philosophical progression from religion to faith through atheism involves a purification of man's desire for protection and a purification of man's fear of punishment-[these are] inseparable processes..." ("RAF", 88)¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁹ It seems that Ricoeur is following Nietzsche's analysis of the "problem of the origin of Christianity" (Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ, translated, with an Introduction and commentary by R.J. Hollingdale [Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1968]), 134. Nietzsche says firstly, "Christianity ... is **not** a counter-movement against the Jewish instinct, it is actually its logical consequence, one further conclusion of its **fear-inspiring logic**" (134: emphasis mine). However, Ricoeur stops short of affirming Nietzsche's second "proposition": "the psychological type of the Galilean is still recognizable- but only in a completely degenerate form (which is at once

Following Freud, the renunciation of the "father image" of the biblical text, "recovered as a symbol ... would be a parable of the ground of love; it would be the counterpart, in a theology of love, of the progression which led us from a mere resignation of Fate to a poetic life" ("RAF", 98). A "post-religious faith" understands the ultimate referent of biblical texts to point towards a theology of love lived in accordance with a poetic life. In the section below, I will trace the origins of this main thesis from Heidegger and its implications on Ricoeur's theory of reference.

IIIc. Heidegger's exposition of "techne" and "poiesis"

Ricoeur alludes to a comment made by Heidegger concerning a poem by Hölderlin, namely, "in poetic fashion dwelleth man upon the earth" ("RAF", 96)¹⁹⁰. Ricoeur's notion of what it means to lead a "poetic life" is based upon an exposition of Heidegger's concept of **poiesis**, "the act of

a mutilation and an overloading with foreign traits) could it serve the end to which it was put, that of being the type of redeemer of mankind" (134).

Furthermore, Nietzsche's analysis of the implications of such a form of religion are implied in Ricoeur's desire to purify faith of 'religion': "Yahweh the God of 'justice' ... becomes an instrument in the hands of priestly agitators who henceforth interpret all good fortune as a reward, all misfortune as punishment for disobedience of God, for 'sin' (136).

¹⁹⁰ Ricoeur does not cite the source of the Heideggerian reference but it can be found in "The Question Concerning Technology" in Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings [edited, with a General Introduction and Introductions to each selection, by David Farrell Krell] (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1977), 316ff.

creation in the broadest sense" ("RAF", 97). In his essay, "The Question Concerning Technology", Heidegger traces the shift in meaning of the word **techne** (technology). In early Greek thought, the "techne" is used in the sense of a "way of knowing", a "revealing". This "revealing" was through "poiesis", a "bringing forth" of the essence of a thing through "physis", the structure inherent in the thing itself. Heidegger notes that "**physis** also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth, **poiesis**. **Physis** is indeed **poiesis** in the highest sense" ("QCT", 293). **Techne** was understood to imitate nature; it had a mimetic function. The "revealing" of the modern sense of technology is a "challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such" ("QCT", 296). The modern understanding of "techne" shifted to imply an **imposing**¹⁹¹ of a structure onto something rather than an **exposing** of an inherent structure. This imposing of a structure upon the world is called "enframing": "Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e. challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve" ("QCT", 302). Heidegger understands that this prevailing modern understanding of technology "as a destining

¹⁹¹ "The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of challenging-forth" ("QCT", 297).

of revealing¹⁹², is the danger ... for it blocks **poiesis**" ("QCT", 309-311). Attached to this notion of destined revealing is the understanding of "technology as an instrument" which leads to "the will to master it" ("QCT", 314). Rather than technology challenging us, in the sense of **techne** as **poiesis**, the modern definition allows humanity to impose its notions of **truth** upon **poiesis**. Ultimately, **poiesis** is no longer able to challenge humanity as a "bringing-forth" of the truth inherent in the structure of nature itself. Re-capturing this initial understanding of **poiesis** would allow humanity once again to "bring the true into the splendor of what Plato in the Phaedrus calls **to ekphanestaton**, that which shines forth most purely. The poetical thoroughly pervades every art, every revealing of coming to presence into the beautiful" ("QCT", 316).

IIIId. Ricoeur's appropriation of Heidegger

Ricoeur appropriates Heidegger's work on **poiesis** in a more subtle way than simply the notion of **poiesis** as creativity. In the dialectic between the text and the

¹⁹² Heidegger understands this notion of humanity destined to reveal rooted in the idea of the human as the "lord of the earth. In this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct" ("QCT", 308). Although Heidegger does not explicitly state the reference, the above citation seems an allusion to Genesis 1:28: "...and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (RSV).

reader, it is the text which rightly provides the structure rather than the reader's preconceived notions concerning truth. In this way, it is the text which ultimately challenges the reader and thus evades the problem of subjectivity.

For Ricoeur, there are two functions of reference in any given text. The first order of reference deals with what the text says. The second order of reference is the poetic function; an opening up of possibility of a way-of-being-in-the-world. The first order of reference deals with issues of verification¹⁹³, whereas the second order deals with a manifestation of the world unfolded for the reader. Ricoeur notes that the second-order of reference is **primary**; it is **ontologically prior**. He says, "I call it 'second order', but in fact it is the primitive language, which has been overshadowed by 'ordinary' language" ("MC", 27). Ricoeur thus bypasses the problem of subjectivity by giving precedence to the world of the text: within the dialectic between the reader and the text, Ricoeur's hermeneutic begins from the world of the text which is the testimony of the

¹⁹³ Within the colloquy, a statement concerning the first-order of reference is fashioned around Ricoeur's theory: "...ultimately what we describe in terms of verifiability remains not 'meaningful'" ("MC", 32). The upshot of this statement is to suggest that Ricoeur is not willing to play by philosophy's rules. He replies that the concept of revelation implies "I receive meaning, but I cannot construe meaning. I see the philosopher and the believer in an endless conflict ... The language of verification belongs to one sphere of discourse, and I cannot apply it to another" ("MC", 33).

other.

IV. Ricoeur on the relation between listening and identity

"To confess that one is a listener is from the very beginning to break with the project dear to many, and even perhaps all, philosophers: to begin discourse without any presuppositions"¹⁹⁴.

Ricoeur understands that through this "listening without presuppositions", the speaker will say something meaningful which provokes reflection and in turn opens a world in which the listener can project his/her ownmost possibilities. This concept of listening without presuppositions is central to the poetic function of texts for texts can expand our horizons only if we do not seek to impose a controlling interpretive framework upon them. We must allow texts to speak on their own terms. Being a Christian listener involves two commitments: firstly, Ricoeur states "I assume that this speaking is meaningful, that it is worthy of consideration, and that examining it may accompany and guide the transfer from the text to life where it will verify itself" ("NG", 217). Secondly, it involves dwelling within the hermeneutic circle; "through the transfer from text to life, what I have risked [wagered?] will be returned a

¹⁹⁴ "Naming God" in Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985), 217.

hundredfold as an increase in comprehension, valor, and joy" ("NG", 217). It is Ricoeur's reliance upon structuralist insights which allows the text 'to speak' and thus, the reader to escape the charge of subjectivity. It is the move from structuralist readings to the critique of ideology which has been traditionally challenged in his thought.

It is my contention that Ricoeur's reading of Heidegger and Nietzsche influenced his development of the notion of Christian listening. Kevin Vanhoozer has rightly pointed out the strong connection with Heidegger's project and which parts overlap with that of Ricoeur. He suggests that Ricoeur's emendations to Heidegger's thought are useful in that they make way for "narrative hope" (BN, 32). I will attempt to relate Ricoeur's notion of listening without pre-suppositions to Nietzsche's notion of the overman overcoming revenge by not imposing a controlling framework upon discussion.

IVa. Exposition of Heidegger and Nietzsche

Heidegger's lectures of 1951 and 1952, entitled "What Is Called Thinking?"¹⁹⁵, were to be his first since he was silenced by the French occupying powers and his last

¹⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger, What Is Called Thinking?: A Translation of Was Heisst Denken? [translated by and with an Introduction by J. Glenn Gray], (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

university lectures (WT, vi). The connection between thinking and listening is drawn out through an etymological analysis guided by Nietzsche's thought. Heidegger maintains that the common way of thinking is this: "Our own manner of thinking still feeds on the traditional nature of thinking, the forming of representational ideas" (WT, 45). Yet, he rejects this as improper, as evidenced by his dictum restated throughout the first-half of the lectures: **"Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking"** (WT, 6: italics his). His remedy for this situation is that "it has become necessary to improve our ability to listen" (WT, 55). The lack of the ability to think is precipitated by the "dominance of ideational or representational thinking" (WT, 64).

Hermeneutically, this way of thinking is a problem for Heidegger who proposes that "there is no universal schema which could be applied mechanically to the interpretation of the writings of thinkers, or even to a single work of a single thinker¹⁹⁶" (WT, 71). Heidegger argues that we are closed to hearing because tradition teaches us that the ideas of history are about the past, not about the present. Thus, Heidegger maintains that we rarely are opened to hearing; "we do so only on rare occasions" (WT, 76). There are conditions

¹⁹⁶ Hence he argues about Nietzsche: "... it should be clear that one cannot read Nietzsche in a haphazard way; that each one of his writings has its own character and limits; and that the most important works and labors of his thought, which are contained in his posthumous writings, make demands to which we are not equal" (WT, 73).

for one to hear rightly: "We must acknowledge and respect every thinker's thought [because it] come[s] to us as something in each case unique, never to be repeated, inexhaustible- and being shaken to the depths by what is unthought in his thought" (WT, 76). It is this unthought part of a thinker's thought which makes the thinker even greater. However, this greatness can be only uncovered in retrospect.

From Nietzsche, Heidegger argues that the traditional way of thinking, of schematising, is at its core combative¹⁹⁷: "The pursuit of thought, the formation of ideas of man so far is determined by revenge, the onset, the attack" (WT, 85). The overman, for Nietzsche, is the human who does not seek this revenge¹⁹⁸. Thus, the bridge from man to the overman is paved with "the deliverance from revenge" (WT, 86). For Nietzsche, revenge is connected with the will to power, in a very Kantian sense of the categorical imperative: "The determination of what is, then, is in a certain way at the command of a way of forming ideas which pursues and sets upon everything in order to set it up and maintain it in its own way" (WT, 92). The will imposes a

¹⁹⁷ "The spirit of revenge, my friends, has so far been the subject of man's best reflection; and wherever there was suffering, there punishment was also wanted" (Zarathustra, 162; cited in WT, 85).

¹⁹⁸ "For that man be delivered from revenge: that is the bridge to the highest hope for me, and a rainbow after long storms" (Zarathustra, 123; cited in WT, 85).

structure upon received sense-impressions not only to understand and make sense of this data but also to control it. Heidegger elaborates on this Nietzschean doctrine,

"Hence the will is the sphere of representational ideas which basically pursue and set upon everything that comes and goes and exists, in order to depose, reduce it in its stature and ultimately decompose it. This revulsion within the will itself, according to Nietzsche, is the essential nature of revenge" (WT, 93).

The overman overcomes revenge by becoming "independent of time in the sense of a passing away" (WT, 102). So Nietzsche has Zarathustra teach the doctrine of eternal recurrence of the same whilst teaching of the overman. Heidegger maintains of these 'doctrines': "in their essence they belong together" (WT, 106). He writes, "... in both doctrines there is thought at the same time that which belongs together from the beginning and thus inevitably must be thought together- the Being of beings and its relatedness to the nature of man" (WT, 106). Thinking, for both Nietzsche and Heidegger, is thus related to the essential nature of Being- it is fundamental to the Being of being. Ultimately, "the nature of revenge as will, and as revulsion against the passing away, is conceived in the light of will as primal being- the will which wills itself eternally as the eternal recurrence of the same" (WT, 107).

V. Significance of Ricoeur's work in relation to Heidegger and Nietzsche

Ricoeur suggests that "faith ... represents the limit of any hermeneutic because it is the origin of interpretation" ("NG", 218). Ricoeur's dual commitment to being a Christian listener, preserves the ontological investigations of Heidegger, belonging-to, while criticising a strictly positivist notion of truth. He writes, although changing his metaphor of hearing to that of seeing,

"If we have become blind to these modalities of **rootedness** and **belonging-to** that precede the relation of a subject to objects, it is because we have, in an uncritical way, ratified a certain concept of truth, defined by adequation to real objects and submitted to a criterion of empirical verification and falsification" ("NG", 222).

Ricoeur's hermeneutic maintains with Heidegger that the "phenomenology of Dasein is a **hermeneutic** in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting"¹⁹⁹. The hermeneutic thus evades the problem of positivist excesses.

For Ricoeur, "**[l]istening excludes founding oneself** ... It requires giving up the human self in its will to

¹⁹⁹ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time: A Translation of **Sein und Zeit**, [translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson], (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962), 62.

mastery, sufficiency, and autonomy" ("NG", 224). Listening returns the participant to the hermeneutic circle.

Ricoeur's notion of the Christian listener requires that the subject does not impose his/her **will**, consciously, upon the text. Rather, the unfolding of the world of the text is essential for the text to speak, initially, or anew (in the case of the biblical texts). This relationship between text and reader requires that the listener **think** in the sense Heidegger outlines and thus allows this person to begin to make the transition from human to overman. For Ricoeur, the notion of the **will** imposing a structure upon the text before the text can speak is a version of Nietzsche's notion of **revenge** as the primal instinct which must be overcome for the transition to the overman. Ricoeur understands the second naiveté (the willing suspension of disbelief) to facilitate this transition towards an opening of the self before the world unfolded by the text which ultimately engages and challenges the reader's worldview. It is this engagement with the text which allows the reader to formulate a "narrative identity" which in turn informs the self as to personal identity.

Ricoeur's philosophical journey is one fraught with investigation. He began his philosophical investigations attempting to construct a "philosophy of the will". He came

to realise through this work that he had a specific problem: that of language. He understood that a direct reflection on oneself (hence the title given to his work "reflexive" philosophy) was not possible and self-understanding could only be mediated through symbols. He attempted to formulate a "hermeneutic of symbols" and realised that language cannot be deconstructed as such. Rather than symbolic language being the problem, it was language itself which was the genesis of the problem. He then discarded the primacy of the subject's ability to reflect upon itself based on his linguistic investigations (distanciation, semantic innovation and a revised notion of "truth" as manifestation), which culminates in Time and Narrative.

The first chapter has attempted to follow Ricoeur's theory of reference which has its foundations in his structuralist investigations onwards. In this chapter, I have attempted to tie his linguistic work into his work on biblical texts and finished the discussion with an early lecture on religion. In this lecture, his hermeneutical dependence on German philosophy comes to bear upon his notion of "truth", so that even biblical texts have a "non-theological" truthfulness. This, I suggested, is due to his "obsession with legitimacy" within the sphere of philosophy. I will now turn to an analysis of how Ricoeur relates emplotment to the discerning of identity, what he calls

"narrative identity" to "personal identity".

VI. Personal Identity derives from Narrative Identity

Paul Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity derives from his earliest work on identity from a phenomenological standpoint. His early work on Husserl, Marcel and Jaspers led him to the position that one's identity is not posited by one's own self but is rather mediated through a complex network of signs and symbols found in one's culture. This led Ricoeur to an analysis of these symbols in the first two parts of his "Philosophy of the Will". Due to the need to interpret these symbols, Ricoeur soon came to focus his attention on the problems of language and writing making strong inroads into hermeneutical theory. A large cross-section of his work deals specifically with literary theory and its impact on the hermeneutical endeavour. It is absolutely necessary to understand the impact of Ricoeur's previous work on the investigations found in his more recent work.

The most recent work of Ricoeur focuses on a more narrativised approach to personal identity. This approach derives from his position of mediated selfhood aided by a hermeneutic focusing on texts which are "culturally significant". One's identity for Ricoeur is a combination of

ipse-identity and **idem**-identity²⁰⁰, the two poles between which the self moves. **Idem**-identity is that which is unchanging, what he calls a 'transcendental'. **Iipse**-identity is that which is relative, what he calls the 'modalities of selfhood'. Ricoeur's main premise in his 1986 work, Oneself As Another, is that 'it is within the framework of narrative theory that the concrete dialectic of selfhood and sameness ... attains its fullest development" (QAA, 114). This thesis derives from his analysis of the shortcomings of literary theorists who tend to consider the agent within the narrative impersonally. For Ricoeur, the key to narrative identity lies between characterisation and self-maintenance (his terminology).

Within characterisation, **ipse**- and **idem**-identity coincide. Character is described as the "set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of a human individual asking the same" (QAA, 119). It is within the interweaving of time and narrative (what he calls *emplotment*) that a character is recognised through his/her habits (the history of the character) and their acquired identifications (those which contribute to the recognition of the character as a unity).

²⁰⁰ These two Latin terms are employed by Ricoeur to differentiate between selfhood (**ipse**-identity) and sameness (**idem**-identity) (QAA, 3).

It is within this framework of temporal narrative that the identity of a character is discerned. It is the emplotment of the character and the ability to follow this movement which yields the identity of the character and in turn, mediates partial identity (the "narrative identity") to the reader. Ricoeur states that the "structure of narrativity demonstrates that it is by trying to put order on our past, by retelling and recounting what has been, that we acquire an identity"²⁰¹. I have previously looked at Ricoeur's analysis of emplotment which is the conceptual basis of narrative identity.

In the fifth and sixth studies which constitute Oneself As Another, Ricoeur elaborates his notion of identity which is derived from a narrative conception of the self. The fifth study, "Personal Identity and Narrative Identity" is defensive in nature whilst the sixth study, "Self and Narrative Identity" is more constructive in tone. My analysis of his construction of a theory of identity will include these studies with additional studies which were included as Gifford Lectures but were left out intentionally by Ricoeur²⁰².

²⁰¹ "The Creativity of Language" in Richard Kearney, Dialogues with contemporary Continental thinkers (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 21.

²⁰² The two essays are included in Figuring the Sacred and are entitled "Pastoral Praxeology, Hermeneutics, and Identity" (303-314) and "The Summoned Subject in the School of the Narratives of the Prophetic Vocation" (262-275)- (Cited hereafter as "PP" and "SS" respectively). The later essay is not the original study given as one of the Giffords

Ricoeur combines an approach taken by "analytic" philosophies of action and his phenomenological and hermeneutical studies into a theory of action which he believes will not only expand the area of study but will engender a more fruitful analysis. Indeed, "... the referent of narrative discourse is obvious- the order of human action" ("CL", 23). His main premise is that "it is within the framework of narrative theory that the concrete dialectic of selfhood and sameness ... attains its fullest development" (QAA, 114). This is because narrative theory considers the agent and not "action" impersonally, a major shortcoming of "analytic" theories of action²⁰³. Narrative theory occupies this transitional position between description and prescription. He understands narrative as occupying a mediating position because after describing and narrating, prescription is a necessary final step because there is no "ethically neutral narrative" (QAA, 115). Moreover, he maintains that "narrative, which is never ethically neutral, proves to be the first **laboratory of moral judgement**" (QAA, 140)²⁰⁴. It is problematic when the move to

but is attested to as containing much of the same material. As to the reasoning for leaving these two studies out of Oneself As Another, see above section.

²⁰³ See studies 2-4 for Ricoeur interaction with and analysis of "analytic" theories of action.

²⁰⁴ This strong position about the necessity of making ethical judgments both through and about narratives is curious because the **prescriptive** aspect of narrativity is borne out in the two Gifford lectures intentionally left out of Oneself As Another. They are both practically

prescription is ignored or dismissed as irrelevant²⁰⁵.

Ricoeur traces the inception of this problem by an analysis of the problems currently confronting hermeneutics. Two tendencies within contemporary hermeneutics lead to the confusion over prescription. The first tendency is to view hermeneutics as discourse about discourse. Hermeneutics, within this view, is second-order reflection about the conditions present in the use of language. It is mainly a descriptive, though investigative (especially when practised as deconstruction) enterprise. Ricoeur argues that if this is the function of hermeneutics, then the discipline "would become redundant" ("PP", 304). Secondly, the tendency to speak of a "hermeneutic of ..." betrays a methodology which tends to neglect the necessarily applicative aspect of the hermeneutical endeavour. Ricoeur maintains that "understanding and explication without application are not interpretation ... [and] application is not some supplement to hermeneutics" (OAA, 304)²⁰⁶. For Ricoeur, hermeneutics

oriented and focused.

²⁰⁵ This move parallels his notion of appropriation within the hermeneutic circle. It is not enough for the reader to investigate the world of the text without making some commitment to the text's disclosure, either pro or con. I discuss Ricoeur's notion of "critical appropriation" in chapter III/2.

²⁰⁶ It may seem odd for Ricoeur to argue against a specific approach taken by a hermeneutician for he is known for espousing a "hermeneutic of suspicion". However, this is only one half of his approach to hermeneutics because the complementary aspect, namely a "hermeneutic of restoration", is equally necessary for Ricoeur's entire hermeneutic. I suggest that the tendency of Ricoeur to emphasise the former has led to a one-sided interpretation of his hermeneutics. Furthermore, the charge

cannot simply be discourse about other forms of discourse which would determine it as a mainly descriptive enterprise. Hermeneutics, as with narratives, can not be ethically neutral; it must suggest ways of thinking in accordance with an uncovering of Being.

The conceptual basis for Ricoeur's insistence on the ethical dimension of narration can be analysed as such. All discourse is action (taken from speech-act theory) and human action can be a speaking action (taken from action-theory). He writes, "practice is discursive [yet is] always articulated by norms, symbols, signs, not to speak of the unsaid (prejudices)" ("PP", 305). Christian hermeneutics is an "attempt to unfold the potential for irradiation" ("PP", 305) of events central to the Judeo-Christian faith. The "privileged objects of interpretation are texts, events, institutions, and personages" ("PP", 306) in this quest for irradiation²⁰⁷. From a theological standpoint, the "... self is constituted and defined by its position as respondent to propositions of meaning issuing from the symbolic network ... in the Jewish and Christian tradition" ("SS", 262). For

of being a crypto-theologian, has prompted Ricoeur to leave out those studies in Oneself As Another which deal with the applicative and restorative aspects of his investigations, thus lending to this one-sided interpretation.

²⁰⁷ Whilst most of Ricoeur's work focusses on textual analysis, it is important to note that for him, texts are only one link in a chain of communication; one type of various semiotic systems which influence humans beings.

Ricoeur, this constitution of the self by means other than the **self** is in opposition to the "self that absolutely names itself" ("SS", 262). This difference is important for it recognises the influence of factors external to the self in the acquisition of identity. Effectively, selfhood understood this way, dispossesses the complete autonomy of the will to conceive of itself and requires the person to recognise the influence of a complex network of semiotic systems in understanding one's identity. As a Christian, Ricoeur privileges the formation of identity through the symbolic network of the biblical writings. He writes, this self "responds precisely to that symbolic ensemble delimited by the biblical canon" which is informed by one of the "historical traditions" called the church ("SS", 263). Furthermore, faith is "**instructed**- in the sacred sense of being formed, clarified, and educated- within the network of texts that in each instance preaching brings back to living speech" ("NG", 218). Faith, for Ricoeur is active, it is that response of the self when confronted by the texts the self chooses to appropriate and understand itself in continuity with. I will now turn to unfolding the process by which Ricoeur understands this to happen.

Via. How Texts Interpret Us

Recognising the establishment and the shaping of

selfhood through semiotic systems which we may or may not be conscious of and that these systems are not ethically neutral, requires the individual to assess his/her relationship to those symbolic networks around him/her. Ricoeur suggests that for the Christian the biblical texts ought to be privileged for the formation of identity. He establishes this as a practice in continuity with Judeo-Christian tradition. In the case of the prophetic narratives, the structure of the call of the prophet narrates a situation in which the "prophetic ego is so radically decentered that it is at first uprooted from its initial setting" ("SS", 265). This re-identification of the prophet concludes as the prophet is assured by God and the process of being made part of the tradition of the community.

Ricoeur notes that this "tradition" (which can be readily analysed by a structural analysis of the prophetic narratives) is followed through to the practice of the early church. There is the Pauline metaphor of "the Christian self as christomorphic" ("SS", 268). This notion of the Christian becoming more like Christ is part of a "chain of descending glory ... God's glory, that of Christ, that of the Christian" ("SS", 268). Ricoeur maintains that an understanding of the Christian self which follows this way of thinking is well established traditionally in Judeo-Christian practice and attested to by its writings.

The "conscience"²⁰⁸ aids in the application of this tradition to the self. He writes, "it is to the dialogue of the self with itself that the response of the prophetic and the christomorphic self is grafted" ("SS", 271). This discernment of the conscience is an interpretive act, for

"the autonomy of the Kantian conscience is tempered by the confession of nonmastery over oneself ... [and the] kerygma may be reinterpreted in such a way that its transcendence is symmetrically tempered by the process of ongoing interpretation of the symbolic space opened and delimited by the biblical canon" ("SS", 272-273).

This act is never fully completed for the "'synthesis' is not given and never attained between the verdict of conscience and the christomorphism of faith. Any synthesis remains a risk, a 'lovely risk' (Plato)" ("SS", 275). This position reflects Ricoeur's notion of appropriation in which there is the "wager" of faith.

VII. The conceptual foundations for discerning identity

Ricoeur maintains that it is the idealism inherited from Kant which depersonalised the subject and thus brought the problem of selfhood into focus. He writes, "the problematic of the self emerges magnified, in a sense, but at the price

²⁰⁸ The **conscience** for Ricoeur is established within a dialectic of care (from Heidegger) and testimony (over and against accusation) ("SS", 269-271).

of the loss of its relation to the person who speaks, to the I-you of interlocution, to the identity of a historical person, to the self of responsibility" (QAA, 11). For Ricoeur, personal identity is best posited within a dialectic of selfhood and sameness (ipse- and idem-identity). Indeed, "Oneself As Another suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other [as we might say in Hegelian terms]" (QAA, 3). Thus, the identity of the person is not immediately posited (as Ricoeur suggests is philosophy's inheritance from Descartes' Meditations) but Ricoeur favours a mediated positing of the self²⁰⁹.

Ricoeur argues that whilst idem-identity is necessary for similarity and continuity amongst persons, ipse-identity is necessary for the positing of the self as permanent (not merely Hume's shifting 'bundle of perceptions'). It is the emplotment of the character which establishes the framework necessary for the followability on the part of the reader for "[t]here is thus not just an emplotment of actions; there is also an emplotment of characters" ("PP", 209). Furthermore, the "thesis supported here will be that the identity of the

²⁰⁹ Hume's queries about the attribution of characteristics to a singular person stand out as an emphasis on the side of ipse-identity, especially in The Treatise on Human Nature. Ricoeur sketches this one-sidedness in Locke and Hume (QAA, 125-129).

character is comprehensible through the transfer to the character of the operation of emplotment, first applied to the action recounted; **characters, we will say, are themselves plots**" (QAA, 143: emphasis mine). It is the "interconnection of events constituted by emplotment [which] allows us to integrate with permanence in time ... diversity, variability, discontinuity, and instability" (QAA, 140).

Ricoeur suggests that Dilthey's concept of **Zusammenhang des Lebens** (the connectedness of a life; a life-history) gives the historical basis for a narrative understanding of a life. He writes, "[i]t is this preunderstanding of the historical significance of connection that the narrative theory of personal identity attempts to articulate, at a higher level of conceptuality" (QAA, 141). A narrative identity is dependent upon this 'connectedness' which he calls a "narrative unity of a life²¹⁰" ("PP", 308). As with emplotment, "the character preserves throughout the story and identity correlative to that of the story itself" (QAA, 143). This connection is tentatively supplied by the reader in the phenomenon Ricoeur calls 'followability'; the active part of the reader in creating the plot. This phenomenon occurs firstly by "superimposing **in some way** a configuration with a beginning, a middle, and an end" ("PP",

²¹⁰ His reasoning depends on the apparent obviousness of this claim: "Do not the identity of an actor and the objects/subjects of his or her intervention consist in such an unity?" ("PP", 308).

309: emphasis mine). He notes that this configuration is always conditional and thus open to revision or refiguration. There is continual movement between configuration and refiguration. It is the imagination which allows such "structuring and destructuring" ("PP", 311). However, Ricoeur is silent about 'restructuring'. It is the imagination when confronted with the potential of the world unfolded by the text that prompts this move to restructuring the identity. He writes, the "mediating function performed by the narrative identity of the character between the poles of sameness and selfhood is attested to primarily by the **imaginative variations** to which the narrative submits [one's] identity" (QAA, 148).

However, as with Gadamer's fusion of horizons, the creation of plot is not fully the work of the reader. He writes, the "narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity" (QAA, 147-148). Furthermore, the emplotment of action and character has a defined beginning, middle and end which serves to delimit the potential range of interpretation on the part of the reader. Indeed, the "correlation **between** action and character in a narrative [leads to a] dialectic **internal** to the character which is the exact corollary of the dialectic of concordance and discordance developed by the emplotment of action" (QAA, 147).

IX. The possibility of a "Narrative Theology"

Ricoeur believes that there are gains to be made in pursuing a theology based on narrative. His essay on narrative theology states at the outset²¹¹ that although he is concerned with the difficulties of a narrative theology, he would not exert such effort if he did not believe that a narrative grounding of theology was "sound". A narrative theology is fundamentally "better" than a speculative theology (which rids discourse of reference to stories), a moral theology (which is atemporal²¹²), and an existential theology (which rids theology of a historical basis and ultimately focuses too much on the individual). The contemporary need for a narrative theology comes from the loss of tradition and authority inherited from the Enlightenment quest coupled with technological advances allowing the human will (to power) to control and manipulate the environment. This creates a situation of "an increase of **forgetfulness**, especially that of the past sufferings of human kind [which leads] to a loss of storytelling" ("TNT", 238). The conceptual basis of a narrative theology finds its basis in the elements of narratology; emplotment, narrative

²¹¹ "Toward a Narrative Theology: Its Necessity, Its Resources, Its Difficulties" in Figuring the Sacred.

²¹² Ricoeur understands atemporality to be a major weakness of structuralism (see chapter I/2).

intelligibility²¹³, tradition which vacillates dialectically between sedimentation and innovation, and the focus on "meaning". Furthermore, the "biblical narratives **intensify** ... they constitute the identify (sic) of the community that tells and retells the story, and they constitute it as a narrative identity" ("TNT", 241).

However, the disciplines of narratology and theology are not **prima facie** compatible. The relationship between biblical narratives and the status of narratives in general (narratology) is tenuous because biblical narratives exemplify different traits to most narratives²¹⁴. Ultimately, the gains of a narrative theology are not based exclusively on **narrative** but work in conjunction with the other modes of discourse found in biblical texts. Frei was sceptical of Ricoeur's "general hermeneutics" ("Literal Reading...", 47) yet hesitates in a letter to Gary Comstock: "You may even disagree with my assessment that Ricoeur turns biblical hermeneutics into a regional case of general hermeneutics. Well, I'm afraid I'd argue the case vigorously, despite the essay on Revelation ["Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation"] with its (to my mind inconsistent)

²¹³ "Narrative intelligibility shows more kinship with practical wisdom or moral judgement than with theoretical reason" ("TNT", 239). The emphasis on **phronesis** over **theoria** is the basis for Ricoeur's notion of the followability of narrative.

²¹⁴ For the various problems plaguing any construal of a narrative theology see the appendix "Problem of Narrativity in general".

qualifications"²¹⁵.

X. Frei's critique of Ricoeur's hermeneutic

Ricoeur's "general hermeneutic" as applied to Christian theology causes three inter-related problems for Frei. Firstly, the loss of the singularity of Jesus Christ. Secondly, the flow from text to world is reversed. Instead of theology moving from the specificity of the narrativised "Jesus" to speaking about the person Jesus, there is rather a move from a general human condition (a "way-of-being-in-the-world") to speaking about Jesus. It is a form of allegorising which Frei understands to betray the Christian church's way of the primacy of the **sensus literalis**. Finally, and ultimately, the viability of Ricoeur's general theory ("within which biblical narrative becomes a 'regional' instance of the universally valid pattern of interpretation" ("LR", 125)) is under question because of deconstruction. I wish to deal with an exposition of these issues one at a time.

Loss of the singularity of Jesus Christ

Frei maintains that Ricoeur's theory reduces 'Jesus' to

²¹⁵ Hans Frei Papers, Manuscript Group No.76 (12), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

an "... ascriptive subject chiefly in the form of consciousness, that is, of his selfhood as 'understanding'" ("LR", 126). Frei argues that Ricoeur must do this because it is "...consistent with, if not indispensable to, the hermeneutical scheme of 'meaning-and-understanding'" ("LR", 126). Within this scheme, Jesus becomes "... the verbal expressor of a certain preconceptual consciousness which he then, in a logically derivative or secondary sense, exhibits in action" ("LR", 126). Frei maintains that within Ricoeur's idea of narrative identity, "Like anyone else, Jesus is here not in the first place the agent of his actions nor the enacted project(s) that constitute(s) him, nor the person to whom the actions of others happen..." ("LR", 126)²¹⁶.

The primacy of anthropology

Frei suggests that within Ricoeur's hermeneutical scheme, "[w]hat narratives present (whether or not 'literally') is not in the first place ascriptive selves that are the subjects of their predicates, not even really the self-expressive, centered consciousness or transcendental ego, but the 'mode-of-being-in-the-world' which these selves exemplify and which is 're-presented' by being disclosed to 'understanding'" ("LR", 127). Thus, "'[h]uman reality in its

²¹⁶ This claim does not ring true of Ricoeur in Oneself as Another and the essay "Interpretive Narrative".

wholeness' will in one way or another be the subject matter instead each time, though perhaps a bit more obliquely and allegorically in the case of the narrated ascriptive subject called 'Jesus', and more metaphorically and directly evocatively in the case of the parables and the experience they express" ("LR", 128). Within Ricoeur's system, Frei contends that the "... virtual running into each other of 'meaning' and 'truth' ... tends to force realistic description to become metaphor, so that its 'meaning' qua possible ontological truth can be a transcendent, secondary world which is obviously not realistic" (LComstock, 3). "If true being is in the unity of metaphorical language, limit experience, and meaning, just how do you recapture the world of sense and things? Just what is that secondary world which is referred to by the other part of the 'split' reference, the part that does not refer realistically?" (LComstock, 3)²¹⁷.

Whilst this accusation is founded when addressing the "disclosure" of parables in Ricoeur's thought, is this charge sustainable when Ricoeur speaks about "Jesus"? Does Ricoeur lose the "singularity" of Jesus or does Tracy push Ricoeur's thought towards this? Certainly Tracy substitutes qualities

²¹⁷ See Soskice Metaphor and Religious Language (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1985) and Wolterstorff Divine Discourse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) for the same critique.

of love, etc. for "Jesus" but does Ricoeur?²¹⁸

The problem as Frei sees it, is one of credibility.
There is a

"desire on the one hand to claim the unsurpassability of the New Testament's ascriptive reference to Jesus, so that they do not become esoteric or carnal shadows, in principle surpassable by a later and fuller spiritual 'reference' or 'disclosure', but on the other to deny that this unsurpassability involves the invidious distinction between insiders and outsiders to the truth" ("LR", 129-130).

Buying into this programme to have it "both ways" requires a method of arguing which looks like this: "they try to maintain that Jesus is the irreducible ascriptive subject of the New Testament narratives, while at the same time they make general religious experience (or something like it) the 'referent' of these stories. It is an uneasy alliance of conflicting hermeneutical aims" ("LR" 130).

Ricoeur's "general hermeneutic"

Frei's analysis of Ricoeur's "general hermeneutic" concludes: "...no matter how adequate or inadequate the theory turns out to be in actual exegetical application, the very possibility of reading those narratives under its

²¹⁸ See David Tracy Blessed Rage for Order, 221.

auspices has to stand or fall with the theory's own viability in the first place" ("LR". 130) Thus,

"[i]f the general theory of hermeneutics is to stand, it must persuade us that its appeal to a second naiveté and to a hermeneutics of restoration constitutes a genuine option between reading with a first naiveté on the one hand and on the other reading with that 'suspicion' which regards the linguistic 'world', which text and reader may share, as a mere ideological or psychological superstructure reducible to real or true infrastructures, which must be critically or scientifically adduced" ("LR", 130-131).

Frei maintains that Ricoeur's way of fusing the horizons of text and the reader is to appeal to the text's ability to "disclose". It renders the text "normative, in fact it transcends present understanding **ontologically**, but only in such a way that it is in principle **hermeneutically** focused toward the latter. Textual 'disclosure' means that the language of the text 'refers', but refers strictly in the mode of presentness ... [and] refers creatively without creating what it refers to" ("LR", 132). Yet, it is precisely this notion of "presence" to the consciousness (Ricoeur's 'understanding') which deconstruction attacks: "the 'worlds' that are supposedly 'disclosed' actually have the subversive, deconstructing nonreferentiality of pure metaphoricity built into them" ("LR", 135). Indeed deconstruction argues that "the general bearing of hermeneutical theory is one for which 'understanding' as self-presence is the indispensable and irreducible

counterpart to textual 'meaning' as linguistic presence, and vice versa" ("LR", 135). This is why deconstruction argues for the priority of speech over writing because within a theory of text understood as discourse (Ricoeur recognises this in IT, 25-26), it is simply the presence of the speaker (in his/her absence) which is exchanged for the self-presence of understanding. So, deconstruction argues, in Ricoeur's theory "[w]hat is already written is not a present event, as understanding what is written is; it must be raised to the level of present communicative event, and thereby the textuality of the text is reconverted (in obverse form) into speech" ("LR", 135; also Derrida, Speech and Phenomena).

Frei's admonishment is

"To realize the deconstructive susceptibility of this self-enclosed, presence/self-presence, scheme is, Deconstructionists tell us, to learn with metaphorical force (or, to an outsider to the whole argument, exaggeration) the drastic difference between speech and writing, and indeed- in contrast to the absolute connection between speech as linguistic origin and the mode of self-presence in hermeneutical theory- of the independent **priority** of writing over speech" ("LR", 135-136).

Thus Frei recognises the

"threat to hermeneutical theory is that **either** 'second naiveté' is no concept but simply a misleading term, and restorative hermeneutics explains or justifies no way of reading, **or** that if one is to hold out for anything like it, one had better invent a more adequate theory to support the claim ... [or] one may want to claim that a notion

similar to 'second naiveté (though not necessarily isomorphic with it) is indeed meaningful, but not because it is part of, or justified by, any general theory' ("LR", 137).

The question is then raised, "does Ricoeur advocate a general hermeneutical theory?" It would seem that he does not because he reads the biblical material within genre distinctions, thus negating any "singular" way of reading. This is misleading, however, for Frei's contention is not that Ricoeur doesn't recognise genre distinctions but that all literature (which for Ricoeur **necessarily**) has a poetic function and this function is to disclose authentic human being. Frei understands that this "revision" of the New Testament language is "... little more than a literary code for a full-orbed Idealistic-ontological use of 'truth', and its residual realistic element is reduced to some kind of 'powerful (poetic) presence'" (LComstock, 4²¹⁹). Ultimately, this "... kind of straightforward philosophical revision of New Testament claims is simply not open to me; the mode of New Testament truth claiming has to be more complex for me, i.e., more complex at the second-order philosophical-theological level, not in the first-order religious confession" (LComstock, 3).

Frei's unease with Ricoeur's hermeneutics can be viewed

²¹⁹ Though referring to Comstock, this critique would be equally valid of Ricoeur.

as his reaction to a form of an apologetic enterprise²²⁰: This reinterpretation of Christian theology allows it to become a "quasi-philosophy of religion with a regional hermeneutics under general philosophical-hermeneutical governance" (LComstock, 2). Frei maintains "I'm afraid I'd argue the case vigorously, despite the essay on Revelation [Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation] with its (to my mind inconsistent) qualifications" (LComstock, 1). Vanhoozer's assessment of Ricoeur is less definite. He contends that for Ricoeur, "theological hermeneutics is therefore a particular case of a general hermeneutic and at the same time a unique case" (BN, 155). I think that Vanhoozer's assessment of Ricoeur's position is more accurate than Frei's, **especially** because of (not despite) the essay on "Revelation".

XI. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, Ricoeur posits that personal identity derives from a narrative identity, discovered within the matrix of the followability of the plot (and characters are plots). A narrative theology is possible because the biblical narratives differ from other narratives based on

²²⁰ Vanhoozer contends that "... though Ricoeur disavows any apologetic ambitions, his whole project of approximating philosophy to theology may be seen as a large-scale apologetic effort to show the intelligibility of the Christian faith" (BN, 152).

their subject matter and their ability to disclose a way-of-being-in-the-world. Ricoeur calls this "revelation as manifestation"²²¹. To allow oneself to be challenged by the text, Ricoeur employs both Heidegger ("thinking") and Nietzsche (the "overman") to substantiate his claim of Christian listening as the non-imposition of frameworks. This allows the self to be open to the other and to allow the mediation of a narrativised identity.

²²¹ I refer the reader to the section of the thesis "Ricoeur and Structuralism: A revised notion of 'Truth'?".

Chapter Three:
Critique of Methodology

III/1 "Frei and Christian self-description: The possibility of an external critique?"

III/2 "Ricoeur and external critiques: A new definition of the force of ideology?"

III/1. "Frei and Christian self-description: The possibility of an external critique?": An exposition (for the first time) of Frei's notion of theological construal. Frei understands religion as a language game and uses Auerbach ("realistic narrative") and Geertz ("thick description") for an exposition of the descriptive aspect. He rejects philosophical description in theological investigation because of its importation of external criteria, the phenomenological analysis of Ricoeur, and the fideistic stance of D.Z. Phillips.

In Types, Frei favours a dual approach between Schleiermacher (correlation between analysis and self-description) and Barth (internal description and dogmatics). The analysis concludes that Frei's position is similar to Lindbeck's and that his approach is an attempt to mediate a dual approach within theological investigation.

I. Introduction

David Ford, in a recent article, states that Hans Frei "may well be the most significant figure in North American theology and religious studies during the last quarter of this century"²²². Ford recognises Frei's significance to be manifested in several ways; I wish to focus on one of those which he selects. Frei's career was consumed by matters of methodological clarification and historical enquiry into the roots of why such clarification was needed²²³. He was involved in "second-order" theological exploration (descriptive) rather than that of the "first-order" (constructive). However, Frei, unlike Ricoeur, did not

²²² David Ford, "On Being Theologically Hospitable To Jesus Christ: Hans Frei's Achievement", Journal of Theological Studies (NS, Vol.46, Pt.2, October 1995), 532.

²²³ David Ford, 533.

always publish his thoughts on and/or interactions with disciplines outside of theology. It has been surmised by some that this is due to his focus on the meaning of biblical narrative rather than its truthfulness²²⁴. In light of the newer posthumous publications, much of this dialogue concerning this relationship is becoming clearer. In this chapter, I wish to explore the relationship between an intensive focus on Christian self-description and the possibility of this way of construing theology engaging with that of an external critique. My contention is that Christian self-description is not immune to external critique and I wish to explore the ways in which the force of such a critique could be understood.

It is important, at the outset, to note that Frei understood his work to be descriptive rather than a positive unfolding within theology. In the "Proposal for a Project"²²⁵, he states "[t]his is a piece of conceptual analysis- that is, in principle an exercise chiefly **about** rather than **in** theology, although in practice the distinction will not always be clear" (Types, 1). The latter clause is telling, for Frei also maintained that The Eclipse of

²²⁴ As does Gary Comstock, "Truth or Meaning: Ricoeur versus Frei on Biblical Narrative", The Journal of Religion (1986), 116-140. I will discuss Comstock's article and Frei's response to it later in the chapter.

²²⁵ In Hans W. Frei, Types of Christian Theology (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

Biblical Narrative was merely, as its subtitle indicated, "A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics". However, it is clear that Frei was not simply interested in description but also he was equally interested in prescribing a cure for that very eclipse of narrative within theology, which he so successfully describes. The title suggests nothing less. Once again he writes:

"Part of what I want to suggest is that the hermeneutical option espied but not really examined and thus cast aside in the 18th and early 19th centuries was that many biblical narratives, especially the synoptic gospels, may belong to [the type] for which their narrative rendering, in effect a cumulative account of the theme, is indispensable"²²⁶.

His caveat concerning typologies is equally revealing; "... the really important thing is to know that even such distinctions are not **prescriptive**, that their sometimes quite natural violation in practice says nearly as much about them as the distinctions say themselves" (Types, 21). I suggest that whilst Frei wishes his work to be understood as "second-order" reflection within theology, it often slips over into "first-order" theological statements²²⁷. This recognition is necessary not only to expand Frei's importance

²²⁶ The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 13.

²²⁷ Frei understands "first-order" theology to be involved in "'witness' and 'confession' of 'specific beliefs' that seem on the face of it to be talking about acknowledging a state of affairs that holds true whether one believes it or not" (Types, 20-21).

(by extension from Ford's comments) but to evaluate his hermeneutic in light of recent challenges.

Frei's work on biblical narrative is mainly an exploration of how contemporary problems within current theological exploration arose. Because of this focus, he spends little time on "positive" theological construction. However, Frei was not wary of aligning himself with particular theologians and their ways of construing theology. In particular, Frei 'agrees' with (and sometimes 'expands') the work of Karl Barth, H. Richard Niebuhr, and Austin Farrer. His sublated 'constructive' thought, in many areas, lies in agreement with two other theologians, George Lindbeck²²⁸ and David Kelsey. In the recently published Theology and Narrative and Types of Christian Theology, one gets a glimpse of how Frei would have gone about construing theology founded upon his prior work in the Eclipse and the Identity. The importance of this material lay in this glimpse into what a constructive theological proposal might look like; the work within Types on Christian self-description is how Frei envisaged construing theology²²⁹.

²²⁸ Lindbeck states in the "Forward" to The Nature of Doctrine: "I owe more than I can tell to [Hans Frei's] ... encouragement and to his thought" (12-13). Placher suggest that within Lindbeck's book, "Frei was a much more important influence in its development than the relatively sparse references to him might suggest" (T&N, fn.1, 20-21).

²²⁹ I will argue below that Frei's "Christian self-description" is not dissimilar to Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic model". In fact, he is said to have taken a "cultural-linguistic" turn in his later writings.

I now turn to an analysis of this material, focusing on its roots and engagement with Barth's theology, Geertz's sociological analysis and his continued use of Auerbach. I will then analyse how Frei's construal of "Christian self-description" could engage with "first-order" theological construals (particularly Carl Henry's) and external critiques applied or lodged against such a construal, including those of Gary Comstock and Michael Goldberg. I maintain that the force of external critiques is of decisive importance for a theology focusing on narrative.

Firstly, the concerns of the "first-order" theologian, Carl Henry, will be addressed. Frei engages Henry's theology in the "Trinity Journal"²³⁰ and also discusses him within Types. Henry challenges Frei on the truth-status of theological statements. He contends that theological statements are not merely assertions, but are "true" regardless of who is making them. For Frei, the problem with Henry's formulation is that "he adduces a set of **a priori** criteria of accuracy and appropriateness, of meaning, meaningfulness, and truth,- all of them explicitly

"What is clear is that a 'cultural-linguistic' turn, under the influence of George Lindbeck, has been effected in Frei's thought" (George Hunsinger, "Afterword" in Theology and Narrative, 259).

²³⁰ This issue of the "Trinity Journal" (Spring 1987) has one Carl Henry's lectures that he gave at Yale Divinity School in 1985. Following the lectures is a "Response to "Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal" in which Frei addresses Henry's lecture of the same title.

philosophical and independent of application" (Types, 24). Frei wishes the "rules" of Christian theology to be governed internally, that is, no privileged status ought to be given to philosophy or any theoretical discipline. Frei understands second-order theological discussion to be involved in issues such as "the logic, or grammar, of the faith, which may well have bearing on the first-order statements, an endeavour to bring out the rules implicit in first order statements" (Types, 21). Following Schleiermacher's method, Frei advocates theology as "critical or normed self-description" (Types, 21). Thus, Henry's construal is wrong-headed in that it looks outside of theology for a standard by which to measure rather than using philosophy as a "tool" and not the "yardstick". Frei is opposed to the privileging of philosophy within the "doing" of theology.

Secondly, Ricoeur's hermeneutic (a "hermeneutic of suspicion") attempts to discern ideology within the text, especially within a hermeneutic which maintains that a narrative conveys what it "means". Not to do so would be blind and thus decisively harmful to the proposed hermeneutic. If this is the case, then this would be a valid critique of Frei's hermeneutic. Frei often refers to his hermeneutic using the phrase, "the text means what it

says"²³¹. This is radically different from a hermeneutic which maintains that the "author said more than what he or she was trying to say". A hermeneutic employing suspicion, such as Ricoeur's or in a more drastic form "ideology-critique", would abhor such a claim. Often a text means more than it says and, indeed, it is proposed that what the text **does not** say is more important than what it does say.

A further crucial distinction to construing theology in a self-descriptive way is that the investigation can take either a phenomenological or a social-scientific route. Frei advocates the latter whilst arguing against the former. It is at the juncture where the hermeneutics of Frei and Ricoeur follow separate paths²³². I now turn to an exposition of Frei's approach to "Christian self-description".

Ia. Christian self-description aided by the Social Sciences

Frei relies on the work of the social sciences, specifically the work of Clifford Geertz, in his analysis of the ways theologians have construed theology²³³. He argues

²³¹ "Response" in Theology and Narrative, 208.

²³² I will take this issue up in the concluding chapter after I have unfolded Frei's position in relation to first-order theological statements and a "hermeneutic of suspicion".

²³³ Types of Christian Theology is a an analysis which positions theologians on a scale in relation to how they understand theology to be

that "Christianity is a religion, a social organism. [Thus], its self-description marks it typically as a religion in a way similar to those descriptions given by sociologists of religion or cultural anthropologists" (Types, 22). Theology undertaken within this rubric argues that its self-description is likewise more distant from its traditional partner, philosophy. This is because "the grammar [of the faith] (use according to rules of such a construct) is more readily exhibited or set forth than stated in the abstract" ("Remarks", 33). He, therefore, advocates philosophical investigation into one's hermeneutic more akin to that of Wittgenstein rather than that of "the Idealist tradition"²³⁴. Herein lies the substance of the ever-increasing divergence of his hermeneutic from Ricoeur's.

construed. Frei discerns five types:

Type 1 "substitutes a general meaning for the specific ascriptive subject Jesus...",

Type 2 substitutes meaning [as in Type 1] while attempting to maintain the specificity of Jesus,

Type 3 is the correlationist enterprise engaging the Jesus of History with the Christ of Faith,

Type 4 "asserts the unity of the Christological subject at the hermeneutical level but cannot specify the mode or manner in which Christological statements are 'historical', while nonetheless asserting that they are",

Type 5 reiterates scripture while proposing that understanding the meaning of scripture involves correct usage of them, (Types, 5-6).

²³⁴ "In regard to understanding, (remember: for this particular exegetical task!) I find myself influenced increasingly by Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin rather than by the Idealistic tradition that has dominated the field for so long, whether in its pure form (e.g., in Dilthey), in existentialist form, in a more historical form like that of Pannenberg, or in a more ontological form like that of Heidegger, Gadamer, among theologians Fuchs and Ebeling" ("Remarks", 33).

Frei maintains that the Reformers (he has in mind Calvin, Melancton, and Luther) understood theology as "involved at one and the same time a set of belief assertions and a confidence that all Christian language, including those assertions, is self-involving language, and not neutral or informational language" (Types, 26). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, theologians viewed this "dual aspect of Christian self-description as a problem" (Types, 26). Thus, Frei perceives the dilemma within modern theology to be how can one hold these two in tandem; namely Christian assertions which are 'truthful'.

Frei contends that this area of concentration which by and large consumes modern theological investigation is misguided. He proposes that "[p]erhaps the very logic of the self-description of Christianity as a religion is that these two things [truth-claims and assertions] don't **need** to be explained for their harmony. There is no need to explain, but only to describe them, distinctly and together" (Types, 27). This harmony is best described within a Christian construal of theology as "thick description", a term borrowed from the anthropologist, Clifford Geertz²³⁵. "Thick description is an attempt to describe the nuances within a

²³⁵ Geertz borrows the term from Gilbert Ryle but Frei's appropriation of its content and its reference within The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973) aligns itself with Geertz.

cultural system rather than explain them²³⁶. Within a culture, thickly described, "... the essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract generalities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (IC, 26).

Frei recognised the usefulness of such a method of description rather than explanation for it focused on the way Christianity functioned rather than apologising for its claims. It is here that one can see the close affinities to both Lindbeck and Kelsey. Lindbeck also understands the doctrines of a religion to function as rules or "regulatively"²³⁷. Kelsey focuses his attention in The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology on the way Scripture functions within a particular theologian's way of construing theology²³⁸. Frei also maintains that Christian self-

²³⁶ "As interworked systems of construable signs ... culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly- that is, thickly- described" (The Interpretation of Cultures, 14).

²³⁷ "... [d]octrines regulate truth-claims by excluding some and permitting others, but the logic of their communally authoritative use hinders or prevents them from specifying positively what is to be affirmed" (The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 19).

²³⁸ He writes, "... the way in which any particular theologian concretely takes biblical texts as "scripture" and uses them as "authority" in actually doing theology will vary with the way he decides to construe scripture's functioning in the church's common life as the occasion and mode of God's presence" (The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology (London: SCM, 1975), 183).

description is properly done within the context of the Christian community (this includes the church and the academy). Christian doctrines are thus debated internally. I now turn to his debate with the theologian Carl Henry over "first-order" theological statements.

II. Frei opposed to a strictly context-invariant hermeneutics²³⁹

In an article entitled "Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal"²⁴⁰, Carl Henry rejects Hans Frei's hermeneutics. He maintains that Frei's theory invalidates itself because "it offers no objective criterion for distinguishing truth from error and fact from fiction..." (19). My contention is that it is not clear that Henry is reading Frei correctly. As George Hunsinger points out,

...for Frei, the category 'fiction-like' is strictly a formal category which as such remains non-committal about the narrative's truth or fiction. To say "fiction-like" is thus not quite the same as saying 'fictional yet true', especially

²³⁹ "[Barth] claims that for theology, there is no such thing as a general context-invariant criteriology, certainly in contrast to ... conservatives like Henry" (Types, 45).

²⁴⁰ Carl Henry, "Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal" in Trinity Journal [8NS (1987)], 3-19. Hans Frei's "Response to 'Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal'", (21-24). Reprinted in Theology and Narrative, 207-213.

if the latter could be construed as meaning 'historically fictional, yet theologically true'",
241.

That is, Frei does not necessarily believe that the narratives which do not deal with the passion and resurrection are fictitious²⁴². His disagreement with Henry is in the categories that Henry wishes to employ. Henry wants to use the terms "factual", "historical reality", "reference", and "truth" to describe the narratives in the Biblical texts. Frei maintains that these terms are not "privileged, theory-neutral, trans-cultural [and] an ingredient in the structure of the human mind and of reality always and everywhere"²⁴³. This leads Frei to reject Henry's terminology and to insist on maintaining the Biblical language which is the only way to faithfully express the Biblical truth²⁴⁴.

241 George Hunsinger, "Hans Frei as Theologian: The Quest for a Generous Orthodoxy" in Modern Theology (8:2, April 1992), fn. 12.

242 Frei contends that the **genre** of the passion-crucifixion-resurrection narratives are "realistic narrative". That is, he contends that in the "third and last stage in the story's structure ... this part is most generally agreed to reflect actual events with considerable (though not absolute) accuracy" (IJC, 132-133). Furthermore, the genre "realistic narrative", "... at the crucial climax of the resurrection, fictional description, providing direct knowledge of [Jesus'] identity in, with and through the circumstances, merges with factual claim, whether justified or not" (IJC, 145). For the problems associated with such a claim, see chapter 2 above.

243 "Response" in Theology and Narrative, 211.

244 However, Frei's use of the categories "realistic narrative" and "history-like" betrays his dependence upon literary terminology and negates his refusal to employ "non-Biblical" terminology.

Frei maintains that "realistic narrative" renders the identity and characteristics of personal agents through the depictions of action-intentions which are part of a process of self-manifestation²⁴⁵. This identification occurs within a narrative framework similar to that of ordinary time experience. For Henry, there is no distinction between a historical report and realistic narrative, they are necessarily the same. However, Frei distinguishes between history and realistic narrative yet admits that the Biblical texts written in realistic narrative **may** (but not necessarily) also contain historical facts. For Frei, the relationship between historical fact and realistic narrative is necessary only in the passion and subsequent resurrection narratives. However, as Henry contends, the literal sense of the narrative is associated with logical and grammatical rules. Henry, as Frei contends, is guilty of what he had traced in the Eclipse; historical-critical methods of biblical reading took over the old realistic method of reading. Frei notes the result as, the "meaning of the stories was something different from the stories or depictions themselves although this is contrary to the character of a realistic story" (EBN, 11). As a result of historical-critical exegesis, the meaning and authority of

²⁴⁵ A full discussion of how Frei applies this method to discerning the identity of Jesus is found in chapter II/1.

the Biblical texts became associated with historical factuality. In the wake of modernity, this linking of the biblical narrative with historical claims led to the discarding of the biblical narrative as historically unreliable and thus "untrue".

IIa. Frei and Carl Henry on referentiality

Frei proposes that the synoptic gospels begin with Jesus viewed as representative of the whole of Israel. In these infancy narratives, he maintains that Jesus is depicted as a symbol of Israel²⁴⁶. It is in the baptismal narratives where the change from a symbolic narrative to realistic narrative occurs. In these narratives, Jesus becomes a person in his own right rather than merely a representative of Israel by performing "miracles and signs of the kingdom". Frei cites Luke 4:21 as the summation when Christ proclaims that "the Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing".

Frei points to a problem which occurs when a person tries to determine "What actually happened?". He maintains that the infancy narratives are "proliferations of legend and

²⁴⁶ In the gospel of Matthew, this is emphasized by the events early in Jesus' life which parallel those of Moses' life.

- 1) Jesus' family called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1)
- 2) Herod kills all the male infants in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.
- 3) Although not explicitly pointed out, the further parallels with Moses' birth and his near escape.

stylized tales" (IJC, 132) and therefore, the term "historicity" does not apply to them. However, the third and last stage of the Jesus story is generally agreed upon to recount the actual events that occurred with "considerable accuracy" (IJC, 132). He suggests that the claim of historicity can be (and should be) applied to the passion narratives and resurrection because of their importance for the historic Christian faith.

While it may seem that Frei is interested in preserving the historicity of the biblical narrative, it is of key importance to note that he distinguishes between "historical factuality" and "history-likeness". Nicholas Wolterstorff comments that

"Indispensable to understanding Frei's ... argument is the recognition that the history-likeness of the literal sense of text implies nothing whatsoever as to the truth or falsity of the propositional content of that sense. From the history-likeness of the literal sense of some work of history one can conclude nothing whatsoever as to its accuracy"
247.

Thus, one can say that the biblical narrative may be "history-like" but this has no bearing on whether or not the narrative is "historically factual". For Frei, the literal

247 From an unpublished paper entitled, Is Narrativity the Linchpin? Reflections on the Hermeneutic of Hans Frei, given for the 1992 Hester Seminar at Wake Forest University on "Relativism and Religious Knowledge".

sense of a realistic narrative does not mean that the narrated event has actually occurred; the only exceptions being the narratives of the passion and resurrection of Jesus. These are factual occurrences reported closely to the way they happened. However, it is important to note that Frei maintains that one assumes historical factuality of the other narratives unless evidence is given to the contrary. Thus, Frei's understanding of the Bible as realistic narrative does not necessitate a view of all of its texts as 1) historically accurate or 2) historically actual.

By "historically accurate", I mean that the biblical narrative conveys an accurate historical account concerning the narrated story. Applied to a realistic narrative, when Matthew wrote that Jesus was in the desert fasting for "forty days and forty nights"²⁴⁸, this may or may not be historically accurate. The use of forty days and forty nights could be a literary device alluding to Moses' 40/40 fast on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34. For Frei, the realistic nature of the narrative does not necessitate factuality; Jesus could have been in the desert for ten days. The redactor may have changed the facts of the narrative to suit his aim which would be, within this model, to draw an analogy between Jesus and Moses.

²⁴⁸ Matthew 4:1-2, "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry".

"History-likeness" also does not necessitate "historical actuality" (what Frei calls "historicity"). By "historical actuality", I mean that the Biblical narrative actually happened in history (that is, it is not purely fictional). That is, while the facts of the Matthew 4 narrative may not be historically accurate, it may also have never actually occurred in history.

The theory of "history-likeness" maintains that one can never know, in an absolute sense, what really happened in the first century. Henry contends that advocating this theory is disastrous for theology because it undermines its authority. He claims that the implications of such a theory are obvious; if nothing definite can be known about the life of Jesus, then how can we be sure of the historicity of the passion and resurrection of Jesus (as Frei does seem to appeal to)? It seems as if Henry has a valid point here. Paul does appeal to the resurrection (as a historical fact and actuality) as the basis for Christian faith. He states, "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is in vain and so is your faith" (I Corinthians 15:13-14). However, it is essential to note that Frei would agree. The event of the resurrection is the basis of Christian faith. It is at this point, however, that the Christian would have

to base this assertion on faith, not in a **theory** based on the ostensive referencing of the Biblical texts. Frei says of his assertion,

"at [this] point, a judgement of faith concerning the inspiration of the descriptive contents and a judgement of faith affirming their central factual claim would have to coincide for the believer. He would have to affirm that the New Testament authors were right in insisting that it is more nearly correct to think of Jesus as factually raised, bodily if you will, than not to think of him in this manner" (IJC, 150).

He re-asserts his claim that "faith is not based on factual evidence or inherent historical likelihood"²⁴⁹. Frei is proposing that one's belief cannot be likened to a rational acceptance of a set of "true" (as in "historically accurate" or "historically factual") propositions. Rather, it is by faith that the Christian accepts the event of the resurrection. He finishes The Identity of Jesus Christ by affirming that "no matter what the logic of the Christian faith, actual belief in the resurrection is a matter of faith and not of arguments from possibility or evidence" (IJC, 152).

Frei outlines his theory of reference in this way. "... [U]sing the term 'God' Christianly is in some sense referential. But that doesn't mean that I have a theory of

²⁴⁹ Frei, IJC, 151 and following quote, 152.

reference to be able to tell you **how** it refers" ("Response", 210). He maintains that the biblical narrative is adequate to describe what is being referred to, though it doesn't explain how it refers: "The truth to which we refer we cannot state apart from the biblical language which we employ to do so ... The narrative description there is adequate. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself' is an adequate statement for what we refer to, though we cannot say univocally how we refer to it" ("Response", 210). Henry's unease is due to this uncertainty as to the referential status of the Biblical language. However, Frei maintains that Jesus being raised from the dead is not a fact like other "facts" and thus cannot be subsumed into that larger category. He writes, "Is Jesus Christ ... a "fact" like other historical facts? Should I really say that the eternal Word made flesh, that is, made fact indeed, is a fact like any other? ... I don't think so, just as I don't think that I can say 'God created the world' and mean by that a factual referent like any other" ("Response", 211). Frei is careful to note that his view of reference is not that of Ricoeur. Whilst he cannot specify how language about "Jesus Christ" refers, he admits, "[i]t is historical reference (to use our cultural category) but it is not historical reference in the ordinary way: **nor of course is it metaphor**²⁵⁰"

²⁵⁰ In another place, he writes "we analogize more on the basis of our **literal** reading of the gospel story than on the basis of something more nearly metaphorical. We start from the text: That is the language pattern, the meaning-and-reference pattern to which we are bound, and

("Response", 212: italics mine).

Frei makes an enigmatic statement directly after dealing with the issue of reference. He states that using the word "God" in a "Christian" way, refers. However, he extends this admission to say that this "... is also true in some sense other than a referential one: It is true by being true to the way it works in one's life, and by holding the world, including the political, economic and social world, to account by the gauge of its truthfulness" ("Response" 210). Frei recognises that warranted belief allows one to act and think appropriately in the knowledge of Christian claims. This hearkens back to a similar proposal from Lindbeck: "**significatum** of the claim that Jesus truly and objectively was raised from the dead provides the warrant for behaving in the ways recommended by the resurrection stories even when one grants the impossibility of specifying the mode in which those stories signify" (ND, 67). The question raised is whether or not Frei can affirm the "truthfulness" of Christian claims without appealing to any sort of "propositions concerning states of affairs in the world"? In other words, is it sufficient to claim that the coherence of Christian faith is enough to substantiate Christian faith?

which is sufficient for us. We cannot and do not need to `transcend' it into `limit' language and `limit' experience" ("Response", 209). This statement clearly disassociates Frei's hermeneutic from that of Ricoeur and this relationship is explored in more detail below.

I believe that Frei would answer negatively to this question. He affirms that "the resurrection of Jesus from death has always been central to Christian faith"²⁵¹. Indeed, "the miracle of the resurrection in particular- is a real event; however, it is one to which human depiction and conception are inadequate, even though the literal description is the best that can be offered, not to be supplanted or replaced by any other and therefore itself not simply metaphorical in character" ("Resurrection", 203). Frei's view privileges neither the text nor the reality but understands the text as providing an "adequate testimony" rather than any form of "accurate report". His reasoning is that the resurrection is unlike any other event and therefore categories such as "evidence" and "factual/accurate report" cannot be employed. To submit the text to historical scrutiny is to miss the point of the attestation of biblical narratives. The biblical narratives testify to a miraculous event; they do not report an historical event. Frei maintains,

"to take the account of the empty tomb (for example) to have primarily the status of a factual report used as evidence is from this point of view to mistake its textual function. It is to turn it from a witness of faith into a report, from testimony to the truth of the mystery that unites the divine and the human into a report of a simply and solely natural-type event that is supposed to demonstrate its divine character by running counter

²⁵¹ "Of the Resurrection of Christ" in Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 201.

to customary natural experience" ("Resurrection", 203).

Frei contends that Henry's enquiry into the historical veracity of the biblical narratives reduces their testimony to the level of common historical narrative. However, Frei maintains that these stories, especially of resurrection, do not belong to a normal understanding of history. This is not to deny that "the story of the empty tomb may have the tentative secondary role of rendering historical evidence" ("Resurrection", 203) but rather that this position is tenuous at best. In Frei's view, it would be just as plausible to argue the contrary position that the texts do not derive from early accounts. Yet, "the message and the miracle of faith are accounted for by the very character, and are therefore a function of, Jesus' being and his resurrection from the dead; and so, Jesus and faith, as well as reality and text, belong together as the miracle of resurrection" ("Resurrection", 205). Ultimately Frei attributes faith in the resurrection to be 1) testified to by the biblical accounts and 2) founded upon the very being of Jesus himself.

III. Frei on Christian self-description

Criticism external to "Christian self-description" could be potentially devastating for Frei's construal because his depiction of the theological enterprise requires an internal explication. I will now turn to analysis of how Frei's depiction of such description could engage such a critique.

Following Kelsey's analysis, Frei maintains that a text is accorded the status, Scripture, "through the functions it performs within `the community for which it is a common text'" (Types, 57). This does not mean that the aforesaid community is the only viable interpreter. Frei maintains that "[c]learly, there is no such thing as a community's assuming dictatorship of interpretation principles" (Types, 57). A more balanced view, he suggests, would be modelled on Schleiermacher's theology which attempted to correlate theology within the academy with that of the church²⁵². In this correlative enterprise, the

"New Testament is simply an authoritative or normative expression of the pious Christian self-consciousness of the first Christians, and indirectly the self-communication of the perfect God-consciousness of Jesus Christ through **that**

²⁵² The current problem within literary theory is in the trespassing between the boundaries between exegesis of a text and the application of the methodology employed. The "multiplication [of literary theories] has tended to make complex matters more so, sometimes only at the (second-order) level of the theories themselves, sometimes in the actual reading of texts, when theory, as often happens in contemporary academic discussion, claims entry rights into (first-order) exegesis, and the line between `literary' and `interpretive' activity becomes deliberately blurred", (Hans W. Frei, "'Narrative' in Christian and Modern Reading" in Theology and Dialogue: Essays in Conversation with George Lindbeck (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 154).

derived communal God-consciousness before, within, and after Scripture" (Types, 65).

The problem, as Frei analyses it, is that many theologians have been misled by attempting to explain **how** narratives 'refer', instead of focusing on what those narratives 'mean'²⁵³. Frei's theological investigations attempt to bypass this modern theological agenda. This can be seen most clearly as Frei dialogues with the literary-critic, Gary Comstock and the Jewish theologian, Michael Goldberg.

IIIa. Gary Comstock on "truth" and "meaning"

Gary Comstock sets up a dipolar relationship between Frei's and Ricoeur's thought using the terms "meaning" and "truth" as the reference points. His query is pertaining to the status of biblical narratives and their relationship to philosophical truth-claims. He asks, "[i]s it enough to say that the biblical narratives are **meaningful**? Or are Christians also committed to saying that they are **true**? Frei thinks that the answer to the first question is yes, so he does not pursue the second. Ricoeur thinks the second demands an answer, and he tries to show how and why we should answer it affirmatively"²⁵⁴. I believe that Comstock's

²⁵³ A major contemporary issue not mentioned by Frei is the current pre-occupation within literary theory with the Derridean question of "deferral of meaning".

²⁵⁴ Gary Comstock, "Truth or Meaning: Frei versus Ricoeur on Biblical

"analysis" of Frei's position betrays his affinity for philosophical privileging. The question is raised, does Comstock have a valid point and has Frei's work facilitated this reading of him? In his 1967 Harvard lecture, Frei argued that "[t]heology has to validate the **possibility** and, hence, the meaning of Christian claims concerning the shape of human existence and the divine relation to it, even though the **actual occurrence**- and thus the **verification** of the claim -is a matter of divine, self-authenticating action and revelation" (Remarks, 30). Furthermore, Frei asserted that "I believe that it is not the business of Christian theology to argue the **possibility** of Christian truth any more than the instantiation or **actuality** of that truth" (Remarks, 30). It would seem that Comstock's analysis has some basis in Frei's work²⁵⁵, yet I will argue that his analysis is based on a faulty understanding of what "second-order" theological investigation is concerned with and that Comstock ultimately privileges philosophical language over **any other** form of language which, in turn, has helped to create this quandary. In addition to a close analysis of Comstock's argument and

Narrative", The Journal of Religion (1986), 118.

²⁵⁵ "As it stands, Frei's account can seem to collapse the revealed Word into into [sic] written word, a written that witnesses to nothing beyond itself. The problem may be that, in the absence of any general theory of truth and reference, readers will tend to carry over our cultural assumptions about what is real and how texts in general mean. When Frei approaches the question of the reference of **these** texts so cautiously, then against the background of the rather simple empiricism that still dominates much of our thinking, he seems to undercut their claim on reality" (William C. Placher, "Paul Ricoeur and Postliberal Theology: A Conflict of Interpretations", Modern Theology (4:1) 1987, 48).

the faultiness of its claims, I will use a letter written to Comstock by Frei concerning this article to substantiate and expand the argument²⁵⁶.

Comstock's thesis is this: "I will argue that Ricoeur's is the more consistent position, and I will suggest that [his] 'impure narrativism' is more faithful than [Frei's] 'pure narrativism' to the testimony of the scriptural stories" ("TvM", 119). His argument pertaining to Frei runs like this. Firstly, Frei's use of the category "realistic narratives" allows "no separation of meaning and reference" ("TvM", 119) in the biblical narratives. This suggests that readers "... come to understand that story's meaning not as **'illustrated** (as though it were an intellectually presubexisting or preconceived archetype or ideal essence) but **constituted** through the mutual, specific determination of agents, speech, social context, and circumstances that form the indispensable narrative web'" ("TvM", 120: cited from Eclipse). Due to this inseparability, Comstock suggests that this necessitates secondly, the position that "[t]he meaning of these narratives is autonomous; they refer only to themselves. Mark means what it says and not another thing" ("TvM", 120). His conclusion is this: "As Frei puts it, scripture 'simultaneously depicts and renders the reality (if

²⁵⁶ "Letter to Gary Comstock" (Hans Frei Papers, Manuscript Group No. 76 (12: 184). Special Collections, Yale Divinity School) found in the appendix.

any) of what it talks about'; its subject matter is 'constituted by or identical with its narrative'" ("TvM", 120²⁵⁷).

However, this **is not** what Frei says. In fact, the full remark made by Frei is this: "**Literal depiction** constitutes and does not merely illustrate or point to the meaning of the narrative and theme it cumulatively renders: and simultaneously it depicts and renders the reality (if any) of what it talks about" (EBN, 27: emphasis mine). For within Frei's hermeneutic, this is only **one** of the ways that scripture works, it is not the **only** way. To say that the Bible refers in only **one** way is misguided; this would imply that Frei advocates a "general hermeneutic", a position which would be in complete contradiction to Frei's. Rather, this section in the Eclipse is comparing literal depiction with figural interpretation in Calvin's theology, it is not advocating a "general hermeneutic". Frei's reply to Comstock is that **theologically**, only in the case of Jesus Christ and the depictions of him, "a straightforward referential truth inference is to be made from a formal coherence description" (LComstock, 6).

²⁵⁷ He acknowledges that these quotes are taken from Eclipse 27 & 33. However, the second quote is not from page 33 (as he claims), but rather is found somewhere else (I have yet to find it).

Comstock's analysis of the problem with Frei's 'pure narrativism' is that "it rests on certain foundational principles. And they are ill suited to the narrative reading of the gospel" ("TvM", 121). Here, Comstock's argument against Frei once again shifts from **scripture** to the **gospel**.

Comstock continues, "As I have said, Frei does not appear interested in developing the philosophical foundations of 'narrative hermeneutics'" ("TvM", 122). This is correct but not strong enough. Firstly, as argued above, Frei is **not** a narrative theologian. Secondly, he 'does not appear interested' because, in fact, he is **opposed** to developing foundational claims for a "narrative hermeneutics". Comstock recognises that "Frei has no use for ... all-encompassing hermeneutic foundations. But this is not to say that he is an antifoundationalist" ("TvM", 122).

As with Moore, Comstock seems to misunderstand the polemical stance of the New Critics when he writes, "[o]ne of Frei's literary foundations is that the meaning of a realistic narrative is autonomous. Meaning is tied neither to author's nor to its reader's beliefs, intentions, or practices ... One of Frei's philosophical foundations is related. The narratives of the Bible are self-referential, not referring to anything other than themselves ("TvM", 123).

It is an unusual interpretation of Frei to suggest that he believes that the gospel stories refer to nothing external to the text. Frei's response to Comstock is this: "... the matter is far more complex for me than your exposition of my **supposed** stance of "autonomous meaning" of realistic narrative makes it appear" (LComstock, 5: emphasis mine). Furthermore, "[p]hilosophically, the gospel narratives are not self-referential..." (LComstock, 6). In fairness, Comstock adds this caveat, "If I am right to think that these are Frei's conceptual foundations..." ("TvM", 123) which suggests that if the conditions he has outlined above are wrong, then his conclusions cannot follow from the faulty analysis.

Comstock continues to attack Frei's apparent refusal to engage the issue of how texts correspond with external reality. He claims that "[p]ure narrativists [Frei] are content to except narratives from the rigorous debate about truth conditions. Stories, they tell us, do not make assertions about the world. Narratives are not interested in 'corresponding' to some reality outside them. Thus, we have no need to ask about their 'truth'" ("TvM", 123). Indeed, he recognises that "Frei's narrativism is reminiscent of Wittgenstein. Any question about the 'truth' of biblical narrative is an unfortunate category mistake²⁵⁸" ("TvM",

²⁵⁸ George Hunsinger's analysis suggests that Frei's position is more subtle than Comstock allows: "To suppose that the meaning of these

128). He concludes with the charge that to ignore the issue of the narrative's truthfulness "... does not seem to do justice to the intentions of just those believers who tell and retell the scriptural stories as their own" ("TvM", 129).

IIIb. Critique of Comstock

For all of the criticism levelled at Frei on the issue of the text's correspondence with reality, Ricoeur escapes relatively unscathed though Comstock recognises that "[l]ike Frei, Ricoeur denies that realistic narratives refer ostensibly to real objects, agents, or events behind the text" ("TvM", 133). As I have argued above, Ricoeur has a powerful theory of truth. He does not abandon all notions of ostensive reference though the theory places primacy on the second-order of reference (the poetic function) within literary works. However, to claim that Frei denies the possibility for texts to ostensibly refer is a mistake. Frei replies that,

"Philosophically, meaning cannot be identified with truth but must be kept distinct: What these stories refer to or how they refer remains a philosophical puzzle, but it has to be in a way congruent with their realistic, history-like character (and history-likeness of course means that the ministry, death and resurrection

narratives resides in their factual historicity would be to commit a category mistake. The question of factual historicity, although directly posed by the narratives themselves, is simply **not** a question of their meaning. It is the question of their truth" ("Hans Frei as Theologian", Modern Theology (8:2) April 1992, 110).

narratives are the chief topics, not the 'mystery of the kingdom of God', which is not a realistic, fictional or historical, item in the same sense as these others)" (LComstock, 5-6).

Frei's thought on the relation between "truth" and "meaning" and "sense" and "reference" is much more nuanced than Comstock's account allows.

"It's the complexity of that interrelation [between "truth" and "meaning"] that you reduce to far too systematic and simple a shape. If I suggest that philosophically, 'meaning' and 'truth' ... should be sharply distinguished in a hermeneutics of realistic New Testament narrative, and hermeneutics [is] confined to the level of meaning, I'm supposed to be implying that Christians don't make truth claims for their beliefs. But of course I'm saying nothing of the sort: I'm simply saying that the virtual running into each other of 'meaning' and 'truth' in philosophical systems such as Ricoeur's ... is dangerous and does not allow realistic narratives a genuinely realistic status" (LComstock, 2).

Of course, Comstock did not need Frei's letter to be able to understand this. This is, after all, one of the reasons which, Frei argued, led to the eclipse of biblical narrative!

Frei wants a philosophically non-foundational way of understanding the relationship between world and text.

"As for my view of the relation between meaning and truth and the character of the gospel narratives' truth claims: For me, 'divine truth' is at least in part a referential statement, but I do not have a correspondence theory and description with which to back it in this 'odd' instance. Rather it is backed by a coherentist procedure..." (LComstock,

6).

The status of "reference" in theological language
is ambiguous:

"Philosophically, the gospel narratives are not self-referential; their reference is indeterminate, and that indeterminacy is exactly what they share with realistic fiction ... But even if it is so ambiguous, so difficult to pin down, we do not therefore declare such fiction to be either private, purely autonomous, or self-referential" (LComstock, 6).

I suggest that the abandonment of the doctrine of revelation by Frei (in the Preface to IJC), does not allow for a "correspondence theory" between truth and text. The relationship between them becomes, instead, an issue of analogy and of faith.

"The textual universe of the gospel is that perfect coherence of reference and meaning, albeit always imperfectly and partially glimpsed, which allows us to analogize from there to the imperfect, secondary and analogous coherence or cohesion of the two in other cases ... For me this is the risk Christian theology has to take if it is to recapture its character as theology of faith, and specifically of incarnation-oriented theology" (LComstock, 7).

Frei appeals to the "philosophical oddness" of Anselm's argument which he understands helps to bridge the gap between meaning and truth.

"Anselm's distinctively Christian version of

the ontological argument has always been philosophically puzzling-- but private? It seems to me that that argument and the status of discourse about the resurrection of Jesus Christ belong together. I'm suggesting that **in this case** and this case only a straightforward referential truth inference is to be made from a formal coherence description" (LComstock, 6: emphasis mine).

Ultimately, the difference between Frei and Comstock (and by extension Ricoeur) is that philosophy does not hold a "privileged" position over theology in the discussion. Whilst there is a need for theology to use philosophy, this relationship is not foundational (he refers to himself as "mildly antifoundational").

"Mildly? Yes: I am a Christian theologian and do not regard philosophy as ever having achieved that clearly demonstrated set of even formal certainties (and agreements) in 2500 years which would allow it the kind of authoritative status you seem to want to accord it; and yet I believe that theology cannot do without philosophy. Furthermore theology cannot even invest so much in the foundational/antifoundational debate as to come out (qua theology) in principle on the antifoundational side" (LComstock, 1).

IIIc. Michael Goldberg's critique of Frei

Goldberg argues that one of the difficulties with a "narrative theology" is the question of the direction of "projection" in terms of understanding oneself. He questions Frei's "narrative theology": "Can new 'facts' or 'experiences' even force us to reshape or revise our stories,

and if so, how?"²⁵⁹. This is a fair question²⁶⁰, for Frei suggests that

"The direction of the flow of intratextual interpretation is that of absorbing the extratextual universe into the text, rather than the reverse (extratextual) direction. The literal sense is the paradigmatic form of such intratextual interpretation in the Christian community's use of its scripture: The literal ascription to Jesus of Nazareth of the stories connected with him is of such far-reaching import that it serves not only as focus for inner-canonical typology but reshapes extratextual language in its manifold descriptive uses into a typological relation to these stories" ("LR", 147).

Citing Hauerwas, Goldberg agrees that "[Frei's] suggestion would be disastrous if it is an attempt to make irrelevant whether Jesus in fact did not exist and act in a way very much like the way he is portrayed in the gospel accounts" (Theology and Narrative, 185). He extends Hauerwas' critique by stating "... the question of 'whether [the story]

²⁵⁹ Michael Goldberg, Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction [2nd edition] (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1991), 184.

²⁶⁰ Goldberg's critique is, in content, the same as Thiselton's critique of Lindbeck. "I am extremely cautious about George Lindbeck's tendency to locate the meaning of biblical texts in intralinguistic or 'intratextual' categories to the exclusion of presuppositional and extra-linguistic contextual factors about states of affairs in the world" (NHH, 557). Thiselton's correction of this imbalance is to recognise that "... didactic texts, narrative texts, poetic texts, boundary-situation texts, apocalyptic texts, promissory texts, and so forth, perform **different, though often overlapping, hermeneutical functions, especially in relation to different reading-situations**" (NHH, 557-558). Thiselton's hermeneutic allows the text to speak and inform the reader whilst accounting for the input of the reader in the "reading-situation". It is a model owing to Gadamer's notion of the "fusion of horizons" where the world of the text merges, fuses, with that of the reader.

really happened' cannot be ignored without theological peril. Frei's answer remains ambiguous" (Theology and Narrative, 185). Goldberg is thinking here of primarily of Frei's category of 'history-likeness'. However, the distinction "history-like" does not mean non-historical. It is merely used as a means to read the "meaning" of a particular text. Frei writes,

"... the literary parallel between history writing and history-like writing is perfectly clear: in each case narrative form and meaning are inseparable, precisely because in both cases meaning is in large part a function of the interaction of character and circumstances ... [and] this meaning through instantiation is not **illustrated** ... but **constituted** through the mutual, specific determination of agents, speech, social context, and circumstances that form the indispensable narrative web" (EBN, 280).

Thus, Hauerwas' criticism would be founded if Frei did indeed claim the irrelevancy of 'history', but he doesn't. His distinction helps to locate the 'meaning' of the text rather than being an assertion of the irrelevancy of 'historical' questions²⁶¹. Frei writes,

"... I want to affirm my belief that 'hermeneutics' has to do with 'meaning', i.e. with criteria and rules for sound interpretation of texts, rather

²⁶¹ George Hunsinger's note is once again relevant here, "for Frei, the category 'fiction-like' is strictly a formal category which as such remains non-committal about the narrative's truth or fiction. To say 'fiction-like' is thus not quite the same thing as saying 'fictional yet true', especially if the latter could be construed as meaning 'historically fictional, yet theologically true'" ("Hans Frei as Theologian: The Quest for a Generous Orthodoxy" in *Modern Theology* (8:2, April 1992), fn. 12).

than with 'truth'. And I want to stress that even the limited use of 'truth' as true interpretation of a text rather than relation of the text to true reality is only secondary for me, though I won't deny that I puzzle about it" ("HB", 3-4).

Frei is dealing with rules for interpretation, not an analysis of the linking up of text with reality. In fact, he asserts that "... the issue of reference is hermeneutically, though probably not theologically, irrelevant" ("HB", 4-5). For Frei, the issue of linking text and reality is resolved in a similar fashion to Barth's understanding of Anselm's ontological argument which Frei restates in The Identity of Jesus Christ as "presence"²⁶².

Goldberg recognises that Frei's critique in The Eclipse is precisely that thinkers from Locke to Moltmann have "adopted the ... flawed theological strategy of separating truth from meaning and narrative from 'reality'²⁶³" (Theology and Narrative, 159). Frei concludes from this 'strategy' that those thinkers found a new centralising category which he calls "way-of-being-in-the-world". However, this new category merely replaced one 'story' (the Christian story) for another, more 'public' story (human anthropology). For

²⁶² For the problems surrounding this category "presence", see chapter I/1.

²⁶³ He cites EBN, 129: "They have all been agreed that one way or another the religious **meaningfulness** (as distinct from demonstration of the truth) could, indeed, must be perspicuous through its relation to other accounts of general human experience" (Theology and Narrative, 159).

Frei, the Bible as 'realistic narrative' is one where "descriptive shape and meaning cohere" (EBN, 27). This leads Goldberg to claim that Frei's account "contends that the veracity of biblical narrative lies in its faithful depiction of the structure of reality. Shape of story and shape of experience ultimately go hand-in-hand" (Theology and Narrative, 164). I find this claim by Goldberg misleading on two counts. Firstly, Frei never engages this issue of the 'veracity' of the biblical narrative. And moreover, Frei never appeals to revelation to substantiate the "truthfulness" of the narrative. Secondly, whilst the second half of this quotation is a correct analysis of Frei's hermeneutic, it is not correct because of the first half of the statement. It is true because the structure of the narrative "coheres with" ("suggests a") its meaning.

Goldberg concludes that

"while the narrative theologies of Frei and McFague were to some extent justifiable at the primary level through their attention to the meaning entailed by the specific narrative kinds involved, they were nevertheless inadequate at the representative level due to their failure to address adequately the question of the truth-claims stemming from those stories, and that furthermore, their theological proposals will to that extent stand unjustified, no matter what might be their merits on the remaining affective, 'transformative' plane" (Theology and Narrative, 245).

Once again, Goldberg's critique is off-centre for Frei is not

advocating a "narrative theology"²⁶⁴. Frei writes, "I am deeply concerned about the specificity of narrative texts. There are all sorts of texts, and the Bible includes all kinds of texts to which different hermeneutical rules apply ... In other words, I hope nobody thinks of something called 'narrative sense' as a kind of hermeneutical absolute" ("HB", 4). Frei does not deal with the issues Goldberg is interested in; that is, the relation between truth-claims and their reference to reality. Rather, Frei maintains that

"[e]qually clearly it is once more a case of putting the cart before the horse ... if one constructs a general and inalienable human quality called 'narrative' or 'narrativity', within which to interpret the Gospels and provide foundational warrant for the possibility of their existential and ontological meaningfulness. The notion that Christian theology is a member of a general class of 'narrative theology' is no more than a minor will-o'-the-wisp" ("LR", 148).

This evidence effectively renders Goldberg's critique (and Comstock's) of Frei on this issue irrelevant.

IIIId. Frei's exposition in "LComstock" and "LR"

Frei's way of approaching the issue of 'meaning' in biblical narrative is from a non-philosophical stance.

²⁶⁴ One of the folders in the Frei archives contains a "list" of eleven "Problems of Narrativity in general: often Theologians" (Hans Frei Papers, Manuscript Group No. 76 (19:281). Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library). This is found in the appendix.

"Meaning" is understood through

"1) the communal-religious interpretive tradition and what it has seen as their primary meaning,

2) the fact that the tradition has given primacy to their realistic, ascriptive sense',

3) that outside of that tradition there is no reason to think of any single interpretive move or scheme as THE meaning of these stories,

4) and within it there is room for other's [interpretations], provided they do not conflict with the primary, realistic or literal sense,

5) that subordination of understanding to the text, within the descriptive schema explicatio/meditatio/applicatio (see Charles Wood's book) is in no way the same as the elimination of interpretive understanding and of a possible multiplicity of interpretations" (LComstock, 5).

Within this model, the way the Christian moves from the meaning of the text to the truth of it is through analogy: "The textual universe of the gospel is that perfect coherence of reference and meaning, albeit always imperfectly and

partially glimpsed, which allows us to analogize from there to the imperfect, secondary and analogous coherence or cohesion of the two in other cases" (LComstock, 7). This achieves the "publicness" which "truth-claims" aspire to become: "In an admittedly exaggerated fashion one might say that this is the only perfectly 'public' case of truth which allows all out other limited and private truths to become at least semi-public" (LComstock, 7). His way of analogising is philosophically non-foundational for he admits that,

"... I have no philosophical warrant for this claim, since I have proposed that it is not backed by any general theory: Hence its status must remain extremely awkward, at once grandly if not ludicrously imperialistic, and yet totally mired in collectively private Christian discourse in the eyes of those for whom philosophy is a foundational and, in respect of formal canons for meaning and truth, THE universal, normative discipline" (LComstock, 7).

Frei maintains that to bow at the altar of philosophy steals from Christian theology one of its defining characteristics, faith in the incarnation.

The strong emphasis on the role that the Christian tradition has played in the interpretation of the "meaning" of Scripture is a central aspect of Frei's theological method. His exploration of the Church's hermeneutic came to be the centre of his own method. In his essay, "The Literal Reading of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition:

Does It Stretch or Will It Break?", Frei argues that "... the tradition of the **sensus literalis** is the closest one can come to a consensus reading of the Bible as the sacred text in the Christian church..." (LR, 118). His exposition deals with the problems associated with literal readings of the Bible and as such is a "strictly second-order affair" ("LR", 119).

Frei's contention is that "... it was largely by reason of this centrality of the story of Jesus that the Christian interpretative tradition in the West gradually assigned clear primacy to the literal sense in the reading of Scripture..." ("LR", 121)²⁶⁵. It is simply this "traditional reading" which gave primacy to the "literal sense", not something inherent in the text itself, nor it is something which is necessary. The "hermeneutical rule" of the Church focused on the primacy of this "literal sense" because "... it is the story of Jesus taken literally that unveils this higher truth, the 'literal' sense is the key to spiritual interpretation of the **New Testament**" ("LR", 122). Thus, the literal sense was "not to be contradicted by other legitimate sense- tropological, allegorical, and analogical" ("LR", 121) because "the 'literal' reading in this fashion

²⁶⁵ Furthermore, "... Christian tradition tends to derive the meaning of such regulations- for example the sacraments, the place of the 'law' in Christian life, the love commandment- directly from (or refer them directly to) its sacred story, the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah" ("LR", 120).

became the normative or 'plain' reading of the texts. [However] There is no a priori reason why the 'plain' reading could not have been 'spiritual' in contrast to 'literal' and certainly the temptation was strong" ("LR", 122).

Frei suggests that new developments in literary theory (deconstruction, the breakdown of biblical theology, and post-structuralism) have led to a loss of the notion of the **perspicuity** of Scripture which once authorised Protestant readings²⁶⁶. Ultimately, Frei suggests, "[t]his destruction of 'normative' or 'true' reading means an end, among other things, to the enterprise called 'hermeneutics'" ("LR", 124). His analysis and subsequent suggestion is this:

"... current hermeneutical theory defends a revised form of [**sensus literalis**], but I also believe that the defence is a failure... One may well hope that the **sensus literalis**, a much more supple notion than one might at first suspect, has a future. If it does, there will be good reason to explain what it is about with a far more modest theory- more modest both in its claims about what counts as valid interpretation and in the scope of the material on which it may pertinently comment" ("LR", 118-119).

He maintains that "[it] is doubtful that **any** scheme for reading texts, and narrative texts in particular, and biblical narrative texts even more specifically, can serve globally and foundationally, so that the reading of biblical

²⁶⁶ "Not until the Protestant Reformation is the literal sense understood as authoritative- because perspicuous- in its own right, without authorization from the interpretive tradition" ("LR", 123).

material would simply be a regional instance of the universal procedure" ("LR", 137). His challenge is for theologians

"to consider seriously the possibility that the present cultural situation is among other things a **post-hermeneutical** and no longer a hermeneutical situation, and to frame their hermeneutical outlook in accordance with it, both for the sake of the technical credibility of hermeneutical theory and for the broader purpose of the cultural credibility of the theology itself" ("LR", 138).

Frei believes that the revival of the **sensus literalis** can happen under certain conditions. "The less entangled in theory and the more firmly rooted **NOT** in a narrative (literary) tradition but in its primary and original context, a religious community's 'rule' for faithful reading, the more clearly it is likely to come into view, and the stronger as well as more flexible and supple it is likely to look" ("LR", 139). His proposal holds that

"the Gospel stories as well as large portions of the Old Testament narrative are indeed 'realistic', but that the issue of their making or not making factual or, for that matter, other kinds of truth claims is not part of the scope of hermeneutical inquiry. 'Meaning' in this view is logically distinct from 'truth'... [thus] the factuality or non-factuality of at least some of these narratives, important as it is no doubt in a larger religious or an even more general context, involves a separate argument from that concerning their meaning" ("LR", 139-140).

This proposal suggests firstly, what constitutes 'truth' has not been universally agreed upon nor has it been established

as a 'normative' way of speaking about textuality in this post-hermeneutical situation. Secondly, it allows 'meaning' to be accessible by following certain literary 'rules' in discerning the type of literature being dealt with. This second suggestion in practice would look like this: "One appeals first to a qualitatively distinct genus of text (and meaning) called 'literary' and then argues both historically and in principle that within it there is a [distinct] species called 'realistic narrative' ..." ("LR", 140). Then, following the work of Eric Auerbach²⁶⁷, one argues that the biblical narratives belong to this species. Indeed, they are examples of this species, **par excellence**.

The advantages of such a way of reading biblical texts is that firstly, it is specific reading (because of the need to discern the species) and not a general theory about texts or textuality. Secondly, this type of reading "belongs first and foremost into [sic] the context of the sociolinguistic community, that is, of the specific religion of which it is part, rather than into a literary ambience" ("LR", 143-144). Therefore, as he argued at the outset, it allows the continuation of a process which has been overlooked, that the "[e]stablished or plain readings are warranted by a

²⁶⁷ Frei seems to concern himself only with Auerbach's exposition the relationship of biblical literature with classical literature (Homeric), specifically chapter one of *Mimesis* (Odysseus' Scar). However, it has been suggested by Gerry Shepherd that Auerbach's discussion of "figural interpretation" could have been used by Frei to bolster his argument.

community's rules for reading its sacred text" ("LR", 144).

Frei suggests that this "informal set of rules under which the [Bible] has customarily been read in the community" involves three aspects,

"Christian reading of Christian Scriptures must not deny the literal ascription to Jesus ... no Christian reading may deny either the unity of Old and New Testaments or the congruence (which is not by any means the same as literal identity) of that unity of with the ascriptive literalism of the Gospel narratives ... [and] any readings not in principle in contradiction with these two rules are permissible..." ("LR", 144-145).

Within this way of reading, Frei wants to resist the "generalizing tendency that raises theory from the descriptive to the explanatory power" ("LR", 146). He suggests that "[t]he descriptive context, then, for the **sensus literalis** is the religion of which it is a part, understood at once as a determinate code in which beliefs, ritual, and behavior patterns, ethos as well as narrative come together as a common semiotic system, and also as the community which is that system in use ..." ("LR", 146). This frees the observer because the process of understanding "a religion or a culture to which one is not native does not demand a general doctrine of the core of humanity, selfhood, and the grounds of inter-subjective experience" ("LR", 147). Citing Lindbeck approvingly, "[The 'high' religions] have relatively fixed canons of writings that they treat as

exemplary or normative instantiations of their semiotic codes. One test of faithfulness for all of them is the degree to which descriptions correspond to the semiotic universe paradigmatically encoded in holy writ" ("LR", 147²⁶⁸). Frei suggests that if the Bible is read in this fashion, that is, adhering to these "informal rules", the "literal sense" of biblical narrative will continue to remain faithful to the Christian tradition and will indeed "stretch and not break".

Frei maintains that biblical truth-claims "are part of the **sense** and not a matter of their sense turning into reference ... even if by combined force of style and substance they seem to be characterized by an urgent or imperious claim to truth, and exclusive truth at that" ("Narrative", 156). He suggests that this is, at the same time, both an advantage and a drawback of Lindbeck's Nature of Doctrine; his discussion (or lack thereof) of the issue surrounding the status of truth-claims. It is in his discussion of Lindbeck's book that his position is clarified. Furthermore, Frei's own position is not dissimilar to the cultural-linguistic view of religion espoused by Lindbeck. I will now turn to an analysis of Frei's comments on this book and draw out the implications for his own work.

²⁶⁸ George Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 116.

I propose that Frei's depiction of Christian self-description (outlined above) is what he perceives to be, **an extension of**, Lindbeck's depiction of a cultural-linguistic view of religion. There are three significant areas which Frei explicitly parallels (with some minor caveats) with his own: by definition, by affiliation with the theologies of Schleiermacher and Barth, and on the issue of truth. In a speech given by Frei, which was included as an "Epilogue" in Theology and Dialogue, these parallels are drawn out²⁶⁹.

Frei notes that Lindbeck's depiction of theological construal is in agreement with his own: "Academic theology is that second-order reflection which is an appropriate, albeit very modest instrument in aid of the critical description and self-description of specific, religious-cultural communities, in our case the Christian church"²⁷⁰. Frei caveats this remark by stating that "... I hope I'm not subverting Lindbeck's agenda and substituting my own, Christian theology is a discipline both in the non-ecclesiastical academy and in the church" ("Epilogue", 278).

²⁶⁹ Bruce D. Marshall writes, "This essay was originally given as a talk at Yale Divinity School several years ago, at a gathering convened to celebrate the publication of The Nature of Doctrine" ("Introduction" in Theology and Dialogue, 4). The timing of the speech by Frei is critical for it occurred **prior to** the avalanche of criticism which was directed at The Nature of Doctrine and the subsequent mis-interpretations of the work (both of which Frei prophetically forecasts).

²⁷⁰ Hans W. Frei, "Epilogue: George Lindbeck and The Nature of Doctrine" in Theology and Dialogue, 278.

Secondly, Frei charges, like his own Christian self-description, that a cultural-linguistic theory combines aspects of both Schleiermacher and Barth's theologies: "[b]etween them they best exhibit both the possibilities and the problems of significant second-order restatement of the tradition of the major hermeneutical and theological consensus in Western Christianity" (Types, 6). This is the area of focus with Frei's Types and he suggests that Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic view focuses on the same issues. Furthermore, this is the position in which Frei identifies himself most closely and suggests that somewhere between the methods of these two theologians, theology is done most coherently.

Finally, Frei notes that on the issue of 'truth', Lindbeck fails to address it adequately. He suggests that "moderate propositionalists²⁷¹ ... will tell [Lindbeck] that what he says about doctrines as second-order rules is sufficiently kin to doctrines as first-order propositional statements ..." ("Epilogue", 278). Furthermore, the moderate propositionalist²⁷² will argue that if people are taught "how

²⁷¹ Lindbeck defines "propositionalist" as any theological model which "stresses the way in which church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth-claims about objective reality" (The Nature of Doctrine, 16).

²⁷² Frei's use of "moderate" distinguishes between those which will dismiss Lindbeck's book as speaking of an illusory reality. These "traditional propositionalists" will object "[i]f you take doctrines to be **normative**, you must take them to be unvarying or perhaps slightly varying statements about recognizably unvarying truth" ("Epilogue", 279).

to use Christian language properly ... that will take care of the question of truth. There is no **special** question of that kind" ("Epilogue", 279). Frei exhorts Lindbeck to stick with his own agenda in the book, that is, its ecumenical role for prompting dialogue within Christian communities. However, at the same time, he "confess[es] to some **qualified** sympathy for the moderate propositionalist" ("Epilogue", 279). This, I suggest, is due to the way in which Frei understands Barth's hermeneutic to function. For Barth, "... dogmatics is a second-order redescription of the normative text of the church, in effect the gospel narratives, the church's paradigmatic story and the paradigm of its life and language" ("Epilogue", 280). As Frei reads him, Barth bypasses the question of "truthfulness" by "articulating both the unity and the central significance of the ascriptive subject at the **textual** level²⁷³, but [Barth] cannot specify the manner or mode in which the textual statements are historical, while nonetheless asserting that they are" (Types, 90). Barth asserts the historical nature of the text without explaining how. Thus Frei's continued reference to Kelsey's analysis of Barthian gospel exegesis²⁷⁴: "Indeed, it is as though Barth took scripture to be one vast, loosely structured non-

273 An allusion to Kelsey's analysis of Barthian exegesis: "The characteristic patterns in the narrative guide what the theologian says about the agent/subject of the stories, in much the way that patterns in a novel might guide what a literary critic may say about the characters in the novel" (Uses, 48-49).

274 Cited in Types, 90 & 135.

fictional novel" (Uses, 48²⁷⁵).

As I argued above, Frei finds much of his own theological concerns to be exhibited in Lindbeck's book. However, I suggest that Frei recognised his own work to be an extension of this model. He writes: **"Without the absolute priority of that Christian-ecumenical reality, without its reality, forget the 'rule' or regulative approach, forget the cultural-linguistic theory- forget the book"** ("Epilogue", 278: italics Frei). He recognises the concerns of a cultural-linguistic model to be bound up in the desire for an explanation of what occurs when ecumenical dialogue leads to reconciliation between churches without any change in doctrine:

"The cultural-linguistic theory or approach to religion is there solely for the service it can render to the ongoing description or self-description of the Christian community and, by extension, to conversation in which members of various religions would be making grammatical

²⁷⁵ Kelsey again on Barth's view of Scripture, "Reading and, indeed, understanding a passage of scripture does not necessarily bring man into an encounter with God. But it may. Sometimes, when used in church as the basis of preaching and worship, the texts may provide the occasion on which the revelatory event occurs here and now and God 'speaks as I and addresses as thou'. On such occasions the stories 'work'. The agent they render is truly made present to the worshiper in a revelatory encounter" (Uses, 47). Kelsey refers to this as a **functional** view of the way Scripture is understood as being authoritative. For Barth, the biblical "texts are authoritative not in virtue of any inherent property they may have ... but in virtue of a function they fill in the life of the Christian community. To say that scripture is 'inspired' is to say that God has promised that sometimes, at his gracious pleasure, the ordinary human words of the biblical texts will become the Word of God, the occasion for rendering an agent present to us in a Divine-human encounter" (Uses, 48).

remarks to each other about living, believing, and ritually enacting what their religion is about" ("Epilogue", 277).

I suggest that Frei **extends** Lindbeck's theory to encompass theological method for self-description not solely for the purposes of dialogue but for self-consciousness of what is occurring when one begins theological investigation. Whilst this may be a subtle extension, it is one nonetheless and more significantly, Lindbeck appears not once in Frei's Types. Furthermore, it is unclear whether Frei's sympathies with what he calls "moderate propositionalists" are not founded in Lindbeck's own work.

IV. George Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic" model

I propose to investigate whether or not Lindbeck is entirely faithful to his own 'model' or whether a cultural-linguistic approach smuggles in a form of "propositionalism". Investigating such a proposal would allow the affinities between Frei and Lindbeck on the issue of how "truth" may function within the Christian community.

Lindbeck notes that "one of the major inadequacies of the 'propositionalist' model is that it "emphasizes the cognitive aspects of religion and stresses the ways in which church doctrines function as informative propositions or

truth claims about objective realities" (ND, 16). Thus, when this model is applied to doctrines, citing Hans Kung, "if a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false" (ND, 16). Conversely, the cultural-linguistic model views doctrines as functioning like rules ("regulatively") not propositionally ("describing states of affairs"). Thus, on Lindbeck's model, "[d]octrines regulate truth-claims by excluding some and permitting others, but the logic of their communally authoritative use hinders or prevents them from specifying positively what is to be affirmed" (ND, 19). My enquiry will focus on what is necessary and sufficient for religious statements to have ontological truth within Lindbeck's model.

At the outset, Lindbeck distinguishes between the meaning ("intrasystematically true") and the truth ("ontologically true") of a statement. Meaning is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for statements to be ontologically true and thus carry propositional force. The sufficient condition is alluded to by Lindbeck as "if the form of life and understanding of the world shaped by an **authentic use** of the Christian stories does **in fact** correspond to God's being and will, then the proper use of 'Christus est Dominus' is not only intrasystematically but also ontologically true", (ND, 65). Yet, how does one distinguish between 'authentic use' from 'non-authentic use'?

Lindbeck, cites Aquinas as a good example of a moderate 'cognitivist' or 'propositionalist' whose theory fits into a cultural-linguistic approach.

Aquinas distinguishes between the **significatum** (the signified) and the **modus significandi** (the mode of signifying). Following Aquinas, Lindbeck proposes that if we understand that human language about God is inadequate, that is, it may not correspond directly to God's being, it will fit into a cultural-linguistic approach. Yet, he is not satisfied with this. He asserts that the "**significata** can be affirmed: it is possible to claim that the intellectual judgement "God is good" refers or corresponds to **objective reality** even when one cannot specify the **modus signigicandi...**", (ND, 67). How is this possible? Through 'warranted belief'. "The **significatum** of the claim that Jesus truly and objectively was raised from the dead provides the warrant for behaving in the ways recommended by the resurrection stories even when one grants the impossibility of specifying the mode in which those stories signify", (ND, 67). "Thus, propositional truth and falsity characterize ordinary religious language when it is used to mold lives through prayer, praise, preaching, and exhortation", (ND, 69). It is through these speech acts (which are the **authentic uses** of religious language) that religious language is both meaningful ("intrasystematic") and (in fact)

ontologically true. Lindbeck's model rejects doctrines as carrying propositional force **because they are "second-order discourse" about first-order uses of religious language**. Assertions with propositional force can only be made when speaking **authentically** religiously. Yet he concedes the possibility of doctrines "making affirmations with ontological import", (ND, 69). Thus, far from being anti-propositionalist, Lindbeck's model incorporates statements which carry 1) propositional force because they are 2) ontologically true.

Whilst he is sceptical about doctrines being ontologically "true" if they are authentically used by the Christian community, they are "ontologically true". They would not have propositional force if they are not used authentically. Yet, most of the time, it would seem that doctrines are used in this fashion. In fact, by Lindbeck's own model, it would hold that if a person skilled in "how to use [the religious system's] language and practice its way life" (this is very close to Frei's depiction of the "moderate propositionalist" who says "Go on, show people how to use Christian language properly and that will take care of the question of truth" ("Epilogue", 279)) and who is capable of determining the propositional meaning of its affirmations, would also be capable of making second-order statements (doctrinal affirmations like "Christ is Lord") which are

ontologically true.

Lindbeck actually concedes that "there is nothing in the cultural-linguistic approach that requires the rejection of the epistemological realism and correspondence theory of truth which ... is implicit in the conviction of believer's when they **rightly use** a sentence such as 'Christ is Lord'; they are uttering a true first-order proposition", (ND, 69). In conclusion, rather than being anti-propositionalist, a cultural-linguistic view of religion, I maintain, smuggles ontological truth into religious systems via authentic use of speech acts by the community. Whilst cultural-linguistic models seem to be interested in truth within the system only, I concur with Placher's analysis that Lindbeck "... seems to sympathize with appropriately modest cognitive claims" and is rather a "crypto-cognitivist"²⁷⁶. He admits that this "reading" of Lindbeck only occurred to him after he read the book a second time (*Ibid.*, 47).

Now that it has been demonstrated 1) that Frei's model of Christian self-description is sympathetic to (and is not dissimilar to and may well employ) Lindbeck's model of a cultural-linguistic theory of religion and 2) that this theory smuggles in a "weak" form of propositionalism- founded

²⁷⁶William C. Placher, "Paul Ricoeur and Postliberal Theology: A Conflict of Interpretations", *Modern Theology* (4:1) 1987, 47.

only during "authentic" use by the community, I will now turn to an analysis of how an external critique might look when lodged against this way of construing theology.

IV. Final Critique

The challenge of a hermeneutic employing suspicion is seemingly bypassed by Frei's prior theological and methodological commitments. On the one hand, this could be seen as authorised. David Demson argues that Frei's position is located in his interpretation of the doctrine of creation²⁷⁷. The doctrine celebrates the inherent "goodness" of all that which is created, including human beings. "The Christian doctrine of creation, Frei indicates, affirms that body and human language, (the two modes of self expression) are good. So language is not alienated"²⁷⁸.

On the other hand, David Kelsey argues that "however

²⁷⁷ He finds Frei arguing this position in The Identity and "The Literal Reading" essay. Two things need to be noted: Firstly, Demson's is an interesting interpretation of The Identity since it is usually seen as an investigation into the doctrine of Christology. Kelsey cites Frei's work in The Identity as such "In recent theology, this type of claim [authority of narrativity] has been worked out in varying degrees of detail in regard to a number of traditional theological loci: Christology..." ("Biblical Narrative and Theological Anthropology" in Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 121). Secondly, and more importantly, nowhere in The Identity do I find Frei appealing to the doctrine of creation to justify the perspicuity of scripture.

²⁷⁸ David Demson, "Response to Walter Lowe" in Modern Theology (8:2) April 1992, 146.

basic scripture may be to other theological loci²⁷⁹, in its narrativity it **cannot** serve to authorize a theological anthropology" ("TA", 121). Indeed, he argues, that by their very logic, narrative appeals to scripture do not allow for the construction of an authoritative theological anthropology. This runs counter to what George Stroup considers to be the advantages of a "narrative theology" which maintains that

"Christian faith is rooted in particular historical events which are recounted in the narratives of Christian Scripture and tradition, that these historical narratives are the basis for Christian affirmations about the nature of God and the reality of grace, and that these historical narratives and the faith they spawn are redemptive when they are appropriated at the level of **personal identity** and existence"²⁸⁰.

Kelsey does allow for a modified understanding of the relationship; "[t]heological remarks are related to biblical narratives, to be sure, but it is not a relation of 'authorized by'" ("TA", 133). He argues that Frei's appeal to narrative identity based on unsubstitutable identity is not a "**theoretical** description"²⁸¹. Rather, he attempted to

²⁷⁹ He cites the doctrines of Christology (Frei), Revelation (Thiemann) and God (Thomas Tracy, Goldberg), ("TA", 121).

²⁸⁰ 39 George W. Stroup, The Promise of Narrative Theology (London: SCM, 1984), 17.

²⁸¹ It is dogmatic assertion: "... the self-involving quality of religious statements is the indispensable logical condition or interpretive setting for the intelligibility of the doctrine that Jesus is the crucified and risen Saviour. It **is** to affirm, very simply that, unlike other cases of factual assertion, that of the resurrection of

"show that the conceptual schemes employed by various theoretical descriptions of human personhood all fail to grasp the unitariness of a personal identity precisely in its unsubstitutability" ("TA", 133). Narrative depictions of persons, it is argued, are helpful for they 1) focus on a single individual and not the individual in abstraction and 2) identify that individual in action, not as a series of related characteristics. Kelsey concedes that "realistic narrative is the mode of discourse uniquely suited to describe an individual person's **unsubstitutable** unitariness" ("TA", 134). Yet, he maintains that this is not the basis for a theological anthropology for its focus is confined to particular individuals, in Frei's case Jesus Christ, rather than human beings as such.

If the appeal is made that the particular characters of the narrative are "types" which we then come to identify with²⁸², then also the distinctiveness of the narrative is lost. Kelsey writes, "when the biblical story is mined for archetypes in the service of theological anthropology, it is precisely its narrativity that is set aside" ("TA", 136). In

Christ shapes a new life" (LJC, xiii).

282 This is what George Stroup seems to imply when he writes: "Traditionally Christians have claimed that anyone who makes [the] confession [that Jesus is the "only begotten Son of God"] is led to reconsider what kind of person one is and how one lives in the world... **What a person believes about Jesus Christ cannot be separated from how one lives in the world without tearing apart the fabric of Christian faith**", (The Promise of Narrative Theology (London: SCM, 1984), 15).

conclusion, Kelsey's analysis of appeals to human identity based on biblical narratives seems decisive. These appeals can be of only one sort; specific individuals who are portrayed in the narrative, in a way similar to character depictions in a novel²⁸³.

Is Frei justified then in dismissing the whole phenomenological-hermeneutical investigation into personhood carried on by Ricoeur and others? Is it essential for hermeneutics to recognise the possibility of human self-deception or might one plausibly accept the "goodness" of the human based on narrative appeals to scripture? Furthermore, Frei's analysis of Christian self-description could be challenged as has been Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model; the same critique may hold, **mutatis mutandis**. Lindbeck has been charged with abdicating genuine conversation external to Christian ways of speaking. As one dubious commentator characterises the position, "a hedgehog curling up before the advancing lorry"²⁸⁴. Is it adequate for Christianity to be satisfied with self-description or cannot external critiques to the systems have legitimate force?

²⁸³ Of course, this is the way in which Kelsey reads Barth's hermeneutic.

²⁸⁴ Mark Corner, "Review of George A. Lindbeck's: The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age" in Modern Theology, (3:1) 1986, 113.

V. Concluding Remarks

I have attempted within this chapter to sketch Frei's own position concerning Christian self-description. I have then compared this with that of Carl Henry, Gary Comstock, and Michael Goldberg on the issues of history & reference and truth & meaning. I have then sketched the position further in relation to George Lindbeck's and offered a suggestion that not only are these positions similar (with Frei understanding his own as an extension of Lindbeck's agenda) but that criticism from a hermeneutic of suspicion applied to Lindbeck could, **mutatis mutandis**, be equally as harsh applied to Frei. The interesting fact is that nowhere in the literature do I find any critique or discussion of Frei's model for theological self-description.

Frei's exposition of Christian self description depends heavily upon a reading of the biblical narrative which is informed by literary theories of reference, history, and the genre "realistic narrative". Though Frei breaks his ties with the New Critics for practising a "disguised Christian reading" of texts, literary theory still remains a crucial aspect of his theological investigation.

III/2. "Ricoeur and external critiques: A new definition of the force of ideology?": Ricoeur takes a mediating position between Gadamer and Habermas regarding the nature of the person reading the text ('understanding') and the necessity of uncovering ideologies in texts to subsequently overcome them ('ideology-critique'). Ricoeur's notion of distanciation (based on authorial intention inscribed in the textual form which is not necessarily in the content- "the text is a ship which breaks its moorings") gives hermeneutical distance ('critical instance') whilst participation (Gadamer's 'belonging') in the texts of one's culture is preserved (principle of "no unmediated reflection"). Ricoeur challenges Habermas on the non-meta-hermeneutical positioning of ideology-critique due to its status as non-scientific. For Ricoeur, all texts are ideological, thus critique is valuable to uncover these ideologies. Yet, since identity is always mediated and texts are, **par excellence**, 'identity-formulating'; they are necessary.

The chapter engages Ricoeur in dialogue with William Rogers on 'wagering' of texts as scriptural, Said on ideology of distinctions (us/them), and Thompson who sees Ricoeur's critique of Habermas as invalid (distanciation and textual identity formulation misguided). However, Ricoeur does seem to extend his theory to all semiotic systems, not simply to texts.

I. Introduction

"To be forced to spend years in the concentration camp of a highly civilized yet warlike and confused enemy is to feel oneself invited to make a new examination of what is termed civilization and its basis in experience and thought. Professor Paul Ricoeur accepted the challenge of this invitation by setting for himself the task of mastering and expounding just that German philosophy which seeks a new and unprejudiced view of life at its foundations. Upon achieving possession of this phenomenological philosophy, Ricoeur undertook to develop it further and appropriately enough, in just the direction designed to throw light upon that strange division or fault in human nature which from time to time is manifested in such phenomena as Nazi concentration camps²⁸⁵.

²⁸⁵ Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree in Paul Ricoeur, Husserl: An analysis of his phenomenology (Evanston:

This citation is, I believe, an appropriate introduction to a study of Ricoeur's stance toward ideology and its subsequent critique. His intellectual journey was precipitated by this very phenomenon of ideology manifested by the sheer power of language to affect the human being. Ricoeur's distinctive contribution to the study of ideology²⁸⁶ is to recognise that ideology is not necessarily a negative condition of social being. Indeed, he argues that "the phenomenon of ideology is susceptible of a relatively positive assessment"²⁸⁷. Ricoeur understands this to be an essential task due to our inheritance from the Enlightenment failure to find a meta-perspective which would help humanity to fashion a utopic society. The ultimate gains of the Enlightenment project lay, rather, in the recognition of human situatedness within history and the inability to transcend this condition of historical understanding²⁸⁸. Indeed, in advancing this

Northwestern University Press, 1967) [translated by Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree], xiii.

²⁸⁶ The critique of ideology (Ideologiekritik) is best represented by Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas of the Frankfurt School for Social Research. For a full discussion of the major figures involved, see Rolf Wiggershaus, The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance [Translated by Michael Robertson] (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1994). For a discussion of the significance of the Frankfurt School for theology see Thiselton: 1992, chapter XI, "The Hermeneutics of Socio-Critical Theory".

²⁸⁷ "Science and Ideology" in Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, [edited and translated by John B. Thompson] (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1981), 222.

²⁸⁸ Thus, "... the modern reflection on the properly historical condition of understanding history" (SI, 224).

thesis, Ricoeur hopes to break down the traditionally understood opposition between science and ideology without collapsing one into the other. Ricoeur proposes that his approach to a critique of ideology incorporates a more sound epistemological framework than that of Mannheim or Habermas (two figures Ricoeur dialogues with extensively²⁸⁹) and thus, is in a better position to deal with the phenomenon. His methodological stance towards ideology is to situate the critique "within the framework of an interpretation which knows itself to be historically situated, but which strives to introduce so far as it can a factor of distancing into the work that we constantly resume in order to interpret our cultural heritage" (SI, 224). His approach to the understanding of ideology is thus closely linked to 1) his contention that there is no unmediated reflection of the person from within the consciousness (all reflection is mediated through the semiotic systems of culture) and 2) his interpretative theory (mainly of texts) in which distancing is a key element. I will spend the next two sections unpacking what is involved in Ricoeur's theory that there is no unmediated reflection and its implications for textual interpretation, focusing on his theory of distancing. It is necessary to grasp the importance of these two elements if one is to understand Ricoeur's unique

289 _____. Lectures on Ideology and Utopia. [edited by George H. Taylor] New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. Mannheim is discussed in chapters 10 & 16 whilst Habermas is discussed in chapters 13 & 14.

contribution to the discussion surrounding ideology.

Furthermore, this debate is of utmost importance for theological discussion for if one is to recognise that ideology affects reading, then one's reading of a text is likewise influenced by ideology. One only needs to look at the history of Christianity (especially Christian missions) to recognise the enormous impact of latent ideologies having disastrous effects²⁹⁰. There is a need to formulate a theory of critical distance (Ricoeur's "critical instance") between texts and readers which would allow readers to discern the ideologies of both the text and themselves. If so, then the hope is that the reader will not be merely projecting one's ideologies onto a text which would distort not only the meaning of the text, but the text's ultimate significance, namely its ability to challenge and transform the person. Rather the text would be free to operate, as scripture, to challenge and evoke a response from the reader. Ricoeur's intentions are similar to that of any theologian construing the biblical texts as scripture. As David Kelsey observes, "... the way in which any particular theologian concretely takes biblical texts as 'scripture' and uses them as 'authority' in actually doing theology will vary with the way he decides to construe scripture's functioning in the

²⁹⁰ A good survey of this material can be found in Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

church's common life as the occasion and mode of God's presence" (Uses of Scripture, 183). Ricoeur's decision to note the presence of ideology in both the text and the reader makes way for his "second naiveté" which would allow scripture to function as scripture. He shares Kelsey's observation that "[t]o say that scripture is normative for Christian theology is to say that there is something in it **determinate** enough to impose some controls on what theologians may say in the name of elucidating Christian faith and life" (Uses, 192).

II. The phenomenological quest

William E. Rogers' critique of Ricoeur²⁹¹ centres around the privileging of texts, specifically when one construes a text as scriptural. His critique is two-fold. Firstly, he contends that Ricoeur's theory cannot account for **any** difference between the interpretive process as applied respectively to Scripture and literature. This attack is well-founded for Ricoeur clearly distinguishes between Scriptural texts and those which are not. Ricoeur refers to his decision to view some texts as Scriptural as a "wager". Thus, Rogers maintains that within Ricoeur's theory, privileging will only be warranted if 1) an account is

²⁹¹ William E. Rogers, "Ricoeur and the Privileging of Texts: Scripture and Literature" in Religion and Literature 18:1 (Spring 1986).

developed which allocates for a difference (of a "type") between Scripture and literature or 2) Ricoeur asserts that the interpretive process is the same in both cases. The latter assertion would then lend itself to the criticism that the privileging is subjective and thus irrational.

Rogers' analysis of this issue focuses on Ricoeur's The Symbolism of Evil (1960). In this work, the theory of appropriation parallels that of a wager when construing a text as scripture.

"I wager that I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings if I follow the **indication** of symbolic thought. That wager then becomes the task of **verifying** my wager and saturating it, so to speak, with intelligibility. In return, the task transforms my wager: in betting **on** the significance of the symbolic world, I bet at the same time **that** my wager will be restored to me in power of reflection, in the element of coherent discourse"²⁹².

Rogers contends that "[t]he metaphor of the 'wager', in fact, seems to hint at a certain arbitrariness in choosing a particular symbolism for privileging"²⁹³. Nor does Ricoeur

²⁹² Paul Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil (Translated by Emerson Buchanan), (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 355.

²⁹³ Meeting this objection head-on, Kelsey would argue that **no** position is "neutral" in respect to granting privileged status to a text: "Theologians, however, do offer much more elaborate and systematic 'reasons' for taking biblical texts as 'authority' ... these reasons are never 'theological-position-neutral'. They always derive their force from a logically prior imaginative judgment about how best to construe the mode of God's presence. That is, they always presuppose a prior decision about what it is to be a Christian" (Uses, 166).

say exactly what difference it makes in interpretation when one symbolism is appropriated over one" (Rogers 1986: 7). Ricoeur's "explanation" for this "wagering" is rooted in the "contingency and restrictedness of a culture that has hit upon these symbols rather than others" (SE, 367). Although Rogers recognises that Ricoeur grounds his wager upon this explanation, he dismisses it as completely arbitrary. I will argue, however, that this explanation is an essential aspect within Ricoeur's theory which is not unpacked fully with The Symbolism of Evil. Understood in its fullest sense, I maintain that Ricoeur's "wager" is neither irrational nor arbitrary, as Rogers contends, but rather based on the phenomenological investigations which have preoccupied Ricoeur for over thirty years.

IIa. Reflexive Philosophy

Kevin Vanhoozer sums up Ricoeur's position succinctly: "One's very selfhood is ... a gift of language and literature"²⁹⁴. Ricoeur maintains that due to the impossibility of pure self-reflection, self-understanding is mediated through the symbol systems of a particular culture. He maintains that it is these semiotic systems we are acquainted with, not those from another culture. This is due

²⁹⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Biblical narrative in the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in hermeneutics and theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 275.

to Ricoeur's recognition that these are the symbols which affect us unconsciously from birth and would be in line with the Wittgensteinian proposal, "form of life". However, Ricoeur's theory stops short of maintaining immediate appropriation of the symbols. He maintains that there can be a "critical instance", an analysis of the efficacy of those symbols from within a culture. Only after this critical analysis would one be entitled to appropriate the proposed symbols as one's own. Rogers does not seem to recognise this critical investigation which Ricoeur requires prior to appropriation²⁹⁵. However, I maintain that this is the crucial part of the theory because it allows Ricoeur to maintain a "soft" condition of critical participation in the symbolic systems. In doing so, he holds the line between the idealism of pure reflection which would allow non-ideological discourse (if it could be re-formulated) and the reality of the effects of one's culture upon the consciousness, which Gadamer and Heidegger stress too strongly. The crucial moment within Ricoeur's theory for addressing Rogers' objection, occurs between the critical analysis and the appropriation of the symbol system.

I Ib. Critical participation

²⁹⁵ In terms of Locke's notion of maximal concernment, Ricoeur would recognise that religious issues fall into this category. Therefore, after a hermeneutic of suspicion is employed in the investigation of this semiotic system in particular, then one may be entitled to appropriate that particular religion as one's own. I will investigate this process in depth below.

Some of Ricoeur's earliest work begins by looking at myths as symbol systems. He maintains that some myths are better than others ("a higher level of elaboration") based on the myth's addressing issues of both particularity and universality. He has, therefore, created a scale by which some myths are more adequate than others²⁹⁶. For example, the "Adam myth", Ricoeur argues, is more adequate because it "concentrates the event of the Fall in one man, one act, one instant, [and] likewise disperses it over several characters and several episodes ... [t]he conflict of the myths is thus included in a single myth"²⁹⁷. The "Adam myth" is superior to the other myths [Orphic, Babylonian] because it incorporates aspects of other construals of evil within a schematic both interiorised and exteriorised. That is, Adam is represented as a particular individual whilst he is incorporated into a narrative encompassing a universal scope. "Thus the biblical schema of deviation, opposed to the Orphic schema of affecting exteriority, receives its rational equivalent in the Kantian idea of the subversion of the maxim" ("HS:I, 303").

²⁹⁶ I demonstrate in section IIIa. of this chapter the structural basis for such a decision.

²⁹⁷ "The hermeneutics of symbols: I" in Paul Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations [Edited by Don Ihde, Translated by Dennis Savage] (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 295.

Ricoeur maintains that symbols can also be subjected to philosophical reflection. "Hence I do not take the concept of original sin to be a theme extraneous to philosophy but, on the contrary, to be a theme subject to an intentional analysis, to a hermeneutics of rational symbols whose task is to reconstruct the layers of meaning which have become sedimented in the concept" ("HS:I", 305). For Ricoeur, this "breaking through" the initial signification of the symbol, leads to a "second naiveté" which unleashes the power of the symbol anew. The hermeneutical method allows the symbol to speak once again and "it is by **interpreting** that we can **hear** again. Thus it is in hermeneutics that the symbol's gift of meaning and the endeavour to understand by deciphering are knotted together" (SE, 351). This passionate engagement with the symbol, what I have called critical participation, Ricoeur refers to as entering the "hermeneutical circle". He says of this phenomenon, "This circle is not vicious ... [i]t is quite alive and stimulating. You must believe in order to understand. No interpreter in fact will ever come close to what his text says if he does not live in the aura of the meaning that is sought" ("HS:I", 298). Entering the hermeneutical circle requires that the individual engage with the symbol. This engagement (if it leads to the appropriation of the symbol as adequate) enables a "second naiveté" which opens up the way for belief, fresh and new: "I believe that being can still

speak to me, no longer indeed in the pre-critical form of immediate belief but as the second immediacy that hermeneutics aims at" ("HS:I", 298).

Yet, there is still a need to elaborate the justification of the gradation of symbolic systems. However, Ricoeur argues, this is precisely the limitation of any phenomenology of symbols, for the question of truth is bypassed and the question of warranted appropriation still needs to be addressed. Ricoeur writes of this impasse,

"If a phenomenologist should give the name truth to internal coherence, to the systematization of the world of symbols, it is a truth without belief, truth at a distance, reduced truth. From such truth this question has been eliminated: **Do I myself believe that? What do I personally make of these symbolic meanings?**" ("HS:I", 297) 298.

Since appropriation of the symbol is crucial, Ricoeur's stance towards the symbol systems needed to be "emotionally intense and at the same time critical" ("HS:I", 297) 299. He maintains that this critical participation with the symbol allows one to "belong to" yet alienate the symbol-system

298 Ricoeur writes in a similar fashion, "Although the phenomenologist may give the name of truth to the internal coherence, the systematicity, of the world of symbols, such truth is without belief, truth at a distance, reduced, from which one has expelled the question: do I believe that? what do I make of these symbolic meaning, these hierophanies?" (SE, 353-354).

299 He writes elsewhere, "It **has been necessary** to enter into a passionate, though critical, relation with the truth-value of each symbol" (SE, 354).

concurrently. "It is only by participating in this dynamics that comprehension can reach the strictly critical dimension of exegesis and become a hermeneutic; but then one must abandon the position-or rather, the exile- of the remote and disinterested spectator, in order to appropriate in each case a particular symbolism" (SE, 354).

IIC. Critical Appropriation

Appropriation of a symbolic system first involves recognition of the text as **other**. He argues, "to understand is not to project oneself into the text; it is to receive an enlarged self from the apprehension of proposed worlds which are the genuine object of interpretation"³⁰⁰. The relationship between the "efficacy" of the symbols and their "truth" would be the ability of the symbols to disclose "authentic selfhood" (see chapter II). It is this "objectification" of the text (the text as "other") which complements the act of appropriation. Likewise, this objectification is possible because of the inherent distanciation that necessarily accompanies the inscribing of a text. John B. Thompson states that Ricoeur's argument is that "hermeneutics can no longer treat problems of method as secondary and derivative, as Gadamer tends to do; for we

³⁰⁰ "Appropriation" in Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, [edited and translated by John B. Thompson] (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1981), 182-183.

belong to a tradition only in and through a distance which implies the possibility of objective analysis and critique"³⁰¹. Thus, Ricoeur sets out to amend Gadamer's work- what he refers to as a "supplementation to the hermeneutics of tradition"³⁰². This "correction" of Gadamer involves the recognition of distanciation which, Ricoeur contends, will lead to an "emancipation of the text" (from the complete participation of the individual) and thus, allows space for the "critical instance".

III. The Prominence of Distanciation

Ricoeur's literary theory meshes with his earlier work on phenomenology and symbolism. I will now sketch some of the major aspects of his literary-theoretical framework. Ricoeur maintains that with the inscription of discourse, at least two phenomena occur: autonomy of the text which leads to distanciation and a certain degree of fixation of meaning.

The autonomy of the text refers to the three "eclipses" of a piece of written discourse (though he contends that the "seeds" of distanciation are also present in spoken

³⁰¹ John B. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction", in Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, [edited and translated by John B. Thompson] (Cambridge: C.U.P., 19810), 20.

³⁰² "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" in Paul Ricoeur, From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II [Translated by John B. Thompson] (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern, 1991), 298.

discourse). The written text eclipses 1) the author's intention, 2) the conditions which produced the text and 3) the original addressee/s. Thus, if one questioned the author as to what was meant by a certain phrase, Ricoeur would maintain that this would make no difference, since the text is now part of the public world and interpreted as such. He contends that "the text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say, and every exegesis unfolds its procedures within the circumference of a meaning that has broken its moorings to the psychology of the author"³⁰³. A similar situation occurs in relation to the addressee. Ricoeur argues, with Gadamer, that the text eclipses this original "intended" audience and becomes part of the public domain. "If the meaning of a text is open to anyone who can read, then it is the omni-temporality of meaning which opens it to unknown readers; and the historicity of reading is the counterpart of this specific omni-temporality" ("Appropriation", 192). Ricoeur also contends that "the work **decontextualizes** itself, from the sociological [conditions of the production of the text] as well as the psychological point of view, and is able to **recontextualize** itself differently in the act of reading" ("HI", 298). It is this tri-fold autonomy of the text which produces distaniciation

³⁰³ "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text" in Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, [edited and translated by John B. Thompson] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 201.

from the author, the original addressee, and the sociological conditions which facilitated the production of this particular text.

Gadamer's addition of textual distance (**Schriftlichkeit**) to the lingual dimension (**Sprachlichkeit**) was supposed to account for this distance between text and reader. Ricoeur pushes this distance further for he maintains, following Hegel, that "the distanciation revealed by writing is already present in discourse itself, which contains the seeds of the distanciation of the **said** from the **saying**" ("HI", 299). However, the autonomy of the text does not mean that the text has an infinite number of meanings (as it does for some post-structuralists). Rather, there is a certain fixation of meaning that occurs with the inscribing of a discourse. It is the text, not the reader, which presents a limitation of the number of potential interpretations. These potential interpretations would be delimited by the author's choice of words (and in this sense, the author stands as a spectre over the text), which in turn, fix the parameters of possible interpretations. He writes, "... if it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal" (IT, 79: emphasis mine). Moreover, following Karl Popper: "An interpretation must not only be probable, but more probable than another

interpretation" (IT, 79). Ultimately, it is the phenomenon of distanciation which is productive and a central point in Ricoeur's theory building toward a critique of ideology for it creates space for that "critical instance". The distanciation between text and reader achieves this critical distance which creates the conditions for a detachment which allows Ricoeur's theory to escape the charges of subjectivity and thus irrationality when one "wagers" on appropriating a symbolic system as one's own.

Ricoeur then turned his enquiries to the discipline of structuralism³⁰⁴ where his method of scaling the adequacy of mythic-symbolic systems might find justification. Rogers acknowledges Ricoeur's turn to structuralism: "Ricoeur's strenuous efforts to incorporate the insights of French structuralism into his theory show, I think, his concern for constructing a hermeneutics that can claim to produce understanding at some level through explanation on the linguistic model" (Rogers 1986: 13).

IIIa. Explanation and Understanding

Ricoeur maintains that interpretation is not the synthesis of the dialectic between "explanation" and

³⁰⁴ However, as noted in the last chapter (Ricoeur and Structuralism: A revised notion of truth), Ricoeur's recourse through structuralism met with minimal gains and he now prefers to refer to his work as "post-structuralist".

"understanding". He understands this distortion to have its origins in Dilthey's extension of the method³⁰⁵ found in the "natural sciences" to the "human sciences" ("HI", 299)³⁰⁶. This extension placed "explanation" in the "natural sciences"³⁰⁷ as a process of "understanding" dissimilar to that of the "human sciences"³⁰⁸. However, for Ricoeur, the locus of the problem is not in the methodology of the types of enquiry, but rather in the failure to recognise that explanation arises from the use of language. Hence the recourse to a structural analysis of language: "Discourse ... can be produced as a work displaying structure and form ... the production of discourse as a work involves an objectification ... [which] 'takes hold' in structures

305 Gadamer disagrees with Ricoeur as the origins of the problem lying with Dilthey. In speaking of "why Heidegger's advance over Dilthey is valuable for the problem of hermeneutics ... [Gadamer states] [t]rue, Dilthey had already **rejected** applying the methods of the natural sciences to the human sciences..." (Truth and Method (second revised edition) [Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall], (New York: Continuum, 1993), 261: emphasis mine).

306 Gadamer also makes this point: "The experience of the sociohistorical world cannot be raised to a science by the inductive procedure of the natural sciences ... historical research does not endeavor to grasp the concrete phenomenon as an instance of a universal rule" (Truth and Method (second revised edition) [Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall], (New York: Continuum, 1993), 4).

307 "When there are external facts to observe, hypotheses to be submitted to empirical verification, general laws for covering such facts, theories to encompass the scattered laws in a systematic whole, and subordination of empirical generalizations to hypothetic-deductive procedures, then we may say that we 'explain'" (II, 72).

308 By contrast, "understanding ... relies on the meaningfulness of such forms of expression as physiognomic, gestural, vocal, or written signs, and upon documents and monuments, which share with writing the general characteristics of inscription" (II, 72-73).

calling for a description and an explanation that mediate 'understanding' ("HI", 299). Thus, it is the "task of understanding to bring to discourse what is initially given as structure" ("HI", 299). It follows that rather than a choice between "truth" and "method" (as Gadamer maintains), there exists a dialectic³⁰⁹. Ricoeur's theory of fixation of meaning supplements the methodological investigations which uncover the range of possible meanings and how one comes to understand a text. This detour through structuralism is inescapable: "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'³¹⁰ that speaks therefrom" ("HI", 299).

IIIb. The revised notion of truth

Ricoeur's distinction between "sense" and "reference" opened up the path to a revised notion of truth. Following Frege, the "sense" is the internal organisation within the text itself, while the "reference" is the world opened up by the text (what Gadamer calls the "matter of the text"). It

³⁰⁹ "Explanation, then, will appear as the mediation between two stages of understanding ... from guess to validation" (II, 75).

³¹⁰ This word "matter" is what Ricoeur sometimes calls '**Sache**'. "The **Sache** is the **referent** of human experience" and the referent of the parables is "common human experience" (*Semeia* 4: 92).

is at this juncture that Ricoeur's methodological tools of 1) mediated reality and 2) textual autonomy (which culminates in distanciation) allow a critique of ideology. These tools allow 1) "recourse against any given reality" (because reality is construed) and thus 2) "the possibility of a critique of the real" ("HI", 300). Adding Heidegger's "projection of my utmost possibilities ... is the mode of the ... power to be: therein resides the subversive power of the imaginary" ("HI", 300). Ricoeur maintains that the imagination combined with the poetic function of the text (the reference being the world unfolded by the text) allows the self to be challenged by the possibilities configured within the text. Thus, viewing the text as unfolding a world displaces the subjectivity of the reader because "authentic self-understanding is something that ... can be instructed by the 'matter of the text'" ("HI", 301). The possibility of critique of oneself occurs due to the privileging of the text for the formation of self-identity.

"To understand is not to project oneself into the text but to expose oneself to it; it is to receive a self enlarged by the appropriation of the proposed worlds that interpretation unfolds ... [Only then] it is the matter of the text that gives the reader his or her dimension of subjectivity; understanding is thus no longer a constitution of which the subject possesses the key" ("HI", 301).

In sum, in the choice (the 'wager') to appropriate the text, the self is dispossessed of its understanding and challenged

by this world unfolded by the text³¹¹. It is thus, the poetic function of the text and the wagering of the individual on this disclosive power of the text, which ultimately provides the warrant for supplanting purely ideological readings of texts.

David Kelsey's analysis of differences within theological construals suggests that

"[theological positions] are the result of irreducible differences among imaginative construals of the mode of the presence of God; and they are evidence that this act of the imagination is decisive for the particular characteristics that give a theological position its particular specificity and most deeply separates it from other 'theological positions'" (Uses, 163).

Thus, Ricoeur's decision to view the disclosive power of scripture as primary for building Christian identity is derived from his prior inversion of the Aristotlean primacy of the ostensive referential function of a text to that of poetics. Kelsey's observation is relevant here as an analysis of Ricoeur's prior literary-theoretical commitment:

"... theologians' decisions about which role in an argument supporting a theological proposal ought to be filled by scripture is largely determined about how best to characterize the subject matter theological proposals are chiefly to elucidate ... Theologians decisions about how to use scripture,

311 "Distanciation from oneself demands that the appropriation of the proposed worlds offered by the text passes through the disappropriation of the self" ("HI", 301).

like their decisions about how to **construe** the scripture they use, are determined by decisions that are literally pre-text, i.e., logically prior to any attention to any particular text taken as authority for any particular theological proposal" (Uses, 169-170).

Kelsey suggests that one of the "range of limits to a theologian's freedom of imagination" is that it "has its ground in features of the common life of the church to which the imaginative act is accountable" (Uses, 170). The proposal "must be possible to formulate self-consistently, not only the proposal itself, but the data on which it is grounded, the warrant licensing the move from the data to the conclusion, and the backing on which the warrant is grounded" (Uses, 171). This creates several problems for Ricoeur. Firstly, he denies being a theologian and thus is not interested in construing his theological proposals within the context of the church. This creates, secondly, the problem of proper warranting. Since the context of the church is absent, his decision to view biblical texts as "scriptural" lacks proper warrant. Thus, there can be little distinction between texts held as scriptural without the prior commitment of faith.

IIIc. Edward Said on power within semiotic construals

Edward W. Said, a Palestinian literary critic, writes extensively about the latent power within semiotic systems,

especially texts. Said's critique is thus forceful for it addresses Ricoeur's system directly at its centre, the privileging of texts. However, unlike Habermas' theory of distorted communication, Said does not subscribe to **any** critique as meta-critical. Like Ricoeur, he understands even the most critical scholar to be temporally situated. He writes,

"No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally"³¹².

Said maintains that texts function as defining mechanisms, usually helping to define those in power rather than those overpowered. In the case of European domination of Asia, "[t]he Orient is ... one of [Europe's] most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Orientalism, 1-2). Said maintains that the labelling of the Other as Other creates distinctions between the powerful and the weak which in turn gives control to the powerful. "I have begun with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely **there**, just as the Occident is not just **there** either"

³¹² Edward W. Said, Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 10.

(Orientalism, 4). He argues that the creation of Europe, most importantly through literature, has led to Europe's domination of Asia. The logic of Said's critique is as follows. An interpretation of a text gains a traditional reading through a consensus which, in turn, subdues other readings³¹³. The failure to recognise power interests in human relations usually blinds one to the reality of this occurrence. Ultimately, this leads to the **creation** of distinctions between this/that, us/them, etc. which one understands as difference without the recognition that this distinction is perspectival and not necessarily true³¹⁴.

Said contends that his critique allows the critic the freedom to recognise the underlying power structures. He contends that "my whole point is to say that we can better understand the persistence and durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were **productive**, not unilaterally inhibiting" (Orientalism, 14). Thus, an analysis of a culture's literature is productive because one's own culture impresses one to think in a certain

³¹³ This premise is based on the principle of hegemony; namely that certain cultural forms predominate as certain ideas are more influential than others.

³¹⁴ "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Orientalism, 2).

way (us/them). These impressions channel creativity through a specific cultural grid which, in turn, produces a certain way of thinking. Alternative thinking attempts to avoid the cultural grid's premises and is truly creative because it challenges the "traditional" ways of thinking³¹⁵. Thus, for Said, alternative ways of thinking help the process of understanding one's own culture and, in turn, help to formulate a critique of its values. "Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is- and does not simply represent- a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (Orientalism, 12).

This powerful critique of textuality can be further extended to religious texts. "Like culture, religion therefore furnishes us with systems of authority and with canons of order whose regular effect is either to compel subservience or to gain adherents. This in turn gives rise to organized collective passions whose social and intellectual results are often disastrous"³¹⁶. The implications of Said's theory are two-fold; firstly, there is no meta-situatedness, no Archimedean point of reference from which to adjudicate among competing interpretations and

³¹⁵ Said's argument here is founded upon Michel Foucault's analysis in The Archeology of Knowledge.

³¹⁶ Edward W. Said, The World, The Text, and The Critic (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 290.

secondly, there is no meta-beginning point, the hermeneutical circle is always entered while moving³¹⁷. Both of these points are also made forcefully by Ricoeur, especially in reference to Habermas³¹⁸. Ricoeur could also employ them to counter Rogers' criticism.

It must be noted, however, that Said is wary of embracing Ricoeur's investigations, specifically on the issue of reference. He contends that Ricoeur's suspension of ostensive reference leads to confusion in the sphere of action. He writes,

"Ricoeur assumes circumstantial reality to be symmetrically and exclusively the property of speech, or the speech situation, or what writers would have wanted to say had they not chosen to write. My contention is that worldliness does not come and go ... The point is that texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarefied form are **always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society- in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly**" (The World, the Text and the Critic, 34-35).

Said wishes to deconstruct the text as inscribed intention.

317 "There is no such thing as a merely given, or simply available, starting point: beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to **enable** what follows from them" (Orientalism, 16).

318 As the theory is applied to "meta-critical" non-hermeneutical systems of analysis, Said writes "Once an intellectual, the modern critic has become a cleric in the worst sense of the word. How their discourse can once again become a truly secular enterprise is, it seems to me, the most serious question critics can be asking one another" (The World, the Text, and the Critic, 292). Said attributes this to the shift in contemporary thought towards a greater degree of specialization which leads to an overemphasis on the "private and hermetic over the public and the social" (The World, the Text, and the Critic, 292).

Rather than gaining access, via a hermeneutics of suspicion, to the interiority of a hidden message in the mental life of the author, he focuses on the "exteriority" of the text- what it describes and how the description is made. After all, domination of the Other is achieved as the Western author, "renders [the Orient's] mysteries plain for and to the West" (Orientalism,21). Ricoeur's description of the dialogic situation is a "simplified idealization, and far from being a conversation between equals, the discursive situation is more usually like the unequal relation between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed" (The World, the Text and the Critic,48)³¹⁹. Ultimately, Said's objections require Ricoeur to state why one ought to privilege the text in regards to identity formation? Said concludes that "[m]y thesis is that any centrist, exclusivist conception of the text, or for that matter of the discursive situation as defined by Ricoeur, ignores the self-confirming will to power from which many texts can spring" (The World, the Text and the Critic,50).

It would also seem that the force of Said's critique can be extended to Ricoeur's "space" between the subject and object which he contends will allow for the necessary critical distance. Said's theory of "power interests", which

³¹⁹ Citation taken directly after a reference to Foucault, Archeology of Knowledge: "Speech is ... [the] very object of man's conflicts" (New York: Pantheon Books, 216).

are always manifested in the texts of the dominant culture, is critical of those very texts and thus, the texts invalidate themselves as to their usefulness for the formation of human identity. He contends that "[t]oo often, literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent, it has regularly seemed otherwise to me, and certainly my study of Orientalism has convinced me that society and literary culture can only be understood and studied together" (Orientalism, 27).

The agenda which then needs to be addressed concerning Ricoeur's construal of how ideological critique is possible is as follows; firstly, why privilege the text in the formation of self-identity rather than human understanding, etc. and secondly, does the phenomenon of distanciation create the necessary "space" for critical distance between the subject and the object (the text)? Rogers' critique addresses this first point whilst the second issue is the centre of the critique of Said³²⁰.

IV. A new understanding of "ideology"

³²⁰ I propose that the force of Said's critique is that the subject and object (culture and its literary productions) are bound in such a way that the recourse to "states of affairs" in the world accessed by human understanding would not be a viable option. Like many feminist critics, Said's theory suggests that a reformulation of language is necessary which would exclude inculturated self-understanding as the central control. However, Ricoeur would deny the possibility of such a reformulation for it is based on an "ideal of unrestrained and unconstrained communication" ("HI", 303).

Ideology-critique looks for the sub-text that manipulates the reader through the writer's interests. This leads to Said's, Foucault's and Habermas' understanding of all social interaction as a play of power. Ricoeur's "hermeneutic of suspicion" is suspicious of reading texts on both a communal and a personal level because structuralism ultimately collapses into post-structuralism. When the layers of meaning in semiotic systems become apparent, Ricoeur moves from the symbol to the word, and from metaphor to narrative. The role of hermeneutics is expanded to include the interpretation of systems such as linguistics (his studies on the double-meaning of metaphor) and psychoanalysis (Freud). However, instead of resting content with this unmasking of the idols of power inherent in language, Ricoeur moves to the secondary aspect of hermeneutics, restoration.

IVa. Hans-Georg Gadamer

Gadamer's hermeneutic maintains with Heidegger that within human existence **Dasein** is the basic mode of being-in-the-world through participation and involvement. Authentic selfhood is positioning oneself ("projecting one's own possibilities") toward the future; as Gadamer sees it, the exchange of Husserl's "consciousness" for "care". However,

unlike Husserl, Heidegger recognises the interpretive act as central to being, not as a secondary act³²¹. Heidegger "placed hermeneutics in the center of his analysis of existence in showing that interpretation is not an isolated activity of human beings, but the basic structure of our experience of life" ("HS", 317). This led Gadamer to posit that "[l]anguage is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world"³²². Furthermore, Heidegger's phenomenological analysis "suggests very well what I would have in the place of 'foundation'. I would call it 'participation' because ... we share a common world of tradition and interpreted human experience" ("HS", 322). This allows the hermeneutician to ultimately become a "better phenomenologist" ("HS", 323). For Heidegger, "the authenticity of Dasein emerged as human finitude"³²³. As a positive extension of Jaspers, Heidegger "sought instead to understand finitude positively as the real fundamental constitution of Dasein. Finitude means temporality and thus the 'essence' of Dasein is its historicity" ("PF", 125) This temporality and situatedness conditions understanding which

321 Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion" in Phenomenology and the Human Sciences [Edited by J.N. Mohanty] (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 318.

322 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem", in Philosophical Hermeneutics (CA: Berkeley, 1976), 3.

323 Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "The Philosophical Foundations of the 20th Century" in Philosophical Hermeneutics (CA: Berkeley, 1976), 125.

never allows for pure, unmediated reflection on the part of the interpreter.

With the philosophical basis of participation overcoming the problems associated with linking the person, text and world, Gadamer recognises the "real act of work is appropriation in the common being of the speakers" ("HS", 322). Gadamer embraces the Heideggerean hermeneutical circle: "The fact that erroneous interpretations also arise from anticipation and, therefore, that the prejudices which make understanding possible also entail possibilities of misunderstanding could be one of the ways in which the finitude of human nature operates" ("PF", 121).

IVb. Relationship between Gadamer's and Ricoeur's thought

Gadamer maintains that **prejudice** functions positively within the interpretive process: "It is not so much our judgements as our prejudices that constitute our being ... I am using [this formula] to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice ..." ³²⁴. Prejudice is required for the experience of **Dasein**: "The consciousness that is effected by history has its fulfilment in what is linguistic

³²⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" in Philosophical Hermeneutics (CA: Berkeley, 1976), 9.

(sic) ... and that provides an initial schematization for all our possibilities of knowing" ("UHP", 13). Prejudices "... constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something- whereby what we encounter says something to us" ("UHP", 9). Gadamer's hermeneutic employs prejudice to function as the pre-conditions to experience **Dasein**.

Gadamer comments on hermeneutical schemes which employ Nietzsche's concept of the "will-to-power" as the hermeneutical key to understanding that human interests are at the basis of the communicative act. He suggests that these hermeneutical schemes "...[change] completely the idea of interpretation; it is no longer the manifest meaning of a statement of a text, but the text's and its interpreters function in the preservation of life ... This radical position forces us to attend to the dichotomy between the belief in the integrity of texts and the intelligibility of their meaning, and the opposed effort to unmask the pretensions hidden behind so-called objectivity (Ricoeur's 'hermeneutics of suspicion')" ("HS", 317). He maintains that

"[t]his dichotomy is too sharp to allow us to rest content with a mere classification of the two forms of interpretation, as either simply interpreting statements following the intentions of the author **or** as revealing the meaningfulness of statements in a completely unexpected sense and against the meaning of the author ... I can see no way of

reconciling the two [a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of restoration]. I think even Paul Ricoeur must in the end give up attempts to bring them together, because we have here a basic difference involving the whole philosophical role of hermeneutics" ("HS", 317).

Gadamer's critique of Ricoeur has merit, for if structuralism collapses into post-structuralism, language seems to be at the center of the problem: language which "hermeneutics of suspicion" can never bypass. I will explore an extension of this problem below.

IVc. Jurgen Habermas

Habermas writes, "[t]he **only** knowledge that can truly orient action is knowledge that frees itself from mere human interests and is based on Ideas- in other words, knowledge that has taken a theoretical attitude"³²⁵. Habermas understands Gadamer's work to be within the sphere of the "**historical-hermeneutic** sciences". These sciences "which are concerned with the sphere of transitory things and mere opinion, cannot be linked up so smoothly with [the empirical-analytic sciences]- they have nothing to do with cosmology" (KHI, 303). This is because "access to the facts is provided by the understanding of meaning, not observation ... Thus the rules of hermeneutics determines the possible meaning of the

³²⁵ Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests [translated by Jeremy Shapiro] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 301.

validity of statements of the cultural sciences" (KHI, 309). However, the empirical-analytic sciences "develop their theories in a self-understanding that automatically generates continuity with the beginnings of philosophical thought" (KHI, 302-303). Habermas shares with Gadamer an interest in finitude, the "methodological consciousness of describing a structured reality within the horizon of the theoretical attitude" (KHI, 303). However, he contends that the "severance of knowledge from interests" (KHI, 303) leads to a "value-freedom".

In his critique of Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons, Habermas focuses on the crucial role of the subject in the interpretive process. "Hermeneutic knowledge is always mediated through [the interpreter's] pre-understanding, which is derived from the interpreter's initial situation. The world of traditional meaning discloses itself to the interpreter only to the extent that his own world becomes clarified at the same time. The subject of understanding establishes communication between both worlds" (KHI, 309-310). Habermas recognises the inability of the subject to critique itself (within this fusing process) and thus "hermeneutic inquiry discloses reality subject to a constitutive interest in the preservation and expansion of the intersubjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding" (KHI, 310).

Habermas understands general hermeneutics to suggest "laws of acting" whereas ideology-critique critically analyses, through a process of self-reflection, those very laws constituted by hermeneutics. Thus, the value of ideology-critique is that it "... sets off a process of reflection in the consciousness of those whom the laws are about" (KHI, 310). Within Habermas' "theory of interests", "self-reflection is determined by an emancipatory cognitive interest ... [which] releases the subject from dependence on hypostatized powers" (KHI, 310).

IVd. Relationship between Habermas' and Ricoeur's thought

Ricoeur maintains (with Gadamer) that "hermeneutics" focuses on "preunderstanding [which] is fundamentally a hermeneutics of finitude" ("HI", 302-3) whereas the critique of ideology "raises its claim from a different place than hermeneutics, namely, from the place where labor, power, and language are intertwined" ("HI", 303). Ricoeur recognises the complementary nature of the two approaches (hermeneutics and the critique of ideology). Their concerns intersect at the point of a hermeneutics of finitude, both are concerned about human being and authentic existence. This recognition "secures a priori the correlation between the concept of prejudice and that of ideology" ("HI", 303).

Ricoeur contends that Habermas' "theory of interests" is directed towards "emancipation"; the critique supposedly uncovers the distortions which would then pave the way for reaction and subsequent correct action. Indeed, Habermas contends that "... the approach of the critically oriented sciences incorporates the **emancipatory** cognitive interest that ... was at the root of traditional theories" (KHI, 308).

I noted earlier that Ricoeur amended Gadamer by insisting that there is not an option between truth or method, thus the theory can never account for the distancing of the text from the reader. I will now turn to his critique of Habermas on the issue of the possibility of a meta-hermeneutics.

Ricoeur suggests that in the act of appropriating a text to expand one's conception of the self, the author and the reader engage in "play"³²⁶ where an "imaginative variation of the ego" is explored. Thus, "it is always a question of entering into an alien work, of divesting oneself of the earlier 'me' in order to receive, as in play, the self conferred by the work itself" ("Appropriation", 190). For Ricoeur, it is this "divestment of the self" which plays with

³²⁶ Taken from Gadamer, "What is essential is the 'to and fro' (**Hin and Her**) of play" (Appropriation, 186).

"imaginative variations of the ego" which allows the text to critique the self and its illusions. There is a commitment on the part of the reader for, "[i]n entering a game we hand ourselves over, we abandon ourselves to the space of meaning which holds sway over the reader" ("Appropriation", 187). It is, likewise, the universality of the reality of hermeneutics which requires the reader to recognise all knowledge as this play between tradition and creativity.

Ricoeur maintains that for a critique of ideology to be made on properly scientific grounds (which Habermas maintains), one needs to adhere to two principles; firstly, a non-ideological point of view and secondly, an autonomy from other disciplines. However, he contends, that the escape from subjectivity (which would allow for a meta-perspective) is not possible because theories in the human sciences cannot escape attempts at falsification while maintaining sufficient explanatory force. This is due to the nature of enquiry in the human sciences which does not deal with issues of (scientific) falsification³²⁷. Likewise, maintaining autonomy from other disciplines would strengthen the claim of scientific rigor. However, in the "ideology-critique" as

³²⁷ Ricoeur's position is articulated theologically by Louis Dupre who writes, "The believer does not refuse to submit his faith to the criterion of falsifiability, but only to **scientific** falsifiability. The test of faith must be administered in accordance with the nature of the religious experience itself, not with the standards of the scientific experience", (Louis Dupre, The Other Dimension: A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes (New York: Seabury, 1979), 70).

practised by the Frankfurt School (Habermas in particular), "we witness a crossing between the social theory of ideology and psychoanalysis" ("SI", 234). Ricoeur contends that neither of these two conditions are met and thus the claim of objectivity is invalidated. Ultimately, "ideology-critique" cannot be classified as "scientific" for "a non-ideological discourse on ideology ... comes up against the impossibility of reaching a social reality prior to symbolisation" ("SI", 237)³²⁸. "(As [Habermas'] vocabulary itself suggests, ideological delusion and its critique both belong to the same sphere of self-reflection, which, must be as primitive as productive action itself. Again this implies that we must give up the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure)", (LIU, 227). Ricoeur suggests that Habermas' own language on "human interests" betrays its dependence on the human being, thus it is not capable of achieving that complete and scientific "objectivity" which Habermas desires. The "self-" is a crucial component in **Ideology-kritik**.

The governing principle for Habermas is "recognition" within relation. Ricoeur relates this "framework" to the aims of **Ideology-kritik**. "This framework of recognition is

³²⁸ "Such is the fundamental reason why social theory cannot entirely free itself from the ideological condition: it can neither carry out a total reflection, nor rise to a point of view capable of expressing the totality, and hence cannot abstract itself from the ideological conditions to which the other members of the social group are subsumed" ("SI", 239).

important for Habermas because it situates his theory of interaction as a 'dialogic relation' (K&HI, 56).

However, Ricoeur suggests that communication is at the heart of the problem.

"The situation of excommunication, which recognition must overcome, is a disease of communication. Ideology is therefore itself a disease of communication. Ideology is not the accidental but the systematic distortion of the dialogic relation. We cannot speak of the dialogic relation except through the process of recognition, and ideology is the system of resistances to the restoration of the dialogic relation", (LIU, 228).

Ricoeur suggests that the value of Marxist critiques, such as Habermas', is to point out the pervasiveness of the ideology of the "market-place". If this shift from the ideological use of religion has been transferred to that of the market-place, then Ricoeur believes that religion is once again liberated to perform a critique of ideology.

"Religion may act not only as an ideology but as a critical tool to the extent that ideology has emigrated from the religious sphere to the marketplace and to science and technology. If the market and science and technology are the modern ideologies, then the present ideological role of religion may be less a burning issue. Religion still has an ideological role of the market and technology. We may then place religion in a dialectical position between ideology and utopia. Religion functions as an ideology when it justifies the existing system of power, but it also functions as a utopia to the extent that it is a motivation nourishing the critique. Religion may help to unmask the idol of the market" (LIU, 231).

Ricoeur proposes a new understanding of ideology which would recognise "discourse of a **hermeneutical** character on the conditions of all **historical** understanding" ("SI", 242). The problem inherent in Habermas' approach is "... the critique of ideology is of **interest** insofar as it is a nonhermeneutical discipline situated outside the sphere of competence of a science or philosophy of interpretation and marking the fundamental limit of the latter (hermeneutics)" ("HI", 271). Ricoeur wants to maintain the autonomy of the two approaches because they complement each other in the process of critique. "The gesture of hermeneutics is a humble one of acknowledging the historical conditions to which all human understanding is subsumed in the reign of finitude; that of the critique of ideology is a proud gesture of defiance directed against the distortions of human communication" ("SI", 294). Ricoeur contends that since there can be a "critical instance" (due to distancing) within hermeneutics, the potential exists for the possibility of an internal critique. This would then allow a critique of ideology to allow the balance to be restored³²⁹. He refers to this complementary view as "the dialectic between the experience of belonging and alienating distancing" ("HI", 297). Ricoeur's mediating position opens up the way for hermeneutics to acknowledge the usefulness of a critique of

³²⁹ On the value of ideology critique, he writes, the "theory of Ideology adopts a suspicious approach, seeing tradition as merely the systematically distorted expression of communication under unacknowledged conditions of violence" ("HI", 271).

ideology whilst recognising the tradition-situatedness of the individual: "Though ideology-critique may have some therapeutic results, its purpose is still critique. Psychoanalysis [which Habermas' theory utilises], on the other hand, includes both critique and cure. The function of therapy is to cure, but virtually no one is cured by the process of ideology-critique. Many are wounded but very few are cured" (LIU, 249). Here, Ricoeur seems to be making a moot point. I will explore Thompson's critique below on the issue of Ricoeur's synthesis of problems into a dialectic.

Ricoeur suggests that Habermas uses "communicative competence" in a utopian fashion. "Communicative competence is a utopian construction, an ideal speech situation, the possibility of undistorted communication ... Communicative competence [for Habermas], however, is not something at our disposal but rather something that must appear as a Kantian Idea, a regulative idea" (LIU, 250). Ultimately, the idea of utopia "is supported first by the notion of self-reflection. This is the main notion of utopia, and it is the teleological component of all critique, of all analysis, of all restoration of communication. I call it the transcendental component. This factor preserves the unity between ideology-critique and the whole tradition of philosophy in spite of Habermas' claim that we have broken with theory for the sake of praxis" (LIU, 251).

Ricoeur's analysis of Habermas' "theory of interests"³³⁰ concludes that it is neither "empirically justifiable" (for this would prejudice the method of the natural sciences) nor "theory" (for this would be an instantiation of a meta-criticism). Habermas' theory, therefore, does not gain the "universality" which he desires (or indeed, claims). Ricoeur proposes, rather, that Habermas' "theory of interests" relies "upon a philosophical anthropology" which is hermeneutical in nature. Habermas' appeal to meta-hermeneutics is located in his pre-supposition that "hermeneutics is primarily a hermeneutics of discourse, indeed an idealism of lingual life" ("HI", 302). Ricoeur suggests, however, that "[t]he interest in emancipation would be quite empty and abstract if it were not situated on the same plane as the historic-hermeneutical sciences, that is, on the plane of communicative action" ("HI", 303). Thus, the force of Habermas' critique is lost precisely because his theory needs to be communicated. The need to use language, language which Habermas contends distorts "communicative competence", undermines the meta-hermeneutical claim of the critique of ideology. This same objection could also be levelled against Said. Habermas wishes ideology-critique to be universally valid (a "science") yet his idealised subject as unprejudiced by his/her own tradition does not exist. In fact, Ricoeur

³³⁰ Ricoeur refers to Habermas' theory as the "theory of interests".

proposes that ideology-critique is 1) a tradition (extending from Marx) and 2) linked to the "most impressive tradition, that of liberating acts, of the Exodus and the Resurrection" ("HI", 306). Ricoeur understands the critique of ideology to be both liberating yet dependent upon the events the community recalls³³¹. He concludes by surmising that if a culture disposed of this "liberating tradition" ("if the Exodus and the Resurrection were effaced from the memory of mankind"), then "[p]erhaps there would be no more interest in emancipation, no more anticipation of freedom" ("HI", 306). Ricoeur suggests that ultimately the issue of difference between Gadamer and Habermas boils down to a philosophical one; they

"do not have the same traditions. Gadamer relies more on the tradition of German idealism and romanticism, whereas for Habermas it is more the Enlightenment plus German idealism. That Habermas and Gadamer are both situated historically is inevitable; no one is outside all tradition. Even emphasis on self-reflection has a certain tradition. Self-reflection has both an ahistorical factor, what I have called its transcendental component, and a cultural component, a history" (LIU, 252).

IVe. Thompson's Critique of the theory

John B. Thompson translated many of Ricoeur's essays

³³¹ Here a parallel could be drawn with Mircea Eliade's discussion of the phenomenon of the "Eternal Return", the recurrence through re-enactment of significant events within a culture.

into English³³² and produced a postgraduate thesis comparing the thought of Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas³³³. He is critical of Ricoeur's work on the relationship between hermeneutics and the critique of ideology³³⁴. His critique follows the same pattern as Ricoeur's essay and focuses on the section in which Ricoeur attempts a mediating position. In all fairness, Ricoeur aligns himself most closely with Gadamer, although the position he espouses is an emendation of Gadamer whilst attempting to listen to the concerns of Habermas. The force of Thompson's critique is two-fold; firstly he contends that Ricoeur's recourse to the "text as other" creates more philosophical problems than it solves and secondly, he maintains that Ricoeur's assertions in regards to Habermas' theory of "communicative competence" are merely this, assertions, and are thus, hollow.

Ricoeur's first attempt at mediating contends that critical distance is possible because the reader confronts the text as other (this is due to distanciation within his theory of interpretation). Thompson contends that this model

332 Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, [edited and translated by John B. Thompson]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

333 The thesis was worked into the book entitled Critical Hermeneutics: A study in the thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

334 This essay is an attempt to mediate a "middle position" between the perceived excesses of Gadamer and Habermas. There had been an ongoing debate within the literature between the two Germans which Thompson gives a brief history of in a footnote ("HI", 345: fn.1).

of interpretation based on distanciation effectively "displaces the primordial bond between subject and object which underlies the hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer" (Critical Hermeneutics, 163). The net result of Ricoeur's recourse to distanciation opening up this critical distance is that "... the primitive hermeneutical phenomenon is no longer belonging as such, but rather the interplay between participatory belonging and alienating distanciation" (Critical Hermeneutics, 163). Thompson maintains that this disassociation between subject and object raises anew the problem of adjudicating among the conflict of interpretations. Ricoeur's recourse to the "world opened up by the text" (which produces his revised notion of truth), fails to give reason for the phenomenon of the text critiquing perceived "reality" rather than perceived "reality" critiquing the text³³⁵. Thompson contends that Ricoeur privileges the text at the expense of human perception about the way things are without giving justification for this privileging. The force of this critique allows Thompson to accuse Ricoeur of not adequately addressing Habermas' theory (and his concerns about distortions in human communication) and thus, Ricoeur's

³³⁵ Thiselton's reservations concerning Lindbeck's theological model parallel Thompson's critique of Ricoeur. He writes, "I am extremely cautious about George Lindbeck's tendency to locate the meaning of biblical texts in intralinguistic or "intratextual" categories to the exclusion of presuppositional and extra-linguistic contextual factors about states of affairs in the world", New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading, (Grands Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 557.

"mediating" position collapses. Habermas' very contention is that which Ricoeur fails to challenge, namely, that semiotic systems (texts included) convey distortions within human communication and thus mask their intentional abuse of power. Ultimately, Thompson's critique maintains that Ricoeur "trusts" (or "wagers on") the very system that Habermas maintains is a distortion.

V. Are we left with Foucault?

Michel Foucault traces the origins of modern post-structuralist hermeneutics back to the work of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud³³⁶: "... the nineteenth century, and quite singularly Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, placed us once again in the presence of a new possibility of interpretation. They founded anew the possibility of a hermeneutic³³⁷". He suggests the radicalness of their critiques to have "changed the nature of the sign, and modified the way in which the sign in general could be interpreted" ("NFM", 61). They

³³⁶ Louis Dupre suggests that "... each of the three great critics focused on one of the components of the onto-theological synthesis. Marx denounced the distorted relation of the person to the natural world, which has resulted in alienation from both the natural and the social environment. Freud focused on the predicament of the modern self. Nietzsche both denounced the Platonic-Christian idea of transcendence and feared its departure" (Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5).

³³⁷ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud and Marx" [Translated by Alan D. Schrift] in Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy, edited by Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (New York: SUNY press, 1989), 61.

introduced a hermeneutic which focused not only on the surface meaning of the sign but also its depth: "... signs are themselves stages in a much more differentiated space, according to a dimension that we could call depth, on the condition that one understand by that not interiority but, on the contrary, exteriority" ("NFM", 62).

This new interpretive scheme is to be found in the hermeneutical rule of Nietzsche, "[t]here are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena" (aphorism, 108)³³⁸. Nietzsche radicalised all interpretation as simply that, an endless array of interpretations: "Against positivism, which halts at phenomena-'There are only facts'- I would say: No, facts are precisely what there are not, only interpretations" (aphorism 481)³³⁹. Foucault suggests that "[p]erhaps this preeminence of interpretation in relation to signs is what is most decisive in modern hermeneutics" ("NFM", 65). He maintains that taking seriously Nietzsche's claim meant that "... interpretation at last became an endless task ... From the nineteenth century on, signs were linked in an inexhaustible as well as infinite network, not because they

338 Basic Writings of Nietzsche [Translated and Edited, with Commentaries by Walter Kaufmann] (New York: Modern Library, 1967).

339 The Will To Power [A New Translation by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale; Edited, with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann] (New York: Random House, 1967), 267.

rested on a resemblance without border, but because there are irreducible gaps and openings" ("NFM", 63).

Foucault works Nietzsche's maxim into a system which negates the "original" text: "The incompleteness of interpretation, the fact that it is always fragmented and initially remains suspended on itself, is met with again ... in the form of the denial of origination" ("NFM", 63)³⁴⁰. Modern post-structuralist hermeneutics finds itself coming to two separate yet connected conclusions. Firstly, "... if interpretation can never be brought to an end, it is simply because there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, because at bottom everything is already interpretation [**tout est déjà interprétation**]. Each sign is in itself not the thing that presents itself to interpretation, but the interpretation of other signs" ("NFM", 64). This leads hermeneuticians to assert the aptness of their interpretations which, at root, are the power interests of the interpreter. "Moreover, insofar as the sign is already an interpretation which is not given as

³⁴⁰ Foucault suggests that within this scheme, approximating madness with aggressive interpretation and losing oneself for "... the further one goes in interpretation, the closer one approaches at the same time an absolutely dangerous region where interpretation is not only going to find its points of no return but where it is going to disappear itself as interpretation, bringing perhaps the disappearance of the the interpreter himself. The existence that always approached some absolute point of interpretation would be at the same time that of a breaking point [**point de rupture**]" ("NFM", 63). Furthermore, "[t]his experience of madness would be the penalty for a movement of interpretation which approached the infinity of its center, and which collapsed, calcinated" ("NFM", 64).

such, signs are interpretations which try to justify themselves, and not the reverse" ("NFM", 65-66). To combat this move, this cycle of positing and assertion, post-structuralist hermeneutics "... finds itself before the obligation of interpreting itself endlessly,, of always correcting itself" ("NFM", 66). Thus, "one does not interpret what there is in the signified, but one interprets, fundamentally, **who** has posed the interpretation" and "interpretation always has to interpret itself, and it cannot fail to return to itself" ("NFM", 66).

Ultimately, for Foucault, taking Nietzsche seriously means that

"hermeneutics and semiology are two ferocious enemies. A hermeneutic that in fact winds itself around a semiology, believing in the absolute existence of signs, gives up the violence, the incompleteness, the infinity of interpretations, so as to create a reign of terror where the mark rules and suspects language ... On the other hand, a hermeneutic that envelopes around itself this intermediate reign of madness and pure language enters into the domain of languages that never stop implicating themselves ..." ("NFM", 67).

Although Jacques Derrida maintains that behind their differences, Ricoeur and Foucault (his ex-professors) are involved in a "pseudo-metaphysics", I maintain that they are engaged in very opposite enterprises.

Firstly, Ricoeur does not adhere to the Nietzschean

maxim that all there is, is interpretation. Ricoeur's notion of "fixity" maintains room for "valid" interpretations: "all interpretations are not equal". Secondly, Ricoeur's desire to move from a hermeneutic of suspicion to a hermeneutic of retrieval requires an idealised notion of "communicative competence", not simply egoistic assertions. Finally, and perhaps most curiously, I argued above that Ricoeur allows for certain texts to have an ostensibly referring function. That is, these texts do not break all references to the "real world" and do not seek to create worlds for the reader to inhabit. My concern is that if one reads Ricoeur as breaking ostensive referentiality in **all** texts, then deconstruction and Foucaultian "new Historicists" will have proper grounds for appealing to Ricoeur. However, while I admit that Ricoeur allows for this breaking of ostensive reference in certain types of texts, those with a **poetic** function, I maintained that this does not include **all** texts.

In the final analysis, I believe that the real issue is not whether Ricoeur allows for ostensibly-referential texts. Rather, the problem with Ricoeur's notion of referentiality is that he classifies the biblical texts as a category of poetic texts which non-ostensively refer yet have a descriptive function. By doing this, he affirms the ability of sacred texts to "re-contextualise" themselves and

speak anew to successive generations³⁴¹. However, the greater question is "Do the **biblical** texts have any ostensive referential function?" This is the issue which Frei and Ricoeur debated. While Frei argued for the "history-likeness" of texts, he stopped short of allowing the resurrection narratives to be non-ostensive. Furthermore, David Tracy's limit-language strips the text and distils the "truths" of the biblical texts from the narrative, another point disputed by Frei³⁴². The "real" argument between Frei and Ricoeur is over the status of the resurrection narratives. Ultimately, one must decide on the referential function of these texts. That is, do they have a poetic function (Ricoeur) or do they ostensibly refer to spatio-temporal events (Frei)?

VI. Concluding Remarks

I began this chapter with an objection raised by William Rogers concerning Ricoeur's privileging of texts in the formation of self-identity. I objected that what Rogers

³⁴¹ Ricoeur states, "an essential characteristic of a literary work... is that it transcends its own psycho-sociological conditions of production and thereby opens itself to an unlimited series of readings, themselves situated in different socio-cultural conditions" (HHS, 139).

³⁴² Whether or not David Tracy is properly appropriating Ricoeur's work at this point is also suspect. Ricoeur does **not** allow for the narrative to be eclipsed in the sense of stating the meaning of a text, propositionally, in the framework of limit-propositions. This is due to the concepts of 1) the surplus of meaning created by the use of symbol and metaphor and 2) the need for narrative; demythologization not demythization (SE, 352ff).

understood as Ricoeur's special pleading (the difference between interpreting a text and interpreting a text as scripture) was only to be understood within a larger philosophic-literary framework. Ricoeur's position of non-immediacy to one's own consciousness requires a detour through the symbols of culture, of which texts are the medium **par excellence**. He combines this with his contention that texts are distanced from both author and reader in a phenomenon that does not occur in a normal dialogic situation. This distancing opens up a path for the critique of the subject via the text in a way which Ricoeur understands as impossible in Gadamer's work. The symbolic construction of the consciousness is thus both necessary yet open to critique.

I then turned to more incisive critiques by Thompson and Said on the issue of this gap opened up via distancing between subject and object. The discussion here was conducted as one explicitly stated by Ricoeur in his critique of Habermas. Ricoeur's contention is that the critique of ideology is not meta-hermeneutical and thus does not have the objectivity claimed by those following the Marxist critique, namely the Frankfurt School. However, Ricoeur does not dismiss the critique of ideology. Rather, he embraces it as a tool to be used alongside hermeneutics; incorporated as a strand of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (which he contends is

inevitable). The force of Habermas' argument is not lessened, only re-directed into a dialectic with that of hermeneutics. By comparison, I propose that the force of both Thompson's and Said's arguments follow. The agenda laid out would then focus on a discussion of whether or not it is possible to reformulate language from within a culture. However, Ricoeur comments that "we do not currently have at our disposal a non-ideological notion of the genesis of ideology ... [this] concerns the impossibility of exercising a critique which would be absolutely radical- impossible, because a radically critical consciousness would require a **total** reflection" ("HI", 238). Ricoeur opts for the integration of the critique of ideology until a theory is formulated which can account for the transcendent critique needed to justify such claims to objectivity. Yet, for him, this will never (because it can never) materialise.

Conclusion

Final Conclusion**The literary-theoretical basis****"Hans Frei and the New Criticism"**

I argue in chapter one that theories of literary-criticism were utilised by both Frei and Ricoeur in their respective approaches to hermeneutics. I began with an exposition of what has been called "New Criticism". I have focused on, for the purpose of indicating Frei's (and Ricoeur's) association with the "New Criticism", several major tenets advocated by the New Critics; close readings, a rejection of authorial intention, and an insistence on the indispensability of the literary work.

The conceptual foundations of New Criticism are found in the work of I.A. Richards and T.S. Eliot. They re-directed the study of literature upon the work itself rather than on the prevailing models of biography, philosophy or history. I argue that New Criticism neither rejects the value of external approaches to literature as useful nor does it hold the view that the text is an authorless entity (two common "misinterpretations" of the New Critical enterprise). From this principle, the exposition focuses on the **polemical**

works of several critics. The "intentional fallacy" becomes a centralising focus, for the New Critics were addressing what they had perceived to have become an imbalance in literary studies. The focus on the work itself allows the critic to place the study of literature within the public realm rather than within the realm of privatised interpretation. The "heresy of paraphrase" focuses on the indissoluble relationship between the structure and the content of the literary work. Attempts to paraphrase a literary work (especially a poem) conflict with its meter and is not possible due to a notion of all language as metaphor. If all language is metaphorical, the translating of a work into another form (the exchange of metaphor for propositional content) is an illusion. Furthermore, this translating loses the metrical structuring of literary works (plays and poems) which ultimately creates a different work.

Frei advocates using New Criticism as a tool for helping to uncover the meaning of biblical texts early in 1967. However, as early as 1979 and definitively in 1986, he rejects New Criticism for reasons not associated with the "intentional fallacy" or the "heresy of paraphrase". Frei was wary of general hermeneutical schemes and he was disturbed by what he perceived to be a hidden agenda; the New Criticism as a hermeneutic which viewed literary works as moral enterprises. I concluded that Frei's relationship with

the New Criticism was that he utilised its insights polemically. That is, his work in The Identity of Jesus Christ, was a New Critical way of reading applied to theological investigation.

"Paul Ricoeur and Structuralism: A new meaning of the notion of truth?"

Ricoeur's hermeneutics also utilises the New Critical tenets of the "intentional fallacy" and the "heresy of paraphrase". He rejects authorial intention as providing the meaning of a literary work and his notion of the "surplus of meaning" combines a theory of language as metaphorical with the indispensability of form and content.

Ricoeur was also heavily influenced by French Structuralism; I focus on his work founded upon Gerard Genette's theory of "narrative discourse" and A.J. Greimas' theory of "discourse analysis". Ricoeur recognised the limitations of Genette's structural analysis as an inability to connect the world of discourse to that of temporality. This required Ricoeur to bracket a notion of "truth" until a proper theory of temporal emplotment could be expounded. Ricoeur and Genette advocate the "close reading" of texts and assume the meaningfulness of the text which, Ricoeur maintains, allows the reader to arrive at a correct reading

of a text. Ricoeur emends Genette by adding "real time" to "story time" and "narrative time". This allows Ricoeur to re-position the storied, textual world within the "real world". This emendation, placed within an expanded notion of narratology (the "guiding concept" is the **mimesis** of action) which allows the interpreter to focus on emplotment (structural analysis of the literary work within 'real time').

Ricoeur's placing of both history and fiction within the discipline of narratology broadens the scope of his investigation. The recognition of the narrative basis of both forms of literature shifts the locus of Ricoeur's investigations to the issue of emplotment. I discuss Ricoeur's use of the "mimesis of action" as the central "guiding concept" and the application of this to the problem of emplotment which is expanded to account for several forms of anachrony. Ricoeur's distinction between the genres, epic and novel, is now accounted for in terms of the narrator. So, the result is that Ricoeur can maintain that the novel, as well as a 'history' or an epic poem, enriches reality through its mimetic function.

Ricoeur's engagement with A.J. Greimas is on the problem of temporality in narratives. Ricoeur's move from structuralism to post-structuralism is related to this

problem; a problem Gremias also faced. Ricoeur extends Gremias' conclusions by investigating the phenomenon he calls the "illusion of sequence". Ricoeur, unlike Gremias, does not equate sequence with chronology. Thus, Ricoeur incorporates Heidegger's definitions of time which relocate the issue within emplotment. For Ricoeur, emplotment becomes both the key and the problem.

The issue of truth within narratological investigation has been bracketed in Time and Narrative until the problem of time has been dealt with. Ricoeur proposes that fiction is "richer in information about time" than history. This is because fiction uses anachrony (whereas historical writing avoids this) and does not attempt to stylistically maintain the same chronological "speed". Thus, Ricoeur has allocated a place to the reader within the process of emplotment. Truth is a projection from the text which discloses information about the textual world and transforms the world of the reader. It is at this intersection of the world of the text and that of the reader where the proposal of truthfulness is met. Historical narrative and fictional narrative intersect on the issue of the disclosive power of the text; the primary ostensive reference is eclipsed to allow the text to expand the reader's worldview.

The discipline of poetics is the link between Ricoeur's

work on fiction and scripture. Poetics recognises all literature as humanly created modes of significations and the interpretation of a text is only one way of treating the text. Poetics recognises that meaning is not to be equated with interpretation but that texts, which have disclosive power, are "true" by offering possibilities to the reader for understanding oneself. Ricoeur asserts that the biblical texts are, **par excellence**, disclosive and true.

The chapter then turns to various construals of the issues Ricoeur engages with in Time and Narrative. Peter Brook's analysis of the problem of emplotment with reference to time parallels and supplements the work of Ricoeur. He shares three concerns with Ricoeur; the plot is at the intersection of time and narrative, time is essential for narrative, and structuralism has under-estimated the role of the reader in the formation of the plot. Hayden White, who shows up often in Time and Narrative, discusses the problem of emplotment in relation to historical narrative. I am not persuaded by White's analysis and discuss how Ricoeur's notions of "fictive history" and "historicized fiction" are more tenable views of the relationship between history and fiction. White's radical "hermeneutic of suspicion" also lacks Ricoeur's dialectical counterpart, a "hermeneutic of retrieval", making his theory seem too theoretical and ultimately, untenable. John Searle suggests that authorial

intentionality is the key to the interpretation of a text. I discuss Searle for Ricoeur is opposed to authorial intention as supplying the necessary interpretative framework for understanding a text. However, Ricoeur's discussion of "textual intent" seems to be sublated in Searle's thought and it would seem that Ricoeur's rules for the interpretive process, at the initial level, cohere with Searle's.

These are the issues my exposition of Ricoeur has dealt with prior to an exploration of his construal of narrative identity. Ricoeur has suggested that structuralism has not dealt adequately with the place of the reader or the place of temporality in narrative. He suggests that emplotment stands at the intersection of time and narrative and that the reader is involved in the construal of emplotment (the "synthesis of the heterogeneous"). He also suggests that to confuse interpretation as the goal of reading a text is to overlook the non-ostensive capabilities of a text, what he calls its disclosive power. Thus, the issue of "truth" is not a question of correspondence to factual claims (if these sorts of claims could be made and proven) but is rather an issue of the reader responding to the world unfolded by the text.

Application of the methodology to narrative identity

"Frei and Narrative Identity"

Chapter two is an exposition of Frei and Ricoeur's notions of "narrative identity". Both thinkers have placed the close reading of the text and the indispensability of the text in the center of their hermeneutic. Both have also rejected appeals to authorial intention (understood as the mental intention of the author) as a way of accessing the meaning of a text. Ricoeur adds a hermeneutic of suspicion which requires the reader of biblical texts on the one hand, to address the analysis of Nietzsche, and with Heidegger on the other hand, to retrieve the meaning of the text as disclosing possibilities.

Frei's construal of narrative identity within the biblical writings focuses on the person of Jesus Christ. His work in The Identity of Jesus Christ is a piece of dogmatic theology in the tradition of Karl Barth. Significantly, and unlike Barth, Frei avoids discussing the doctrine of revelation. He relies on the work of Strawson and Ryle to provide the framework for discussing what Jesus' narrative identity is and what it is not. Thus, Frei refuses to discuss what "personhood" is and focuses on Jesus' identity as conveyed through the biblical narratives. He also avoids reconstructing Jesus' identity in reference to his intentions. Rather, his investigation focuses on the identity

of the narrativised Jesus. Frei maintains, with Barth, that the person of Jesus and the narrative portrayal of him coincide.

Frei's approach to the biblical narratives referring to Jesus is founded upon a genre recognition. He maintains that the passion-crucifixion-resurrection sequence in the gospels are an instance of "realistic narrative" and thus, it is appropriate to ask questions concerning the historical factuality of the account. I argue that Frei's approach to the passion narratives based on his genre analysis seems logically unfounded and I suggest that it may be an instance of special pleading.

I then introduce the work of Ronald Thiemann and Stephen Crites into the discussion. My reasons for investigating these theologians is two-fold. Firstly, they both focus on construing theology within the rubric of narrative. Secondly, and more importantly to my overall project, Thiemann's analysis parallels that of Frei with an important emendation; his narrative proposal is based on a close reading of the Gospel of Matthew whereas Frei's observations are not specifically focused on any particular Gospel account. Likewise, Crites' analysis begins from the similar claim of Ricoeur; namely that through narratives, human beings relate their experiences.

This chapter deals with three critiques of theologies construed within narrative. Maurice Wiles' objects that narrative is an inadequate rubric for construing theology for it is too "constricting" and thus cannot adapt to the changing needs of theology. I also deal with the problem of the "followability" of a narrative and suggest that neither Frei nor Thiemann deal with this issue adequately. I suggest in the following chapter that Ricoeur's investigations in Time and Narrative are an attempt to deal with this phenomenon which he calls "discordant concordance". The final objection to Frei's construal of narrative identity is directed at the foundations of Christian theology; namely, the continuity between the testaments. Frei argues that the Gospel narratives disclose the identity of Jesus whereas Thiemann's extension of Frei's work argues that the Gospels disclose the identity of God. Goldberg's critique anticipates a problem Frei may have noticed and thus is hesitant to extend the disclosure of Gospel narrative identity to God. I conclude that Frei's analysis never deals with the problems associated with the followability of a narrative sequence (including both the reader and the text) nor does he provide an account of the legitimacy of including the Hebrew scriptures within the realm of Christian theology. I also conclude that Wiles' objection to a "narrative theology" may be cogent but is not relevant to Frei's

investigations.

"Ricoeur and Narrative Identity: Is emplotment the key or the problem?"

Ricoeur's work on biblical texts is pre-determined by an obsession with legitimacy. Firstly, he insists on his work as philosophical, not theological. Ricoeur classifies all literary texts as "poetic". That is, they have the power to "disclose" or "reveal". I then turn to his essay on "revelation" to analyse how an emended structural analysis combined with an expanded narratology provides Ricoeur's notion of "truth". Ricoeur maintains that the "poetic" function of discourse is founded upon three principles; distanciation, fixation of discourse, and a dual reference. What is signified in a text is not simply its ostensive referent (first-order), but more importantly, its metaphorical referent. He maintains that metaphor is a form of "semantic innovation" which requires the reader to make sense of the meaning. Within biblical texts, this innovation is called an "enigma expression". These enigmatic expressions (he cites the 'kingdom of God' and parables) are limit-language which in turn are "indirect discourse". Thus, the primary, ostensive signification is eclipsed and metaphorical discourse allows a disclosure of the world signified within the text. However, the world of the reader

merges with that of the text when the reader allows himself/herself to imagine the possibilities opened up by the text. The "truth" of the text is in its power to disclose and the reader engages this truth through a "commitment" to the world opened up by the text.

I then turn to Auerbach's analysis of biblical literature and his subsequent discussion of the function of its language. Auerbach's thesis, which is wholly supported by Frei, is that the projected world of the bible does not cohere with other "narrative worlds". Rather, the world disclosed by biblical literature claims exclusive interpretative rights. Ricoeur's "non-violent appeal" to an understanding of the doctrine of revelation as non-religious, avoids the falsification/verification discussion but in doing so, seems to do an injustice to this Christian doctrine.

For Ricoeur, any engagement with a text must first detour through a "hermeneutic of suspicion". Applied to biblical texts, this hermeneutic requires the reader to reckon with the work of both Nietzsche and Heidegger. Nietzsche's proclamation of the "Death of God" is a recognition that the classical notions of God must be challenged so that "true" notions of God may be retrieved. Nietzsche's proclamation becomes for Ricoeur a guiding hermeneutic which destroys the traditional metaphysical

starting points but then emerges from among these ruins as a guide for constructing a "post-religious faith". This "post-religious faith" is guided by the work of Heidegger. It is a "poetic theology". Heidegger's **poiesis** ("the act of creation in the broadest sense") requires the reader to engage the text as expounding creative possibilities of understanding oneself. Ricoeur's methodological appropriation of Heidegger's exposition of **physis** allows the world of the text primacy. His theory avoids the problem of subjectivity for the reader, though involved in a "synthesis of the heterogeneous", is not fully responsible for the interpretation of the text. Structuralism provides some of the clues for interpretation and Ricoeur's insistence on the primacy of second-order reference allows engagement with the non-ostensive disclosive power of the text.

There have been many discussions of the significance of Heidegger within Ricoeur's thought. There is, however, little discussion of the influence of Nietzsche, even though the lecture "Religion, Atheism, and Faith" firmly fixes his place within Ricoeur's hermeneutic. I investigate this relationship even further by suggesting that Ricoeur's notion of Christian listening, listening without frameworks or revenge, is an extension of both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's work. I suggest that within Ricoeur's hermeneutic, the notion of the **will** imposing an interpretive structure upon

the text does not allow the text to speak on its own terms. This is linked to Nietzsche's notion of **revenge** as the primal instinct which must be overcome before the transition to the overman. This suspension of controlling interpretive frameworks allows the text to challenge the reader and ultimately can contribute to the formation of a "narrative identity" which informs the self as to personal identity.

In Oneself as Another, Ricoeur's construal of "narrative identity" within texts focuses on the way in which a reader derives personal identity from this "narrative identity". Ricoeur defines identity as the combination of the unchanging (**Idem**-identity) and the changing (**Ipse**-identity). His work on identity parallels the investigations within Time and Narrative on the "followability" and the phenomenon of constructing a plot. It is within the interweaving of time and narrative (emplotment) that a character is recognised through his/her habits (the history of the character) and their acquired identifications (those which contribute to the recognition of the character as a unity). It is this emplotment of the character and the ability to follow this movement which yields the identity of the character and in turn, mediates partial identity (the "narrative identity") to the reader.

Within biblical texts, Ricoeur maintains that the

Christian responds to the portrait of Christ by recognising a tradition-inspired continuity between God, Christ and the Christian (a "chain of descending glory"). The "conscience" aids in the application of the Judeo-Christian tradition to oneself. For Ricoeur, the imagination, when confronted with the potential of the world unfolded by the text, prompts a restructuring of one's identity. This is only possible if the person challenged by the text, "wagers" on the validity of the world disclosed. This hermeneutic effectively recognises that the reader cannot escape from within the hermeneutic circle. The reader must "trust" the narrative's disclosive power, whilst that disclosure challenges the reader's worldview.

Ricoeur proposes that pursuing a "narrative theology" may prove to be worthwhile. This proposal suggests that biblical narratives are unique from other narratives due to the subject matter (they attempt to "name God" and refer to that "name") and due to their status as literary works, have disclosive power. However, a narrative theology as construed by Ricoeur would embrace various disciplines including many elements of narratology. These disciplines do not seem **prima facie** compatible. Yet, an investigation into what Ricoeur sketches a narrative theology may look like, reveals that Ricoeur may be involved in a "general hermeneutics", an issue Frei raises in regard to Ricoeur's work.

The final section of this chapter deals with Frei's critique of Ricoeur. It is important, for Frei engages Ricoeur on the issue of a "general hermeneutical theory". Frei suggests that subsuming theological investigation under a general theory, three inter-related problems arise. Firstly, the singularity of Jesus Christ is lost. Secondly, the flow from text to world is reversed. Our "common human condition" informs the text rather than the text informing our world. Finally, current literary theories (especially "deconstruction") have challenged the "self-presence" of the individual.

Theological Methodology and Critique

"Frei and Christian self-description: The possibility of an external critique?"

This chapter is an exposition of Frei's notion of Christian self-description as a way of construing theology. My contention is that theological construal is not immune to external critiques and I explore what the force of external critique would be within Frei's system. I suggest that Frei's **descriptive** theological construals often fulfil a **prescriptive** function; thus his distinction between first- and second-order theological investigation does not always

stand.

A distinctive contribution of Frei to theological description is his exposition of Christianity as a cultural-linguistic system. He argues that a religion can be described in fashion similar to the way cultural anthropologists describe any form of social interaction. Frei understood the benefits of such a construal to be this: to understand a religion is to effectively describe it, not to engage in any form of an apologetic enterprise. He utilises the work of Clifford Geertz who proposed that "thick description" (the describing of a religion) is "not to generalize across cases but within them". For Frei, Christian self-description is necessary for the Christian community to help those within it understand their faith.

The radicalness of Frei's "second-order theological statements" become apparent in the debate with Carl Henry. As I argue, the central problem with Henry's construal of Christian "facts" is that Frei feels that Henry's enquiry into the historical veracity of the biblical narratives reduces their testimony to the level of common historical narrative. Frei wonders if Jesus' resurrection can ever be classified as a historical "fact"; resurrections are not recurring events which can be tested. However, he does want to maintain that the resurrection is a "real event" and is

therefore, not a metaphorically representative state of affairs.

I conclude that Frei's model of Christian self-description has difficulty in engaging with criticisms external to the system. Frei's attempt to avoid discussing "how" the biblical narratives refer whilst focusing on what they "mean", has drawn criticism from both literary critics and theologians.

Gary Comstock maintains that Frei's engagement with biblical texts excludes (prior to the question) the issue of their truthfulness. I argue that Comstock has misunderstood Frei's work and I verify my claim by citing a letter in which Frei responds to an article written by Comstock. I conclude that Comstock's critique of Frei is better understood as an argument over the status of philosophy within the theological arena. Frei maintains that philosophy (as well as any other discipline) does not hold a privileged position within the discussion. Comstock wants to allocate that position to philosophy (Ricoeur does as well and this is the essence of the dispute).

Michael Goldberg arises once again to critique Frei's "narrative theology", suggesting that Frei's theology separates truth from meaning and narrative from reality. I

argue that Goldberg's critique is unfounded for 1) Frei does not frame the discussion within the relationship between "truth-claims" and biblical narrative and 2) Frei never advocates a "narrative theology"; in fact, he opposes it.

I then turn within the exposition to Frei's dependence upon George Lindbeck for his notion of Christian self-description and argue that Frei perceived his work to be an extension of Lindbeck's.

The chapter turns to a discussion of an external critique which employs a "hermeneutic of suspicion" and how effectively a model of Christian self-description might engage it. I suggest that Frei's prior theological and methodological commitments seemingly bypass the issues raised by such a hermeneutic. The difficulty in Frei's construal arises when one moves from a "narrative identity" (in this case, Jesus' identity) to one's personal identity. I conclude that Frei's construal is lacking in an explanation of how this move occurs whereas Ricoeur's discussion of identity attempts to grapple with this issue.

"Ricoeur and external critiques: A new definition of the force of ideology?"

Ricoeur's exposition of theological hermeneutics takes seriously the critique of ideology. However, Ricoeur's

distinctive contribution to the study of ideology is to suggest that since ideology is present in all forms of communication and cannot be completely eradicated, one must not necessarily understand ideology as a negative phenomenon. His discussion assumes that 1) all reflection is mediated and 2) distanciation is a key component within textual communication.

The discussion centres around three critiques. William E. Rogers contends that Ricoeur's hermeneutic fails to distinguish between texts which are scriptural and those which are not. Furthermore, since Ricoeur's theory fails to substantiate such a distinction, any "wagering" on texts must be considered as arbitrary. Edward Said's critique of Ricoeur also hinges on the decision to privilege texts in the process of identity formation. Said maintains that texts can not be employed in the process for textuality is necessarily ideological. Said maintains that Ricoeur's "hermeneutic of suspicion" is not sufficient to dismantle the necessarily ideological production of these texts. Furthermore, Said critiques Ricoeur's notion of distanciation, querying whether this phenomenon "creates" sufficient "space" for the interpreter to gain a "critical distance" from the text.

Ricoeur enters into the discussion on ideology taking a dialectical position between the thought of Gadamer and

Habermas. From Gadamer, Ricoeur recognises 1) the participation of humanity with the products of the culture (including texts), 2) the temporality and situatedness of the individual which does not allow for unmediated reflection and 3) the necessity of prejudice in the informing of the consciousness. From Habermas, Ricoeur recognises the value of a system which intends to unmask distortions within human communication. His attempt to mediate a position between these two thinkers intersects at the point of a hermeneutics of finitude. Since there can be no meta-critical positioning of the subject, Ricoeur dismisses Habermas' **Ideology-Kritik** as neither 1) scientific nor 2) non-ideological. Rather, he suggests that Habermas' theory is valuable as a tool to be used alongside hermeneutics; a type of hermeneutic of suspicion. Furthermore, the critique of ideology can employ religion within the critique for religion no longer holds a dominant role within society. This eclipse of the power of religious critique, once valuable, has now become free to re-exercise its role within society. His attempt at discovering a mediatory position led Ricoeur to suggest that the fundamental difference between Gadamer and Habermas is one of adherence to differing philosophical traditions.

This leads to the final critique of Ricoeur by John B. Thompson. Thompson contends that Ricoeur's attempt to mediate a position between Gadamer and Habermas fails. The

reasons are two-fold; firstly, Ricoeur's recourse to the text as "other" creates more philosophical problems than it solves and secondly, Ricoeur fails to engage the issues Habermas raises. The prominence of distanciation destroys the gains of Heidegger and Gadamer as to the participatory nature of human belonging. Also, Ricoeur's lack of proper warrant for privileging certain texts seems to "trust" the very texts Habermas (and Said) suspect are ideological. Ricoeur reformulates the discussion of ideology to give a positive notion of ideology and thus, only seemingly dissolves the problem.

I argue that the suggestion of Gadamer that a "hermeneutic of suspicion" cannot be reconciled with a theory which attempts to interpret statements as to their meaningfulness (one intended by the author) is relevant. I suggest that if structuralism ultimately collapses into post-structuralism, then language is at the centre of the reformulation of the problem. I then investigate the relevance of Michel Foucault's suggestion that hermeneutics and semiology are irreconcilable alternatives to a common problem; that of the infinite interpretation of the sign. I argue that Ricoeur's agenda does not follow that of Foucault's, though he recognises the problems which have arisen in hermeneutical theory. Firstly, Ricoeur's notion of "fixity" maintains room for "valid" (and thus "invalid")

interpretation. Secondly, Ricoeur's move from the hermeneutic of suspicion to that of a hermeneutic of retrieval hinges on an idealised form of "communicative competence" and is not simply based on egoistic assertion. Finally, Ricoeur's notion of split reference, while focusing on the disclosive power of reference, does not completely dismiss ostensive reference. Ricoeur recognises that there is a "referential and descriptive function of ordinary language" and ostensive reference is not obliterated in scientific discourse. My suggestion is that Ricoeur has made room for the tools which do not require him to follow Foucault's path down to infinite interpretation. However, his theory of the poetic function of all literary texts has put him in a quandary concerning the ostensive references made in those texts.

Final Remarks

This thesis has investigated Frei's and Ricoeur's construals of Biblical identity. I conclude that whilst both approaches expand an understanding of Christian identity, Ricoeur's work in the field of human action allows for the transition from a "textual identity" to personal identity. This is significant for several reasons.

Firstly, on the one hand, Ricoeur has never "formally"

abandoned the value of a structuralist approach to the initial hermeneutical enterprise. He has always defended the value such an approach brings to the interpretation of the text and his "post-structuralism" is an emendation of structuralism. Frei, on the other hand, rejects his New Critical roots in his "final essay" ("LR"). However, Frei's major work on Biblical identity, The Identity of Jesus Christ, relies heavily upon a formalist hermeneutic. An abandonment of New Critical insights would undermine the significance of this work. In the analysis of the final essay, I proposed that Frei's rejection of New Criticism was a rejection of the "Christian" reading of texts. So his contention with the New Critics does not centre around a problem with formalist tools of analysis but rather around their seemingly disingenuous methodology. He could have maintained the value of these "tools" whilst rejecting their masked "Christian" readings. He does, however, recognise the significance of Derrida's deconstruction and in the essay "Hermeneutics and Beardslee", he does maintain a relationship with his "structuralist friends".

Secondly, this study points to parallels with the difficulties which arose between Barth and Bultmann: "... as the published controversies between Barth and Bultmann suggest, what is most basically at issue between the two kinds of 'theological position' they each represent may not

be so much what either side actually **says** on any given theological topic, but rather the **order** in which they are taken up" (Uses, 163).

The difficulty with Ricoeur's approach to identity is that he focuses primarily on the identity of the reader rather than the identification of the character ostensibly referred to within the text. His "split reference", though not allowing for the eclipse of the ostensive referent, emphasises the disclosive power of the text, seemingly at the expense of its ostensive reference. Ricoeur's newer work on biblical texts seems to redress this imbalance and indeed, incorporates some of Frei's insights.

So, the question which arises from Ricoeur's newest work is this: "How would Frei react to the development of Ricoeur's thought which has incorporated the identity of Jesus into an interpretation of biblical texts?" Would he feel compelled to abandon formalist tools if he had read the newest work of Ricoeur?

Ricoeur has not abandoned the procedure of a structuralist hermeneutic; the benefits of employing structuralist analysis were always incorporated within Ricoeur's hermeneutic. I argue that the difficulty which Frei recognises is **not** that Ricoeur's notion of "split

reference" disregards all ostensive reference. Rather, his theological agenda³⁴³ requires the interpreter to make "meaningful", once again, the biblical narratives. However, his early work on the parables moved too quickly from interpretation to "meaningfulness". Thus, it seemed as if the text itself was lost; the text became a projection of a way-of-being-in-the-world. His newer work has proved this objection to be somewhat misleading.

Within the arena of hermeneutics, Frei deals with the meaning of the texts, whereas Ricoeur inverts the Aristotelian order of ostensive reference and poetics. Frei recognises that the text conveys reality through a form of the perspicuity of the text; the 'how' is deferred by appealing to a Barthian hermeneutic. For Ricoeur, the 'text says what it means' yet there is a danger in not attributing 'truth' outside of the text. Thus, the 'text' becomes a 'pointer' which discloses a reality beyond itself. This places Ricoeur within post-structuralism through his incorporation and extension of structuralist insights.

There are differences within construing identity within

³⁴³ Kelsey's analysis may point to a significant part of the problem between Frei and Ricoeur: "[Theological positions] are the result of irreducible differences among imaginative construals of the mode of the presence of God; and they are evidence that this act of the imagination is decisive for the particular characteristics that give a theological position its particular specificity and most deeply separates it from other 'theological positions'" (Uses, 163).

narratives. Frei works intratextually, internally, dogmatically and descriptively in formulating the identity of Jesus. The problem arises in moving from narratological description to human action; Frei is not clear on how the move from a character in a story to one's personal identity is made. Ricoeur works both internally and externally (guided by a phenomenological analysis), recognising the effects of ideologies bearing on texts. He opts for a hermeneutic which accommodates both a hermeneutic of suspicion and one of retrieval.

The later work of Frei ("LR") advocates a form of Christian Midrash which would 'de-center' any textual interpretation thus not giving authoritative status to any 'fixed' interpretation. There is a strong emphasis on the role of the church in determining the 'meaning' of the biblical texts. Ricoeur's notion of textual inscription ('fixity') gives the interpreter structural parameters for adjudicating between conflicting interpretations.

Frei and Ricoeur began their investigations as "formalists" but both have shifted their positions, even if only slightly. Frei advocates discerning 'meaning' intratextually, 'meaning as immanent', and this 'meaning' is 'truth' ("Anselm's logically odd formula"). Ricoeur employs both phenomenological and textual analysis to conclude that

the text 'points' towards 'truth' (ideologies inherent in text and the necessity of a hermeneutic of suspicion do not allow for the text to be 'truth'). Thus, literary-theory has had an enormous impact within the theological construals of both of these thinkers and, subsequently, upon Christian theology as a whole.

APPENDIX

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There is a tenacious sense that all of us have, even those of us who most apologetically have to confess barely knowing the difference between causal efficacy and presentational immediacy, that our descriptive concepts refer¹, that all statements are propositions, and propositions are cast in the shape of assertions under the form of judgments. In other words, even for those of us who are not philosophers or philosophical theologians and therefore blunder foolishly [view²] process hermeneutic groups because a wiser man than ourselves has kindly made a passing reference to a book we may have written once in a foolishly reckless moment- I say even for those there is a tenacious hold of the sense that the ladder from logic through experience to the most refined speculation is one in which self and reality, mind and nature belong together, that the dualists, both metaphysical and epistemological are wrong. We may, for example, say that [the] mind is the mirror of nature after all, against those who with Richard Rorty (p. 113) claim that the only reason the 17th century did not 'misunderstand' the mirror of nature or the (inner) eye otherwise was that they couldn't misunderstand it, since after all they have revealed it. What an irony Rorty's claim would be-- if I may simply entertain it as a hypothesis for a moment-- for the cutting edge of the suggestion is that (any) one who moves in to heal dualist splits is bound to play the game on his opponents' grounds, since they invented the game, or the problem and the revisers, try as they might, can't do more than change some of the rules, i.e. the conceptual descriptions, by which it is played: it's still the same game.

¹ scratched out ... "or that the mind is the mirror of nature"

² Word illegible

But that is indeed no more than a tempting hypothesis for the moment, a momentary if elemental, sudden and therefore frightening state of affairs, and we return to one tenacious native sense that mind and reality belong together. And certainly we look with something like pity--no, that's wrong, with reverse sympathy-- on those who seem to have the very opposite elemental reaction. They say that the best way to get out of the problem or the dualistic game is not to become (solipsistic) Idealists but to pursue an option such as speaking of the social character of language-- in a sociological rather than parapsychic sense of the term social-- and to say that language as a social construct is the very condition of experience, rather than vice versa, that communal languages have their own irreducible integrity even as they are (poems) and open in time and therefore have their own natural history. There are of course those who experience this kind of persuasion, including the consequence that reality as a social construct, as a relief, a therapeutic release from what they regard as hypostatized³ and therefore insolubly generalize problems like "reference", as though that were a single, univocal term or truth as though that term had a single universal status which is given conceptual content by referring it to another universal which is termed "meaning". Against this kind of globali(zation) the irreducibly social, particular form of language comes to some people as a relief. But others regard that possibility with a fear well expressed in the like of Frederic Jameson's book, "The Prison House of Language".

May I confess to being torn hopelessly both ways? The muting of "reference" as a single, universal, rather than concepts or rather people referring by means of concepts in various ways comes as a relief-- since

³ ... "generalizations of families"

referring to God, to my Dachshund, to the way I love my children, to the self that loves them, to the nuclear structure of genes and to the biography of Leopold Bloom which has just been written despite or because of the fact that hitherto he had never existed apart from James Joyce's Ulysses-- since referring may not be the same thing in all these cases. And the relief from logical and trans-logical universalism may go on to cover the very systematic preoccupation with the thinking procedure that has the conceptual name-tag, truth or reference, to say nothing of 'reality'. But on the other hand, the prison house of language image comes up, and relief and fear live side by side when I deny that elemental sense that I am an embodied mind, subject or superject, in a real world of which I actually am a social and temporal location or series of locations. But relief or fear aside, sometimes the native affirmation of the sense of being able to know the true character of reality is to the fore, sometimes the sense that all speculative thinking to demonstrate the referential character of words and concepts is futile.

It is obvious then that I am neither determinedly antagonistic to nor wholly ardently committed to the problematic that preoccupies Professor Beardslee. If I do have to use large-scale technical language I want simply to affirm my belief that 'hermeneutics' has to do with 'meaning', i.e. with criteria and rules for sound interpretation of texts, rather than with 'truth'. and I want to stress that even the limited use of 'truth' as true interpretation of a text rather than relation of the text to true reality, is only secondary for me, though I won't deny that I puzzle about it. Hermeneutics has to have breathing space: don't move in on it too quickly with (trans.) hermeneutical concerns, e.g. character of symbolization: Christian theological hermeneutics is a second-order

discipline on a practice, a practice that is communal, and the relation between signifier and signified in that practice is a semantic matter, so that premature reference to how symbols may be reality-laden through mutual participation of symbol and reality only had to get us back into that representationalism all of us want to avoid.

I am deeply concerned about the specificity of narrative texts. There are all sorts of texts, and the Bible includes all kinds of texts to which different hermeneutical rules may apply. For example, I may want to read a letter in a different way from the way I read a story-- non-narratively, that is-- even if the same person crops up in the tale and in the correspondence, viz. Jesus Christ. In other words, I hope nobody thinks of something called "narrative sense" as a kind of hermeneutical absolute. On the other hand, take Bultmann to whom Beardslee refers, who takes personhood as a kind of root concept. He then identifies a specific person-- Jesus of Nazareth-- as irreducibly himself. Now the way we identify specific human agents in their specificity (we can do other things with them too, we can use them as illustrations of microcosmic organic wholes or as non narrative, repeatable textual structures or as deconstructionist (misprisions) of the interpreter) is to take them in their irreducible specificity and we can only do it by telling their specific self-enactment in their specific context, whether historical or fictional, so that the issue of reference is hermeneutically, though probably not theologically irrelevant. I think that's the hermeneutical rule for irreducible identification of a person in a narrative text: you follow the diachronic, not the synchronic line, you narrate him or her because he/she is not a separable subject/substance from his/her depiction in or as his/her story. Now what Bultmann wants to

do is both to identify the specific person, if you will, Jesus' scandal of particularity, and to dismantle the narrative-- as Professor Beardslee rightly remarks (pp.4f)-- is simply not to play by the rules that govern this game; he has a lousy, indeed an impossible hermeneutics. More than that I don't want to say. I am not saying narrative is all, or even that narrative texts can't be dealt with by other rules of exegesis. And by the way, whether or not the narrative depiction claims that the "transcendent is encountered beyond the ethical rather than the aesthetic" (Beardslee, p.7) is a moot question for me. Hermeneutically, once again, I'd rather leave that aside; I don't know what the transcendent is doing in the first place messing around in my modest second-order rules exhibited in the first-order use of language, and nothing but language. But if I do have to deal with that kind of sweeping generalization, I suppose I'd say that some people long before Frank Kermode-- to whom all honor-- have thought of narratives as more nearly aesthetic language play and others (F.R. Leavis the most scary example) as moral enterprises. I thought of a limited type of narrative in a limited hermeneutical context: realistic narrative as the mode of personal identification: who is this person in and from this story. Identity depiction of that sort is ethical yet also aesthetic, you could even call it the ontologization of the irreducibly particularist warn against well-intentioned endeavors to restore to ethical character.

I am neutral about how to integrate this approach with that of narrative as an aesthetic linguistic world in which strong readers find irradiating moments in discontinuous quanta. I am not sanguine about finding a global hermeneutics to cover these and other narratives-- as well as non-narrative texts, since I believe the variety of

phenomenological hermeneutics may be far worse than either structuralist or deconstructionist procedure. Nor however do I regard this as a matter of distress as I gather Professor Beardslee does. Hermeneutics in general, yes, not sacred or tailored to the uniqueness of the Bible. But there is no one general hermeneutics. The only way to get one is to have a general philosophical theory or system foundational of the general hermeneutics, so that all seemingly divergent elements of general hermeneutical approaches may be harmonized by having their specific places in the total scheme assigned to them. But that foundational endeavor I mistrust deeply. I want my hermeneutics to allow me to mean with my texts in independence from the reality-bearing of the texts and the hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics, though general, is, I believe, context-specific. And that goes for the tools as well as the textual stuff on which they work. Do I want to leave it at that? Didn't I confess a yearning for interconnection and, more, a common transcendent reference that could function as a common norm or truth for what is right interpretation? Half of me agrees with Professor Beardslee's dream, and I doubt that it comes closer to realization than in today's western world.

In the meantime I find that Professor Beardslee encourages me most kindly in my (corrective sense) as does Paul Ricoeur to the phenomenologists, to persist in "rediscovering the reality of 'the narrative sense'" as part of "the self-construction of an entity", one in which the function of a proposition is (focal). I am grateful to both, but want to do so hermeneutically, i.e. with the option of having my narrative interpretation-- on which I don't rest everything in any case-- and thus

my narrative hermeneutics without appeal to foundational thinking. And so I take off my hermeneutical hat to Professors Beardslee and Ricoeur, but at the same time wave an equally friendly yet arms-distance maintaining hello to my structuralist, poststructuralist, and deconstructionist companions.

All that that means is that at the risk of looking utterly relativist to some and utterly reactionary to Professors Beardslee and Kermode, I want to do hermeneutics in the tradition of Christian theology as reflections on the use of Christian communal language and that as a language that has an irreducible integrity of its own, is not systematically grounded by reference to a systematic pre-understanding or pre-linguistic experience (or expression) of reality in general.

Yale University

November 5, 1984

Professor Gary Comstock
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Religious Studies Program
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Dear Professor Comstock:

Here is the paper I promised you. I imagine your essay is by now on some editor's desk; but even if it isn't, I want to request that you not use this paper for quotation. However, I did want you to look at it.

I fear that it will not only confirm your worst suspicions but make you think that conversation with me is worse than useless. Still, I hope not (in a forlorn kind of way). Which reminds me: Will you be in Chicago for the AAR meeting? If so, I hope there'll be an opportunity for us to talk.

But now to our disagreements. I'm afraid you won't find much to agree with in the present essay. You may even disagree with my assessment that Ricoeur turns biblical hermeneutics into a regional case of general hermeneutics. Well, I'm afraid I'd argue the case vigorously, despite the essay on Revelation with its (to my mind inconsistent) qualifications. A 'pure narrativist' I think I'm not, and I hope that will be, clearer than before, but at least mildly anti-foundational I am in philosophy. Mildly? Yes; I am a Christian theologian and do not regard philosophy as ever

having achieved that clearly demonstrated set of even formal certainties (and agreements) in 2500 years which would allow it the kind of authoritative status you seem to want to accord it; and yet I believe theology cannot do without philosophy. Furthermore theology cannot even invest so much in the foundational/antifoundational debate as to come out (qua theology) in principle on the antifoundational side. Christian theologians will have to make use of philosophy,) whichever way philosophers decide that particular issue is to be resolved. In other words, I'm saying two things simultaneously: First, Christian theology is quite distinct from philosophy; it has a kind of distinctness that Ricoeur, despite his good will, cannot see, so that -- again despite his (and your) disavowels [sic] -- theology becomes for him at least a quasiphilosophy of religion with a regional hermeneutics under general philosophical-hermeneutical governance. Second, despite their mutual distinctness, theology as a second-order discipline cannot dispense with philosophy, and their relation remains complex and has constantly to be worked out, rather than being of one invariable shape.

That leads me to my main criticism of your criticism of me: It's the complexity of that interrelation that you reduce to far too systematic and simple a shape. If I suggest that philosophically, 'meaning' and 'truth' (themselves not the only philosophical categories one may want to use for purposes of interpretive clarification) should be sharply distinguished in a hermeneutics of realistic New Testament narrative, and hermeneutics confined to the level of meaning, I'm supposed to be implying that Christians don't make truth claims for their beliefs. But of course I'm saying nothing of

the sort: I'm simply saying that the virtual running into each other of 'meaning' and 'truth' in philosophical systems like Ricoeur's -- in which semantic sense and ontological reference are embraced together under the common category of meaning -- an ironic obverse to the logical positivists' running together of sense and verifiability under the category of meaning as pure ostensivity -- is dangerous and does not allow realistic narratives a genuinely realistic status. Instead, Ricoeur's view tends to force realistic description to become metaphor, so that its 'meaning' qua possible ontological truth can be a transcendent, secondary world which is obviously not realistic. I say that's in its own way as bad as the positivists' obverse, which insists that any realistic description refers ostensively and univocally. Both Ricoeur and the logical positivists unite 'meaning' and 'truth' prematurely when it comes to realistic narrative, whatever may be the case in other hermeneutical situations.

Suppose I distinguish 'meaning' and 'truth', that still leaves open to me several possible explorations about the relation between them in regard to the realistic New Testament narratives, for example, the tradition of analogical predication which has been so common in the Christian tradition from St. Thomas to Barth. Again, it's no perfect answer, if for no other reason than that 'analogizing' is one thing, whereas having a watertight theory of analogy is another and less likely one. Still, perfectly watertight (philosophical) theories are hard to come by anywhere, and in the meantime the use of analogy may keep us from a dreaded referential, fundamentalistic literalism on

the one hand and from a (to at least some of us) equally dreaded dissolution of realistic meaning into a non-realistic secondary or second-order world of truth on the other. Ricoeur often tells us that he wants to dare to be a Kantian, and hermeneutically that is doubtless the case. But his hermeneutics and his ontology are obviously on intimate terms, if indeed not systematically united, and am I completely wrong if I see a far more Hegelian than Kantian slant in the ontology (even though perhaps in Heideggerian or even Schelling-like garb) which he thinks goes appropriately with his hermeneutics? If true being is in the unity of metaphorical language, limit experience, and meaning, just how do you recapture the world of sense and things? Just what is that secondary world which is referred to by the other part of the 'split' reference, the part that does not refer realistically? How is it different from that sublation of realistic reference in which the latter is at once stored up and left behind, that *Aufhebung* which seemed to be the triumph of ontology under Hegel's auspices?

And if I am at least partially right in my suspicion at this point, would you tell me what 'God's action' really means in such a context? And would you really want to tell me that this is how Christians intend to refer when they greet each other on Easter morning with "He is risen"? (p. 15) You tell me that I wrongly interpret that statement purely intramurally; but even if you were right (which you are not), I don't think that's any more incorrect than your apparent identification of the meaning of that text with the statement, "Jesus's life reveals the mystery of the Kingdom of God" (p. 20), especially when that phrase may be little more than a literary code for a full-orbed

Idealistic-ontological use of 'truth,' and its residual realistic element is reduced to the level of some kind of 'powerful (poetic) presence.'

To retrace in order to go on: I think I have good reasons for distinguishing sharply at the philosophical level between the meaning and truth of realistic narrative: I want to avoid both the reduction which A. J. Ayer and Christian Fundamentalists share on the one hand and the ontologically non-realist dissolution of New Testament realistic narrative that you and Ricoeur undertake on the other. That kind of straightforward philosophical revision of New Testament truth claims is simply not open to me; the mode of New Testament truth claiming has to be more complex for me, i.e., more complex at the second-order philosophical-theological level, not in the first-order religious confession.

As for the character, then, of the truth claim, I admit quite candidly that it is logically, theoretically or philosophically 'odd' (which is not the same as 'meaningless' so far as I'm concerned). That seems to make me some kind of privatizing 'fideist' in your view. It is precisely at this point where the philosopher can apparently apply reductionist cliches (which allows him to stop thinking right there), that the theologian has to utilize most strenuously what Hegel called *die Anstrengung des Begriffs* and think both hard and delicately about the distinction but also the interrelation of Christian faith and philosophy. I admit I have so far not done very well there, but I know the issue has to be tackled, and that it is a very complex one which, for someone like myself who cannot be reductionist on the theology/philosophy matter, cannot be an either/or choice, especially since I

also believe that the very alternative, public/ private discourse, in which you couch the issue, is erroneous. For me, 'meaning' in the gospel narratives is more and more a combination of 1) the communal-religious interpretive tradition and what it has seen as their primary meaning; 2) the fact that the tradition has given primacy to their realistic, ascriptive sense (see the accompanying paper); 3) that outside of that tradition there is no reason to think of any single interpretive move or scheme as THE meaning of these stories; 4) and even within it there is room for others, provided they do not conflict with the primary, realistic or literal sense; 5) that subordination of understanding to the text, within the descriptive schema explicatio/meditatio/applicatio (see Charles Wood's book) is in no way the same as the elimination of interpretive understanding and of a possible multiplicity of interpretations. (Again, the matter is far more complex for me than your exposition of my supposed stance of "autonomous meaning" of realistic narrative makes it appear.) Philosophically meaning cannot be identified with truth but must be kept distinct: What these stories refer to or how they refer remains a philosophical puzzle, but it has to be in a way congruent with their realistic, history-like character (and history-likeness of course means that the ministry, death and resurrection narratives are the chief topics, not the "mystery of the Kingdom of God," which is not a realistic, fictional or historical, item in the same sense as these others). When I ask the question of their truth I am much more clearly (more than that I cannot say) on theological ground, but even there not without a reshaped philosophical form. As for my view of the relation between meaning and truth and the character of the gospel narratives'

truth claims: For me, 'divine truth' is at least in part a referential statement, but I do not have a correspondence theory and description with which to back it in this 'odd' instance. Rather, it is backed by a coherence procedure: It is contrary to Jesus's very identity in the stories to be conceived of as not having been raised from the dead; therefore he really -- and not merely in the stories -- lives. I admit the oddity and believe it is due to the uniqueness of the case. Is this the same as 'private' meaning? Anselm's distinctively Christian version of the ontological argument has always been philosophically puzzling-but private? It seems to me that that argument and the status of discourse about the resurrection of Jesus Christ belong together. I'm suggesting that in this case and this case only a straightforward referential truth inference is to be made from a formal coherence description. Further, this cannot be an instance of a general procedural rule, and yet the procedure should not violate general procedure in relating meaning and truth: It is therefore imperative at the philosophical level to suspend judgment about their relation, i.e., to keep them separate at least in this case, perhaps even generally. Philosophical] the gospel narratives are not self-referential; their reference is indeterminate and that indeterminacy is exactly what they share with realistic fiction. The referential status of the latter is notoriously difficult to determine (except if one cancels its character out in effect by Idealist or quasi-Idealist Aufhebung). But even if it is so ambiguous, so difficult to pin down, we do not therefore declare such fiction to be either private, purely autonomous, or self-referential.

Many of these things are at least hinted at, though not

fully expounded in the accompanying paper. I suppose these last remarks may have alerted you to the fact -- which, I suspect, will horrify you most of all -- that I believe strongly in a careful, restrained and almost aesthetic [sic] applicability of typology or analogy to the relation between divine and more general 'truth' for Christian theological reflection. The textual universe of the gospel is that perfect coherence of reference and meaning, albeit always imperfectly and partially glimpsed, which allows us to analogize from there to the imperfect, secondary and analogous coherence or cohesion of the two in other cases. In an admittedly exaggerated fashion one might say that this is the only perfectly 'public' case of truth which allows all our other limited and private truths to become at least semi-public. But of course, I have no philosophical warrant for this claim, since I have proposed that it is not backed by any general theory: Hence its status must remain extremely awkward, at once grandly if not ludicrously imperialistic, and yet totally mired in collectively private Christian discourse in the eyes of those for whom philosophy is a foundational and, in respect of formal canons for meaning and truth, THE universal, normative discipline. For me this is the risk Christian theology has to take if it is to recapture its character as theology of faith, and specifically of incarnation-oriented faith. If it aims at less, is it worth having? Does it do justice to the gospel that commands the life and language of the Christian community? Does it do anything that a good philosophy of religion -or perhaps even better a sympathetic and restrained interpretive social scientific view of religions as distinctive religions, like that of Clifford Geertz --could not accomplish instead?

As I read through all this it is not only terribly repetitious but equipped with every possible sign of haste, and it sounds irascible - which it is not meant to be. I suppose it is also not a direct reply to your article but more nearly a gloss on some of your points, mainly in light of the enclosed essay. Well, no use starting over, so I hope this may get us into conversation one way or another.

Sincerely yours,

Hans W. Frei
Chairman

Problem of Narrativity in general- often Theologians
19 (281) (transcribed August 1996)

- 1) Can "narrative" theology re-establish connection between existential and historical dimension- what kind of history?
- 2) Can the account be non-flat- linear, given the sense of temporality which a thought of memory or hope. And don't we have to resort to it as "meta-story" (p12, 6, 4).
- 3) In view of 2, can some variety in the multiplex be avoided in a 'narrative' view of the Bible's "sacred" or "communal" character?
- 4) What is the forestructure for a "narrative" reconstruction of theology". Is it the capacity to tell stories, isn't it something more profound?
- 5) Doesn't "emplotment" force us to do something like salvation history?
- 6) Reception of text contributes to its meaning- The sense of temporality of the story! The reader is inside the text. How can we reverse the flow of "sense" or meaning fully from our thought to the first.
- 7) (P10) The Christian tradition is a community of story tellers. Is that the basic thing?
- 8) Second discrepancy- the "truth" question. Isn't this unsurmountable? (Our common problem!)
- 9) Why is third feature more difficult than second problem? Non-narrative/narrative dialectic (wisdom).

-only most difficult if "narrative" given a privileged status- In Judaism no need. Isn't this a Christian problem and/or argument against?
- 10) Is the shift from narrative to image vocabulary not the clue that in
 - a) phenomenology
 - b) referentiality
 we deal with something more basic than "narrativity" in "narrative theology". Is it a misnomer?
- 11) Biblical theology will have to prove its uniqueness in a general arena. Can it?

"Equally clearly it is once more a case of putting the cart

before the horse ... if one constructs a general and inalienable human quality called 'narrative' or 'narrativity', within which to interpret the Gospels and provide foundational warrant for the possibility of their existential and ontological meaningfulness. The notion that Christian theology is a member of a general class of 'narrative theology' is no more than a minor will-o'-the-wisp" ("LR", 148).

11/3/86

Dear Bill (Placher),

I have just written the brief letter to Herring, chiefly trying to tell him why or how I thought the issue you're tackling is crucial within the field (relevance to external matters is a different problem) and that you are the man to work on it.

Of course, I was not surprised by your proposal, but nonetheless I was intrigued by the particular shape or direction it took. I do wish we might get together some time and talk about it, and I'd promise to be a better listener and less of a talker. Let me ask you a few questions.

1) I find myself (and to my surprise Dave Kelsey--for whose and Buckley's paper I thank you) reaffirming the hoary but respectable notion of 'critical realism' once again. It's early Farrer that I think of when I think of what kind of truth claims I would want to support, and how I would like to support them. Is that sort of view, with its affirmation of analogical predication and substance assertion, congenial to you? I would think so, from some long-past conversations. Yet I do recall that when you first wrote about my stuff in the Reformed Journal you wanted to make the truth assertions a bit more straightforward and less analogically qualified

(is my remembrance right?).

2) But whether or not such is the ultimate aim of your inquiry, I wonder how the particular discussion and group of people in terms of which you frame your project fits in with it. Are you moving to another level of generalization from 1) above when you move to the question of the nature and rules of rationality as applied to various disciplines and look for the heart of the debate among Kuhnians, Popperians, and Lakatos in-between, and then all their progeny too (including, I might hope, Habermas)? If you are, can you then come back to the sort of thing implied in 1) without really giving yourself an enormous agenda?

3) I haven't made much progress, I regret to say, on my typology, but I do hope you'll at least discuss the possibility I tried to raise in it, viz. that theologians may have a range of possibilities for relating theological (or Christian) to other instances of rational argument, other instances of 'truth', and not simply one. Can one not say that 'Christian religion' is a distinctive form of discourse, that even the concept 'truth' becomes remolded in it, i.e. becomes part of "propositions borrowed from. . ." as our mentor Schleiermacher would have said (did say), without thereby cutting all ties to--and possibilities for discovering parallels in--other fields? If we don't do that, if we don't allow

the possibility of analogy to reach even into the character of the formal concepts we use--and not simply into their content, e.g. 'God purposing' rather than 'natural selection'--aren't we apt to get entrapped in a liberal rather than a post-liberal outlook on truth? Another way of saying the same or at least a similar thing would be to ask if one should not extend the "already developed strategies for finding a middle ground between Cartesian rationalism and radical relativism" into a view of 'truth' that is rather more various and philosophically open-ended than has often been the case?

4) Suppose one goes at the issue of how to make truth claims also from the theological rather than from the philosophical side alone; I ask myself increasingly whether the way the rules operate in Christian religion as a cultural system isn't pluralistic. A) Our languages refers to a real God, and that fact clearly implies a correspondence view of truth? (I believe rules can't be simpliciter but only complexly at second level separated from assertions.) B) At the same time, we can't talk or read intratextually except by taking our texts, our 'narrative', not only to refer trans-linguistically or representationally but to the textual world in which we live. The text is adequate; if it is a 'witness' by virtue of that indirect coherence in it of truth and meaning, which is directly present in the gift of the grace incarnate in Jesus. Hence the literal sense is the

articulation of the identity of the ascriptive logical or narrative subject 'Jesus Christ' with the real subject Jesus Christ. At that point of ascriptive literalism which is the reading of the Lord's identity, and at that point only, the truth affirmation is logically entailed by the text's meaning. To understand who Christ is, is to affirm that he is. Well, this is old stuff to you and the point at which you are most skeptical about (not Lindbeck but) me. But ask yourself if without some coherence view of truth one can still have the narrative component in post-liberal theology, if without it one is not going back to a pre-liberal propositionalism or foundationalism? I am not saying that such ascriptive literalism and the coherence view of truth consequent upon can take the place of a correspondence view of Christian truth; I am saying that the two must co-exist, without reduction or priority of one to the other. I would plead the tradition's complex unity here: At its best, pre-critical scriptural [word illegible] and the sensus literalis never denied the possibility of explanatory (even if not necessarily justificatory) use of the theistic proofs as part of fides quarens intellectum, and thus they cannot [word illegible] the place of the cosmological argument (as if the ontological argument could be substituted for it. In other words, I believe it can't.) We simply have to accept the fact we don't have the super-theory to integrate an intra-textual and an extra-textual understanding of truth or of God as truth. C) Doesn't

the same irreducible complexity go for the pragmatic or subjective or existentialist view of truth in Christian faith? To know that these statements are true is truly to live (and/or be forgiven for not living) them, to learn to use them as instruments of grace? People like Pietists and Bultmann, Kierkegaard and the Wittgensteinian fideists (Holmer, D. Z. Phillips) have tried to make A and B a function of C, but that's bad. On the other hand it's equally bad to reverse matters.

What I'm asking is, don't we have to have three views of Christian truth claims when we "borrow" the concept 'truth' from philosophy? And if that's a possibility, isn't the parallel between theology and other 'fields' one of complex relation-and-distinction rather than straightforward parallel? And the reason is simply that if one goes at the truth issue from the theological side it has, like many other topics, a Trinitarian shape. By a use of the doctrine of appropriation we have to say that "the one God is the truth" is a statement in which (A) "The Father is true" is a statement about God qua real being; (B) "The Logos is true" is a statement about the same, real God qua ground and guarantor of the adequacy of depictive Christian language, paradigmatically that of the Bible--the indirect parallel to the unity of linguistic [illegible word] and real world in the incarnation of the Word. (C) "The Spirit is true" is a statement about the same real and linguistically articulable God qua guarantor

and initiator of performative certainty or ground of living Christian truthfulness, the Enabler of our conceptual capacities through Christian nurture to be true to God's grace, to enact in our lives what we depict narratively and assertorically.

But in all of these, A, B, C, it is the same God--inconceivably?--being true?

Well, I really didn't mean to go on at such length, but you and I have never really talked about this matter sufficiently. Given the fact that "transcendental philosophy" or Wissenschaftslehre and theology should be (from my point of view) regarded as logically independent yet interrelated or interrelatable--one may hope in a non-foundational way--it seems to me that one could try simultaneously from both sides to see how that task of interrelation might be plotted out on the inquiry into truth. That's what I was trying to suggest here, and that still leaves open the question whether one wants to do that correlation in a more even way--correlating theology and philosophy as even partners dialectically, without giving priority to the one over the other--or whether one wants to say that if you do one, that involves the other in a subordinate position, even if the process of super- and subordination is done unsystematically (Barth, subordinating philosophy to theology without eliminating the former). Your worry about me, I suspect,

is that 'truth' would either be a totally esoteric notion for me or disappear altogether in favor of 'description.' Mine about you is a possible temptation to use the concepts 'rationality' and 'truth' univocally, non-analogically, so that 'Christian' truth will be simply, rather than complexly--or non-residually rather than puzzle-remainingly--one single further instance of how a middle ground between rationalism and relativism, worked out (e.g.) in philosophy of natural science, in (soft rather than hard) parallel with explanation on the social sciences, can be extended to cover adequately the use of the concept in theology.

Well, enough for the day! I'm eager to continue discussion! You may find a dissertation done here (in R.S. and Phil. Depts.) by Philip Clayton very useful. "Explanation from Physics to the Philosophy of Religion. Continuities and Discontinuities." Not only he is sympathetic to your general position re theology's task about argument and truth, but Lakatos is for him the most promising general model.

Cordially,

Hans

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