Hermeneutics

1. Hermeneutics and exegesis are concerned with the meaning of texts.

Hermeneutics is concerned with general principles, exegesis is concerned with their application to particular cases.

2. Hermeneutics is not a primary field of inquiry.

Per se the meaning of texts is plain and stands in no need of any exegesis. Per accidens, as a result of any of a number of blocks that may arise, the work of the interpreter becomes necessary.

The point is demonstrable. If every text needed an exegesis, then the exegesis would need an exegesis, and so on to infinity. Similarly, the general theory, hermeneutics, would itself need an exegesis, and the need would be recurrent.

3. The primary field of inquiry is cognitional theory. It deals with knowing in all cases. One of these cases is knowing what an author meant in writing a given sentence, paragraph, chapter, book.

Hence, within the framework of a satisfactory theory of knowledge, hermeneutics is not a matter of special difficulty or interest. Such has been classical hermeneutics, expounded by Aristotle and refined down the centuries.

Contemporary hermeneutics on the other hand is a matter of considerable difficulty and interest, mainly for four reasons.

First, the issues have been placed within the context of historical consciousness. The classicist view that "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," has given way to an attention to detail, to differences in detail, to an understanding of man and meaning that rises from the detailed differences ~~of~~ to be noted in the courseof human development.

Secondly, in the Geisteswissenschaften (as distinct from behaviourial science) the basic category is meaning, and so hermeneutics which deals with meaning has a key~~x~~ role.

Thirdly, the lack of a commonly accepted cognitional theory has resulted

a) in the applications of mistaken cognitional theories to the problem of hermeneutics,

b) in efforts to employ hermeneutical problems as the springboard towards the solution of the philosophic issues,

c) in the attitude of the "plain" man who brushes aside such theoretical considerations, proceeds by what he names simple and honest common sense, and usually is guided by the more superficial and absurd catch-phrases developed by applying mistaken cognitional theory ~~to~~ hermeneutical problems.

Fourthly, modern man has been busy creating a modern world, in freeing himself from reliance on tradition and authority, in working out his own world-view comparable ~~in all respects~~ to the Christian view that ruled in any earlier age. This has brought about a climate and an exigence for reinterpretation

of Greek and Latin classical authors, removed from the context of Christian humanism, and revealed as pagans,

of the Scriptures, removed from the context of Christian doctrinal development, and restored to the pre-dogmatic context of the history of religions,

of the law, removed from the context of Christian philosophy and morality, and placed within the context of some contemporary philosophy or attitude to life.

5. Fr. D. E. Schleiermacher, Hermeneutik, ed. Fr. Lücke, 1838, S.W. I, 7. Reedâtio: F. Meiner, Leipzig 1911, Auswahl in 4 Bde., IV, 137-206.

Wilhelm Dilthey, Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik, 1900. G. S. V, 317-338. Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften, G. S. VII. Stuttgart (Teubner) 1958; also Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.

E. Rothacker, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften, Tübingen ^{2}1930. Systematik und Logik der Geisteswissenschaften, Bonn 1947.

M. Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, ^{7}1953, §§72-77.

R. Bultmann, Das Problem der Hermeneutik, ZfThK 47(1950), 47-69; also in Glauben und Verstehen, II.

G. Ebeling, Wort Gottes und Hermeneutik, ZfThK 56(1959), 224-251; also in Wort und Glaube, Tübingen 1960, pp. 319-348.

H. G. Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik, Tübingen (Mohr) 1960, 486 pp.

Ernst Fuchs, Hermeneutik, ^{2}1960.

Karl Heussi, Die Krisis des Historismus, Tübingen (Mohr) 1932.

G. Ebeling, Die Bedeutung der historisch-kritischen Methode für die protestantische Theologie und Kirche, ZfThK 47(1950), 1-46; also in Wort und Glaube, 1-49.

F. Meinecke, Von der Krisis des Historismus (1942), Werke IV, 196-204 Werke, Stuttgart, Koehler 1959

4. Accordingly, the problems of contemporary hermeneutics are to a great extent coincident with the problems of method in contemporary Catholic theology.

We do not propose to reject historical consciousness and human science because we reject "modernity."

At the same time we do not propose to slip into "modernity" because we wish to accept historical consciousness and human science.

We wish, then, an integration of dogmatic theology with historical consciousness and human science but without the aberrations of the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement, Idealism, Historismus, Dilthey's relativist Lebensphilosophie, an existentialist "Transzendenz innerhalb der Immanenz," or the naturalist "Principle of the Empty Head, Postulate of the Commonplace, and Axiom of Familiarity."

Plainly such an integration cannot be conceived much less achieved without facing squarely the issues involved in the science, cognitional theory, that underlies hermeneutics.

5. There are three basic exegetical operations: (a) understanding the text, (b) judging how correct one's understanding of the text is, and (c) stating what one judges to be the correct understanding of the text.

Understanding the text has four main aspects: one understands the thing or object that the text refers to; one understands the words employed in the text; one understands the author who employed the words; and it is not "one," "on," "man," that understands but I do, as a result of a process of learning and at times as a result of a conversion.

Judging how correct one's understanding of the text is raises the problem of context, of the hermeneutic circle, of the relativity of the "whole," of limiting considerations on the possible relevance of more remote inquiries, and of limitations placed upon the scope of one's interpretation.

Stating what one judges the correct understanding of the text to be raises the issue of absolute context, of "existential" categories, of the use of human sciences in exegesis, and of the problems of concrete communication in their relativity to a given group of readers.

6. Understanding the thing or object.

The Urphänomen is not "intelligere verba" but "intelligere rem per verba."

Exegesis presupposes knowledge of things, objects, and of the language that names them.

Because we already have the universal potential knowledge of the thing dealt with in the text, we find per se that the meaning of the text is plain, that it simply applies to a particular the universal and potential knowledge we already have of the particular.

It is true, of course, that my understanding of the thing or the true understanding of the thing may not be the author's.

But the point to "~~kn~~ understanding the thing" is, not that it settles what the author means, but that without it there is no possibility of understanding the author.

A blind man is not going to understand a description of colours; a person that has never attended to his own acts of intelligence is not going to understand a description of intelligence; etc.

By understanding the thing or object is not meant understanding only the things or objects of the visible universe. The thing or object in question may be (a) in the visible universe, (b) in the world of theory, (c) in the world of interiority, or (d) in the world of the sacred, of religion.

The contention that the interpreter should have his own understanding of the object, know what that understanding is, and distinguish it from the author's understanding of the object, amounts to a rejection of what may be ~~si~~ called "The Principle of the Empty Head."

"The Principle of the Empty Head" contends that, if one is to be objective, if one is not to drag in one's own notions, if one is not to settle in a priori fashion what the text must mean no matter what it says, if one is not to "read into" the text what is not there, then one must just drop all preconceptions of every kind, ~~sak~~ see just what is in the text and nothing more, let the author speak for himself, let the author interpret himself.

What I have named the "Principle of the Empty Head", clearly enough, is a fairly widespread view of correct interpretation.

~~However, PEH confuses two distinct issues: one has to understand what~~ the author means; one has to judge whether one's understanding is correct.

The contention that one must understand the thing is a precondition for understanding what the author means. PEH rejects this ~~mmmmmmmm~~ precondition (a) because it does not achieve what it does not propose~~s~~ to achieve. So far from confusing one's understanding of the thing with the author's meaning, it sharply distinguishes the two. Moreover, it further distinguishes one's understanding of the author's meaning and one's judgement whether that understanding is correct.

Principle of the Open Mind

PEH is a confusion of three distinct issues based upon an utterly inadequate account ~~of~~ or presumption regarding the nature of human knowledge.

So far from tackling in series the three tasks of (a) understanding the thing, (b) understanding the author's meaning concerning the thing, and (c) judging whether one's understanding is correct,

PEH rests on a naive intuitionism that, so far from judging the correctness of its understanding, has no need to judge because it sees what's there, and so far from bothering about understanding the thing, has no need to understand anything but just looks at what's there.

In fact, what is there? There are printed signs in a given order. That is all that is there. Anything over and above a re-issue of the same signs in the same order will be mediated by the experience, intelligence, and judgement of the interpreter.

To reject the "Principle of the Empty Head" is to insist that the wider the interpreter's experience, the deeper and fuller his understanding, the profounder his judgement, then the better equipped he will be to approach the task of stating what the author means.

The basis for this contention is simple.

Interpretation is a matter of proceeding from habitual, potential, universal knowledge, to a second act that regards the concrete and particular: what was meant by the author in this text.

The less that habitual knowledge, the less the likelihood that the interpreter will be able to think of what the author means.

The greater that habitual knowledge, the greater the likelihood that the interpreter will be able to think of what the author means.

When a critic of an interpretation states: "I do not see how Aristotle, St. Paul, Aquinas, Kant, could have meant what the interpreter says he meant," then the literal meaning of the critic's words is that he does not possess the habitual knowledge that would enable to see how the author could have meant what the interpreter says he meant.

While PEH is widespread in positivist and Catholic circles, it is vigorously rejected elsewhere.

H. G. Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, p. 254 s.

".. dass der Historismus, aller Kritik am Rationalismus und Naturrechtsdenken zum Trotz, selber auf dem Boden der modernen Aufklärung steht und ihre Vorurteile undurchshaut teilt. Es gibt nämlich sehr wohl ein Vorurteil der Aufklärung, das ihr Wesen tragt und bestimmt. Dies grundlegende Vorurteil der Aufklärung ist das Vorurteil gegen die Vorurteile überhaupt and damit die Entmachtung der Überlieferung."

R. Bultmann, Das Problem der Hermeneutik, ZfThK, 47(1950), 64.

"Die Forderung, dass der Interpret seine Subjektivität zum Schweigen bringen, seine Individualität auslöschen müsse, um su einer objektiven Erkenntnis zu gelangen, ist also die denkbar widersinnigste. Sie hat Sinn und Recht nur, sofern damit gemeint ist, dass der Interpret seine persönlichen Wünsche hinsichtlich des Ergebnisses der Interpretation zum Schweigen bringen muss... Sonst aber verkennt jene Forderung das Wesen echten Verstehens schlechterdings. Denn dieses setzt gerade <u>die äusserste Lebendigkeit des verstehenden Subjekts, die möglichst reiche Entfaltung seiner Individualität</u> voraus." [italics in text]

Ibid., p. 65: "Voraussetzung des Verstehens ist auch hier (scriptural exegesis) ein Vorverständnis der Sache."

H. G. Gadamer, quoting Fr. Schlegel's 25. Lyceumsfragment, WM 344:

"Die beiden Hauptgrundsätze der sogenannten historischen Kritik sind das Postulat der Gemeinheit und das Axiom der Gewöhnlichkeit. Postulat der Gemeinheit: Alles recht Grosse, Gutes und Schöne ist unwahrscheinlich, denn es ist ausserordentlich und zum mindesten verdächtig. Axiom der Gewöhnlichkeit: Wie es bei uns steht und um uns ist, so muss es überall gewesen sein, denn das ist ja alles so natürlich."

7. Understanding the words.

Understanding the thing accounts for the per se plain meaning of the text. This plain meaning is obvious and ultimate when the author and the interpreter understand the thing in the same way.

However, as in conversation, so in reading, the author may be speaking of X' and the interpreter may be thinking of X". In that case, soon or later, there arises difficulty. Not everything true of X' will be true of X", and so the author will appear to the interpreter to be saying what is not true or even what is absurd.

At this point the controversialist has all he wants: on the basis of his mistaken assumption that the author is speaking of X", he sets about demonstrating the author's errors and absurdities.

The interpreter however considers the possibility that he himself is at fault. He rereads. He reads further. Eventually, he makes the discovery that the text makes sense when X' is substituted for X".

This process can occur any number of times with respect to any number of instances of X' and X". It is the process of learning, the self-correcting process of learning. It is the manner in which we acquire and develop common sense. It heads towards a limit in which we possess a habitual core of insights that enables us to deal with any situation, any text of a group, by adding one or two more insights relevant to the situation, text, in hand.

Such understanding of the text must not be confused either with judgement on the truth of that understanding or with statement of the meaning of the text in virtue of that understanding. One has to understand before one can pass judgement on it that understanding; one has to have the understanding before one can express it. Understanding the text is such a prior understanding.

Such understanding matches the hermeneutic circle.

The meaning of a text is an intentional entity: it is a single intention that unfolds itself through parts, sections, chapters, paragraphs, sentences, words. We can grasp the unity, the whole, only through the parts. Yet at the same time the parts are determined in their meaning by the whole which each partially reveals. It is by the self-correcting process of learning that we spiral into the meaning of the text, understanding the whole through the parts, and understanding the parts in the light of the whole.

Rules of hermeneutics or of exegesis list the points worth considering in one's efforts to arrive at an understanding of the text. Such are the analysis of the composition of the text, the determination of the author's purpose, of the people for whom he wrote, of the occasion on which he wrote, the characterization of the means he employed, linguistic, grammatical, stylistic, etc., etc.

The point to be made here is that one does not understand the text because one has observed the rules, but that one observes the rules in order to arrive at an understanding of the text. Observing the rules can be mere pedantry that leads to an understanding of nothing of any moment, to missing the point entirely. The essential observance is advertence to what I do not understand and the sustained rereading, search, inventiveness, that eliminates my lack of understanding.

8. Understanding the Author.

When the meaning of a text is plain, then with the author by his words we understand the thing.

When a simple misunderstanding arises [e.g., the author is thinking of X' and the reader of X"], then its correction is a relatively simple process of rereading and inventiveness.

But when there is need for a long and arduous use of the self-correcting process of learning, when a first reading yields a little understanding and a host of puzzles, then the problem is not so much understanding the thing or the words as understanding the author himself, his nation, language, time, culture, way of life, and cast of mind.

The self-correcting process of learning is, not only the way we acquire common sense in the first instance, but also the way in which we acquire an understanding of other people's common sense. Even with our contemporaries of the same culture, language, and station in life, we not only understand things with them but also understand things in our own way and, as well, their different way of understanding the same things. We can remark that a phrase or an action is "just like you": we mean that it fits in with our understanding of the way you understand and so go about things. But just as we can come to an understanding of our fellows' understanding, a common sense grasp of the ways in which we understand not with him but him, so this process can be pushed to a full development when the self-correcting process of learning brings us to an understanding of the common sense of another place, time, culture, cast of mind.

The phrase, "understanding another's common sense," must not be misunderstood. Properly, it is not understanding what common sense is, a task of the cognitional theorist. Again, it is not making another's common sense one's own, so that one would go about speaking and acting like a Athenian of the fifth century B. C. But just as common sense is understanding what is to be said and what is to be done in any of the situations that commonly arise, so understanding another's common sense is understanding what he would say and what he would do in any of the situations that in his place and time commonly arose.

This understanding another's common sense is very similar to what in Romantic hermeneutics is named "Einfühlen," "empathy,"

Derived from Winckelmann and developed by Schleiermacher and Dilthey to be attacked by contemporaries under the influence of Heidegger [Sein und Zeit, §§72-77],

Romantic hermeneutics conceives the text as Ausdruck, the exegete's task as Einfühlen, and the criterion of the exegete's task a Reproducieren, an ability to say just why the author in each phrase expressed himself in the precise manner in which he did.

It singles out a valid aspect of the task of the interpreter and it gives an approximate account of the way in which the task is performed; but it is incomplete as well as approximate, and so it has been subjected to a good deal of criticism (Bultmann, Gadamer).

Conceiving the text as Ausdruck correctly draws attention to the aesthetic, intersubjective, symbolic dimensions of meaning, but it overlooks or prescinds from or fails to insist on the aspect of linguistic meaning by which it is true or false, by which it pertains to an absolute domain, by which it can be transferred from one context to another.

Again, empathy is the simplest description of the way in which we grasp intersubjective, aesthetic, or symbolic meaning. But it contains more than a suggestion of an extrinsecism that overlooks the development of the interpreter, his acquiring an understanding of another's mode of understanding, the widening of his horizon to include or fuse with the horizon of others. So far from raising and solving the problem of the transference of meaning from the context of an ancient writer to the context of the contemporary readers of the contemporary interpreters, it encourages a mythic elimination of the problem by suggesting that the interpreter feels his way into another's mind and heart, his thought and sensibility, and it leads to a falsification of issues inasmuch as it implies that there can be no legitimate transference from one context to another, that either one thinks with the mind of Paul or else one has no "objective" knowledge of Paul's meaning whatever.

Finally, the criterion of Reproducieren is excessive. It means that one not only understands the author but also can do what the author himself could not do, namely, explain why he wrote in just the manner way he did. Common sense understands what is to be said and what is to be done; but common sense does not understand itself and much less does it explain itself.

9. The Development of the Interpreter.

The major texts, the classics, in religion, letters, philosophy, theology, not only are beyond the original horizon of their interpreters but also demand an intellectual, moral, religious conversion of the interpreter over and above the boradening of his horizon.

In this case the reader's original knowledge of the thing is just inadequate. He will come to know the thing only in so far as he pushes the self-correcting process of learning to a revolution of his own outlook. He can succeed in acquiring that habitual understanding of the author that spontaneously finds his wave-length and locks on to it only after he has effected a radical change in himself.

This is the existential dimension of the problem of hermeneutics.

Its existence is at the root of the perennial divisions of mankind in their views on morality, on philosophy, on religion.

Moreover, in so far as the radical conversion is only the basic step, in so far as there remains the further task of thinking out everything from the new and profounder viewpoint, there results the characteristic of the classic:

H. G. Gadamer, WM 274 note 2, quotes Friedrich Schlegel:

"Eine klassische Schrift muss nie ganz verstanden werden können. Aber die welche gebildet sind und sich bilden, müssen immer mehr draus lernen wollen." [Schlegel, Fragmente, Minor 20].

From the existential dimension there follows another basic aspect of the task of hermeneutics. Wirkungsgeschichte.

The classics ground a tradition, an Überlieferung, a culture. They create the milieu in which they are studied and interpreted. They produce in the reader through the tradition the Vorverständnis that will need when they come to be read, study, interpret.

Such a tradition may be genuine, authentic, a long accumulation of insights, adjustments, re-interpretations, that repeats the original message afresh for each age. In that case the reader will exclaim, as did the disciples on the way to Emmaus, "Did not our hearts burn within us, when he spoke on the way and opened to us the Scriptures?" Lc 24, 32.

↳ ↑ tip : point at which naive + critical realism generate opposed views of the exegetes task : naive realist wants romantic exegesis, wants to take reader into author's soul, let him see what's "there" for himself, make his own judgements after inspecting the facts ; critical realist wants to determine true answers to questions about the text ; he regards romantic exegesis as a heuristic device, a stimulus for imagination and feeling, that suggests questions, gives rise to series of insights, prepares the way for the scientific task of formulating questions that can be answered + listing questions that cannot

Similarly in history the naive realist narrates relates what was "out there" ; he prizes the constitutive intelligibility of the events because it plausibly can be said to have been "out there" ; he wants the reader to think he is inspecting the facts and making his judgements on that basis + so he will only suggest the retrospective intelligibility — the naive realist's problem is the multiplicity of histories, although there could have been only one constitutive intelligibility of the events —

the critical realist would maintain that histories and, for that matter, sources (apart from tape-recordings, cinematographic representations) are retrospective intelligibilities — retrospective intelligibilities on many — the historians task is to set orderly sequences of ↑ and ↓ give intelligible and true answers

On the other hand, the tradition may be unauthentic. It may consist in a watering-down of the original message, in recasting it into terms and meanings that fit into the assumptions and convictions of those that have dodged the issue of radical conversion. In that case a genuine interpretation will be met with incredulity and ridicule, as was St. Paul preaching in Rome and quoting Isaias: Aure audietis et non intelligetis. Act 28, 26.

It is in this perspective that is to be understood Gadamer's attack on the Aufklärung and on Historismus as ~~based upon~~ involving a Vorurteil gegen Vorurteile überhaupt und damit die Entmachtung der Überlieferung.

Inasmuch as these movements were concerned with creating a new world for man, a new tradition, a new culture, they were astute in laying down a principle that excluded the possibility of a tradition.

But inasmuch as the destruction of tradition implies a continuous return to primitive barbarism - which was not their aim of the Enlightenment or of Historismus - these movements were incoherent and short-sighted.

The ultimate issue here lies between Descartes' advocacy of a universal doubt and Newman's preference for universal belief.

10. Judging the Correctness of one's Understanding of the Text. Dynamics of Faith Pages I, 143

Such a judgement has the same criterion as any judgement on the correctness of commonsense insight.

The decisive question is whether one's understanding of the text is invulnerable, whether it hits bull's eye, whether it meets all relevant further questions.

Here, the key word is "relevant." It implies a reference to a determinate prospective judgement. Without such a judgement in view, one has no criterion, no reference point, for determining which further questions would be relevant.

It follows that judgement on the correctness of one's understanding of the text is, not a general judgement on that understanding in all its aspects, but a limited judgement with respect to determinate and restricted points. It will be of the type, At least the author means this, At least he does not mean that. 6/ That/

The same point comes to light from the hermeneutic circle. One understands the whole only through the parts, and none the less the meaning of the parts is dependent on the whole. In so far as this circle is merely logical, it is surmounted by understanding. But it has a further and more fundamental aspect, namely, the relativity of the whole. With respect to a word, the sentence is the whole. With respect to a sentence, the paragraph is the whole. With respect to the paragraph, the chapter is the whole. With respect to the chapter, the book is the whole. But the book itself stands in a further far more complex type of context that includes the opera omnia of the author, his background, his sources, his contemporaries, the state of the question in his day, the issues then predominant, the author's aim and scope, his prospective readers, etc. In brief, there is an ever broadening hermeneutic context that ultimately finds itself in an historical context. Not only is the historical context to be known only through the hermeneutic contexts, but also it does not possess the type of intelligibility to be found in an hermeneutic context; the latter is like the general's plan; the former is like the course of the battle.

Now it is true that this relativity of the whole does not imply a complete fluidity, a "panta rhei" of meaning. The meaning of the parts is affected by the whole, but it is not affected in all respects. That Brutus killed Caesar can be placed in a context that praises Brutus and, equally well, in a context that damns him; but it does not fit into a context in which it is true that Caesar killed Brutus. The Gospel of St. John has been read in a Hellenistic context and now is being read in a Palestinian context brought to light by the discoveries at Qumrân. The change in context involves a change in perspectives, a change in difficulties, a change in the questions that are raised and discussed. But still this change in context does not change much in a commentary based upon exact analyses of the text and content to make cautious and restricted judgements on its meaning.

~~There is to be noted a relation between the two reasons we have given for the restricted judgements to be made by the exegete. First, we said that one can judge one's understanding of the text to be correct, only if one can judge that that understanding meets all further relevant questions~~

There is to be noted a relation between the two reasons given for the restricted judgements to be made by the exegete. Our understanding of the text is correct in so far as it enables us to meet all further relevant questions. But what are such questions? One can pin them down in two manners. One can assign the prospective judgement to which they would be relevant. One can assign the field from which relevant questions might come. Because the field has a measure of indeterminateness, one is driven to assigning the prospective judgement. Inasmuch as one assigns such judgement, one finds oneself assigning determinate and restricted assertions.

The issue can be put in a third manner. The exegete begins from his Fragestellung, his own viewpoint, interests, concern, that lead him to question the text. As he learns from the text, his Fragestellung becomes transformed; he discovers the questions the author was asking and attempting to meet; he understands the author in terms of the author's own questions and answers. Such an understanding of the author defines a context, settles all that is relevant to itself, and all that has no bearing on itself. If that understanding of the author is correct, then there are no further relevant questions. Still to determine whether that understanding is correct is made difficult by the indeterminacy of the whole. And until that indeterminacy can be eliminated, the exegete has to have recourse to the device of making restricted and limited judgements instead of pronoucing just what is the sum and substance, the essence and the accidents, of all the meaning contained in the text.

11. Statement of the Meaning of the Text.

In stating the meaning of the text the exegete employs concepts, but there are notable differences of opinion on the type of concepts he should employ.

a) Albert Descamps, Réflexions sur la méthode en théologie biblique, Sacra Pagina, I, 132-157, Paris-Gembloux 1959.

P. 142s. "Cette théologie [biblique = exegesis not of whole bible but of its religious context] sera aussi diverse que le sont, aux yeux de l'exégète averti, les innombrables auteurs bibliques; à la limite, il y aura autant de théologies bibliques qu'il y a d'auteurs inspirés, car on s'attachera avant tout à respecter l'originalité de chacun d'eux.

Le chercheur paraîtra se complaire aux cheminements lents, et prendra souvent le chemin des écoliers; sa description aura la saveur des choses anciennes; elle donnera au lecteur une impression de dépaysement, d'étrangeté, d'archaïsme; le scrupule de l'authenticité se traduira dans le choix d'une langue aussi biblique que possible, dans le souci d'éviter la transposition hâtive en vocables plus récents, fussent-ils accrédités dans la tradition théologique...

P. 143 Tout exposé d'ensemble devra se construire suivant les conclusions de la chronologie et de l'histoire littéraire des écrits bibliques; il sera de préférence génétique. C'est pourquoi les questions de la date et de l'authenticité, apparemment secondaires en théologie bibliques, y ont en réalité une importance décisive.

Ces exposés d'ensemble resteront d'ailleurs assez particuliers; s'ils embrassent la totalité des livres bibliques, ils ne porteront que sur un point de doctrine bien délimité; s'ils ont un objet complexe, ils ne porteront que sur un écrit ou un groupe d'écrits. Quant à la théologie biblique qui voudrait embrasser l'ensemble ou du moins un vaste secteur de la littérature inspirée, elle ne le pourra qu'en restant intérieurement très diverse, un peu comme le restera, au plan profane, une "histoire générale" de l'Europe ou du monde.

Certains rêvent, il est vrai, d'une sorte de raccourci, c'est-à-dire d'un exposé du dessein général de Dieu à travers l'histoire des deux Testaments; ce serait même là, suivant plusieurs auteurs, une forme privilégiée de théologie biblique. En réalité, il nous semble que l'esquisse de ce dessein n'appartient à la théologie biblique que dans la mesure même où l'historien peut s'y reconnaître: le croyant lui-même n'atteint le plan divin qu'à travers les multiples intentions des hagiographes."

The foregoing view may be named "communication of an understanding of the text."

The exegete begins from contemporary common sense; he develops the common sense of another time; he speaks to his pupils by beginning from their common sense and leading them into the multiple modes of the common sense of the multiple scriptural authors; that goal is vast, complex, endlessly nuanced.

In turn the pupils will be able to communicate their understanding in the same manner, uttering what initially gives an impression of dépaysement, d'étrangeté, d'archaïsme, but when they have reached understanding, will have become familiar to them.

Commonsense communication of commonsense understanding of text is work of seminar, not lecture, of interpersonal teaching and learning, rather than generally intelligible statement, exposition. Coomonsense has been extended to reach the commonsense of another place and time, but it has no more than commonsense capacity to make itself intelligible to others with same commonsense development.

The technical solution to the problem of communication notes 5 pts.
(a) An area without hermeneutic problems. Systematic thought (eg Euclid) requires an introduction, a process of teaching and learning; but once this is achieved and one is within the system, there are no hermeneutic problems. Hence, endless commentaries on NT, on Plato; no hermeneutic literature on Euclid, on scientific theories, on dogmas; one can ask further questions, give different evaluations, but they regard the same meanings.

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(b) Divions that exclude direct communication. Transcendental horizons differs by different accounts of meaning, knowledge, objectivity, reality; they differ either explicitly or implicitly (according as accounts are explicit or contained in talk about primitive, mythic, Greek, Gnostic, mediaeval, out of date, etc.)

Every statement presupposes some TH: else it is meaningless.

Statements, otherwise similar, have different meanings in different TH's: no statement made by an idealist has the same meaning as a statement made by a realist; similarly for other TH's.

No TH can be demonstrated: the premisses either presuppose the TH to be demonstrated (petitio principii), or no TH at all (meaningless), or some other TH (and then that alone can be concluded).

*technically Differences in TH can be surmounted*only through self-appropriation, distinction of positions and counterpositions (content coherent or incoherent with performance), dialectic.

There is no use arguing about TH on the hermeneutic level.

(c) An area where hermenetuic problems are minimal. Statements about external human activities (standing sitting, awake sleeping, walking running, eating drinking, loving fighting, silent talking). The field of the artefact: things men make; time series of artefacts; development of material culture.

(d) An area where hermeneutic problems are maximal. Literary statements about objects and aspects determinative of transcendental horizons. Literal meaning presupposes a literal mind; the literal mind and meaning with regard to TH is technical and philosophic; still the issues are vital fundamental; they are raised on the artistic symbolic intersubjectiv mystical incarnate ~~human~~ poetic literary levels before they are treated technically.

Above all, religion is the incarnation of transcendental issues.

Technical solution is (b) above; non-technical solution is encounter, challenge; cf. above on Classics which regard principally the development and conversion of subject.

An extra-hermeneutic
(e) A pre-hermeneutic process of clarification (also post-hermeneutic).

From the literary area of maximal difficulty there springs a tradition; the tradition divides by different interpretations of the source; the several interpretations both interact and work themselves out concretely [history performs its own experiments]; reflection arises from the interaction and the concrete consequences; there emerges die Wendung zur Idee, the shift to system; such is dogma.

Through history the area of maximal obscurity works towards the area of maximal clarity.

Proof-texts: the texts that cannot be reconciled with the opposite position [cf. boundary conditions selecting function].

b) Besides the foregoing "commonsense communication of a commonsense understanding of the text," one may envisage a scientific communication of a commonsense understanding of the text.

Such scientific communication rises spontaneously from the foregoing commonsense communication, for the very effort to communicate involves "die Wendung zur Idee."

This tendency and turn may be illustrated by the composition of grammars and lexicons, which are based upon familiar understanding of groups of texts, and summarize recurrent elements or features to be found in texts. Again, from the grammars and lexicons of different languages or dialects, there arise another tendency and turn to the idea in the form of comparative grammars and comparative language study. To take a different instance, place-names in texts lead to studies that collect the lot of them on a map; time-references in texts lead to studies that collect the lot of them in a chronology; personal-names in texts lead to genealogies, biographical dictionaries, ~~chronicles~~, etc., > outlines of history, etc.

Now the exegete draws upon all such studies in his work of interpreting particular texts. From one viewpoint, his work is one of applying the results of investigations in a large number of specialized fields. But there is also another viewpoint that arises in the measure that the application recurs over long series of texts.

For stating the meaning of the text is a totally new and disparate task only on the first occasion. As the number of occasions mounts on which one states the meaning of texts, one finds oneself stating over again the same meanings or slightly different meanings, and so one begins to compare and classify, to find basic recurrent categories, their differentiations, their frequencies.

Genetic processes next come to one's attention, and from the fact one may proceed to the cause or the form or the end of the genesis.

So A. Descamps casually mentions both categories and genetic considerations in his reflections on the method of biblical theology.

So M. Peinador lays it down that everyone would consider biblical theology to be a theology expressed in the very categories of the biblical authors. Sacra Pagina, I, p. 168.

c) In the third place one may ask about the foundations of a scientific communication of a commonsense understanding of the text.

This question appears in Descamps' discussion, first, when he begins by ruling out of court H. I. Marrou's contentions expressed in "De la connaissance historique," and secondly when he discusses Duméry's demand for a "critique radicale." pp. 133-136; 154-157.

It appears in Peinador's illustration of biblical categories by the "images" of the people of God and kingdom of God [p. 168] and as well in his requirement that biblical theology presuppose defined dogmas.

But it also appears in the use of Hegelian thought as the spine of historical development (as in the ~~beginnings~~ of 19th century higher criticism) and in Bultmann's use of Heidegger's existentials particularly in his interpretation of St. Paul. Cf. Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, London SCM 1955 1960.

Finally the same question appears in Insight, chap. XVII, part 3.

There are a number of factors that enter into this problem, and we must begin from an enumeration and description.

First, the effort to attain a scientific communication of a commonsense understanding of texts takes the interpreter beyond the explicit context of the original authors. Comparisons, classifications, the listing of categories and their differentiations, the observation and explanation of genetic processes, begin from the context of the original authors but they thematize it and, by that very fact, go beyond it to ask and answer questions that the original authors did not undertake to discuss.

Implicit in the foregoing shift of context, is the shift from hermeneutics to history. In hermeneutics the question is, What did the author mean, in so far as his meaning is conveyed by his text? In history the question becomes, What was going forward? The battle plan of the general answers questions of the hermeneutic type, for that plan tells us what the general meant to do. The actual course of the battle differs, not a little from the victorious general's plan, and a great deal from the defeated general's plan. To ask about the actual course of the battle is to ask a historical question, and its answer is normally, not this or that man's intention or meaning, but what results from the interplay of numerous and conflicting intentions and meanings. history is dramatic.

Now the original authors used categories, effected differentiations of categories, brought about developments, but they did not sit back and reflect on what they had done. It is precisely this that is done when the scientific communication of a commonsense understanding of texts is attempted. It moves beyond the explicit context of any given author's meaning to construct a historical context that contains, analyses, and relates successive explicit contexts.

Secondly, the commonsense understanding of texts begins from a contemporary brand of commonsense, that of the interpreter, and moves to an understanding of the common sense of another place and time. For the interpreter, his own original common sense is a Selbstverständlichkeit; it is something too obvious to be explained, too certain to need justification, too closely correlated with drammatico-practical saying and doing to be submitted to analysis. Still it is only one brand of common sense: each people, each culture, each language, each region, each generation, each social class has its own; and each finds the others' strange, something that in time one can come to understand, something perhaps that one will make one's own by socio-cultural migration, but not something that is one and the same all over.

Now the contemporary differentiation of common sense, while it does not imply a relativism, does imply a relativity. When the interpreter interprets for some one, he bears in mind that person's horizon. He will speak differently at a congress of his colleagues, in his university lectures, and in a public address. He will be able to bring things home effectively precisely in the measure that he understands the common sense of his audience, i.e., understands what they will understand immediately and fully.

It follows that just as there is a "Wendung zur Idee" that goes beyond the context of the texts to be interpreted, so also there is a "Wendung zur Idee" that goes beyond the common sense of the interpreters, that determines their categories and the genetic process of the development of their science or field.

Thirdly, there exist human sciences. They are concerned with the order of human living in family and society, morals and education, state and law, economics and technics. They are concerned with the meaning of human living in art and symbol, intersubjectivity and language, history and religion, literature, science, and philosophy.

In so far as these fields of investigation get beyond the initial descriptive phase of observation, collection, ~~classification~~ comparison, ~~as~~ classification, ~~if~~ in so far as they attempt to explain, correlate, analyse process, they become systematic. Their ultimate categories and the differentiation of the categories are, not what happened to be the categories of this or that writer or group of writers, but what are demanded by the subject itself, what lie in the nature of man, what can fit all cases, what will bring out most effectively the nature and structure of each.

or aim to be,

Now the results of such human science are an effective tool for the scientific communication of commonsense understanding of texts. They are such a tool, not only when employed on the original texts, but also when employed on the texts written by interpreters of the original texts. Just as the interpreter will not hesitate to employ grammars and lexicons, geographies and histories, in his interpretation of texts, so too he will avail himself of the tools of analysis and communication provided by the human sciences.

and theologies.

Fourthly, there exist philosophies. Already we have spoken of understanding the text as a development in the interpreter and indeed a conversion of the interpreter. But such conversion and its opposite are thematized and objectixfied in philosophical and theological positions. In those fields they find their scientific statement, and such scientific statement is the statement of the foundations of basic orientations and attitudes.

Now such basic orientations and attitudes find their unfolding, expression, concrete realization (1) in the original texts, (2) in the interpretations placed upon the original texts, and (3) in the manner in which the human sciences are conceived, grounded, directed, developed. The basic orientations and attitudes are the basic meanings of all texts, whether of authors, of interpreters, or of human scientists.

d) ~~By raising the question of the foundations of the scientific~~ communication of the commonsense understanding of texts, we have been led to a rejection of a basic feature of what is termed, Historismus. By it is meant the view of the proper way to write history that was current about the year 1900. Among its tenets was the contention, derived from the reaction against Hegelianism, that the writing of history can and should be independent of all systematic or philosophic views. The historian gives us the facts in their objective relations; philosophers and the like can add on the perspectives they please, but that will be philosophy and merely philosophy. Any individual historian may, of course, fall short of his mission, mix his philosophic preferences with his account of the facts in their objective structures. But in so far as he is doing so, he is failing to be properly a historian.

The rejection of Historismus arises from the discovery that such failure to be properly a historian is not per accidens but necessary.

Karl Heussi, Die Krisis des Historismus, Tübingen 1932, p. 64: "... dass Geschichtschreibung und Philosophie durch keine klare Linie getrennt sind."

d) Basic Context.

Context is a remainder-concept: it denotes the rest that is relevant to the interpretation of the text.

Material context is the rest of the documents or monuments relevant to an interpretation of the text.

Formal context is hermeneutic or historical.

Hermeneutic formal context is the dynamic mental and psychic background from which the author spoke or wrote; it is the set of habits of sensibility and skill, of intellect and will, that come to second act in the text.

Historical formal context is the genetico-dialectical unity of a series of ~~authors~~ hermeneutic formal contexts.

The distinction between hermeneutic and historical is ~~the~~ illustrated by the difference between the general's plan of battle and the actual course of the battle. The former has the unity conferred on it by a single mind (matched against other minds). The latter corresponds neither to the victorious nor to the defeated general's plan; it is what is realized through the conflicting plans and decisions and because of them; but it results not merely from the plans and decisions but also from what they overlooked.

Basic context is a heuristic notion, partly determined and partly to be determined. It is what becomes determined in the totality of successful efforts at exegesis.

At a first approximation, basic context is the pure desire to know, unfolding through experience, understanding, and judgement, and leading to the statements found in the texts of authors, interpreters, and critics.

Secondly, it is the pure desire as a reality with a real unfolding leading to actual statements in each of the relevant authors, interpreters, and critics.

Thirdly, it is a reality that develops, that proceeds from the undifferentiated through differentiation to an articulated integration. Such development is both individual (from infancy to senility) and historical (from primitives to contemporary culture).

Fourthly, it is a reality that undergoes conversion, intellectual, moral, and religious, and that is subject to aberration.

It is to be noted that basic context is (1) real, (2) one and many, (3) the ground of genetic relationships, and (4) the ground of dialectical relationships.

Further, it is at once factual and normative: the pure desire is both a fact and a norm; and observance of the norm ~~or non-ober~~ and non-observance are facts with a normative connotation.

Again, basic context is related to commonsense and scientific statements of the commonsense understanding of texts, as the upper blade of a scientific method to the lower blade. They are mutually determining, and they result in a philosophically or theologically grounded scientific statement of the commonsense understanding of the texts.

Cf. Insight, chap. XVII, 3, on the Truth of and Interpretation; chap. XV, 7, on Genetic Method; chap. II-V, on Empirical Method; Epilogue, on the addition of the dimension of faith to human development and dialectic.

e) Logic of Basic Context.

Basic context is a context of contexts: it is not on the level of the author's understanding of what he means; it is not on the level of the interpreter's commonsense statement of a commonsense understanding of the author's meaning; it is not on the level of a scientific statement of a commonsense understanding of the author's meaning; it is the level on which genetic and dialectical relationships are found between the scientific accounts of successive author's meanings.

Compare (1) reference frames, (2) the group of transformation equations defining the geometry of the reference frames, (3) the series of groups of transformations defining the series of geometries.

Because basic context places a series of authors within a genetico-dialectical unity, it goes beyond the intentions of the authors. It is historical, and the historical brings to light what was going forward through the authors' intentions and deeds but not merely because of their intentions and deeds but also because of what they overlooked or failed to do.

E.g., basic context relates the trinitarian doctrine of Tertullian, Origen, and Athanasius. But Tertullian did not do so; Origen did not do so; Athanasius did not do so.

This does not imply that basic context is only in the mind of the upper-blade historian. It is also in the minds of the authors, but there it is implicit, vécu, in the mode of verstehen, etc. The genetic is in them as their dynamic openness or their stagnation; the dialectical is in them as their good or uneasy conscience.

Basic context differs from the scientific statement of a commonsense understanding of the text. Such scientific statement presupposes the commonsense understanding of the text and employs in stating that understanding (1) the categories constructed from the text and (2) the categories constructed by human science. Basic context is concerned with the genesis and dialectical aberrations of categories.

Basic context differs from commonsense understanding of the text: it is content to select in the light of its own principles (usually unknown to the author) significant if very brief points; e.g., prove Tertullian had two distinct modes of thinking about the divinity of the Son. Such selection is not understanding Tertullian. Indeed, not even a scientific statement of a commonsense understanding of Tertullian does more than effect such selections, though it does so in a complete manner.

Cf. G. Ebeling, Die Bedeutung, ZfThK 47 1950 33:
Es hat die Einsicht an Boden gewonnen, dass eine reine objektivierende, nach dem Ideal der naturwissenschaftlichen Methode arbeitende Geschichtsbetractung, die sich mit der Feststellung dessen begnügt, wie es einmal gewesen ist, der Aufgabe des des geschichtlichen Verstehens gar nicht gericht wird und auch nur in gewissen Grenzen durchfuhrbar ist, das dabei die Geschichte gerade stumm bleibt und es nur zu einer Aufhaufung toten Materials kommt statt zu einer lebendigen personalen Begegnung mit der Geschichte.

Conversely, the qq arising from scientific statement and from basic context contribute nothing to an understanding of the text or situation.

E.g., the council of Ephesus defined our Lady's divine maternity. The definition is a corollary to the explication of the Christian tradition and its sources: one and the same is God and man. But the naive are prone to ask, Did our Lady know she was Mother of God? How did she know it? How did she conceive it? How did she feel about it? How do your prove all this from scripture? Does St Luke write with your account of our Lady's thoughts and feelings in mind?

Such questions arise solely from a total incomprehension of the nature and possibility of serious exegesis and serious history.

It is possible to arrive at a commonsense understanding of the texts, at a scientific statement of that commonsense understanding, at a basic context that relates in a genetico-dialectical series the scientific statements.

But this possibility does not amount to the possibility of giving reasonable answers to an imaginative curiosity. The answers have to be theological, and theological answers do not include an imaginative reconstruction of the past.

Method of unverifiable hypothesis - Oscar Cullmann

Bultmann - 1) Apostles used to know in Easter sense

Riesenfeld - Disappointment was basis for making apostles Easter preachers by heart