FOREWORD BY DR. NORMAN GEISLER

OBJECTIVITY *in Biblical* INTERPRETATION



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Objectivity in Biblical Interpretation

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FOREWORD

by

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Biblical interpretation is facing a crisis of objectivity. More and more authors are surrendering to the postmodern influence of relativism in interpretation. This malady is not limited to non-evangelical theorists. The pervasiveness of postmodern perspectivism propagated through the notions of presuppositions, preunderstanding, horizons, paradigms, historicism, and a host of other terms attempting to identify the preconditions of interpretation has forced Evangelicals to question the very possibility of a "correct interpretation" of the Bible and of communication in general. Unless Evangelicals can articulate and reasonably defend a notion of objectivity that transcends all perspectives and reaches beyond one's own historical context to declare a Gospel that is true and relevant for all people in all cultures, in all times, Christianity will continue to be viewed as simply another point of view among the host of choices, all of which are seen as equally valid. In the face of Postmodernism and Deconstruction, this book addresses head-on the question of objectivity in general and objectivity in interpretation and will argue for and defend the traditional belief that it is possible to have a correct understanding of the meaning of the biblical text, that there is an objective meaning in the text that is accessible to the reader.

This book covers not only one of the most crucial topics of our time and the best book I have seen written on that topic, but it is the only good contemporary, in-depth book on the topic of objectivity in hermeneutics. As evangelicals who believe the Bible is the inspired written Word of God, everything depends on our long-standing belief that we have an objective means of obtaining the truth contained in His Word. But this belief in an objective hermeneutics is precisely what is denied by the prevailing contemporary schools of interpretation.

Yet no evangelical to date has comprehensively and adequately addressed this pressing issue. That is, no one has done so until this landmark tome by Professor Thomas Howe. I have known Dr. Howe for nearly twenty years now as a co-worker, and co-author. He has a brilliant mind and is a super teacher. This book is an excellent product of his scholarship.

Professor Howe's deep knowledge of the biblical languages, theology, and philosophy have enabled him to produce simply the best defense of the Evangelical belief in an objective interpretation of Scripture. This is truly a milestone and monumental work on this vital topic. In my forty-five years of teaching, I have seen nothing like it.

PART I: OBJECTIVITY AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

The Challenge of Conflicting Interpretations

As a student of the Bible, or a member of a Sunday school class, or as one who discusses the Bible with others, chances are you have encountered people who interpret the Bible differently from the way you understand it. If you are a Christian in the tradition of the Protestant or Catholic church, you are probably quite aware of the fact that a Jehovah's Witness would interpret many Bible passages differently from what you believe and what you have been taught. In fact, if you are a Protestant, you probably also realize that Protestants and Catholics differ in their interpretations of many Bible passages. You would probably not even be surprised by the fact that different Protestant denominations have different views on many passages. However, you might never have stopped to consider the fact that not only do the interpretations of cults differ from the interpretations of orthodox Christians, and the interpretations of Protestants differ from those of Catholics, or different Protestant denominations differ, but interpretations often differ among people in the same congregation, or the same Sunday school class, or even the same small group. How can these differences be explained? How can we explain the different interpretations between individuals from the same denomination, or the same church, or among close friends who thought they believed alike? How can we explain the fact that sincere people often understand the Bible differently even though they do not seem to have any differences in their basic beliefs or practices? Questions and debates about the interpretation of various passages are a common occurrence in groups of people who, for all practical purposes, seem to believe and think the same.

Interpreting the Bible is of special concern to Christians, and among those who are diligent students of the Bible the problem of conflicting interpretations is a fact of deep concern. How do people reach contrary and often contradictory conclusions? And how can I know whether an interpretation of a passage is correct? In fact, in our postmodern culture, the more penetrating question is, "Is there such a thing as a 'correct' interpretation?" And, even if there is a correct interpretation, how can I know if I have discovered it?

Similar questions and issues have been the concern of the Christian church almost since its very inception, and in an effort to arrive at what they believe to be a correct understanding of the meaning of the Bible, theologians and philosophers through the centuries have studied the practice of interpretation and endeavored to establish principles that would lead the interpreter to *the* meaning of the text. As one commentator put it, "In effect, this is what historical exegesis

has had as its goal: total objectivity on the part of the interpreter so as to prevent injecting into the text any meaning other than the strictly historical one."[1] 'Hermeneutics' is the term used to identify the study of the principles of interpretation. In recent years, many books have appeared that not only attempt to set forth the basic principles of biblical interpretation, but also address questions such as those just asked. And scholars have addressed the many additional problems and issues that arise when one considers how one can or should interpret the ancient text of the Bible.

Objectivity and Interpretation

Of course conflicting interpretations can be the result of a variety of causes. Persons may reach different conclusions due to a difference in technical competence in the original languages of the biblical text. Interpreters who are not proficient in the languages may not be able to deal with some of the intricacies of the text and may be subject to inaccurate reading of the text leading to misunderstanding and conflict. Conflicting interpretations may be due to a shortage of historical background information that creates ambiguity. And not every conflict is necessarily resolvable at the present level of knowledge. A lack of historical background information may put a resolution beyond reach until more information is discovered.

Contemporary hermeneutic theory proposes that many conflicting interpretations are due to the perspectives or points of view of the respective interpreters. As one writer puts it,

> interpretation is a constitutive aspect of human be-ing and that human life is inescapably one of construal. We inevitably "see" the world through the lens of an interpretive tradition that delivers it "as" something; our reading of texts and our hearing of others are conditioned by our situationality (our topographic and temporal locale) and traditionality (those possibilities and ways of reading handed down to us). No discourse or interpretation is able to "overcome" these conditions so as to be able to deliver the world as it "really" is, to provide a normative interpretation that is "purified" from such conditions. To privilege one reading as normative (*the* one correct interpretation) would be to privilege one contingent situationality or tradition over another—a move that would be impossible to justify precisely because of the locatedness of any such justification. There is not *a* reading that is *the* reading of the world or a text.[2]

According to this approach, conflicts are generated because of the differing "situationality" and "traditionality" that indicate the impossibility of a "privileged reading" or of the very existence of "*the* one correct interpretation." It is this kind of conflict with which we are concerned in this present volume. This kind of conflict raises two important questions. First of all, how can we explain the fact that seemingly equally competent interpreters who are

apparently equally pious and equally interested in discovering meaning arrive at conflicting interpretations? The second question actually addresses a more fundamental issue: is it illegitimate to claim that one interpretation is *the* "correct" interpretation? Is there no such thing as *the correct* or *the right* interpretation of a text? If there is no "right" or "correct" interpretation, then the problem of conflicting interpretations seems to loose its meaning. Conflicting interpretations create a problem only if there is an interpretation that is *the right one*. The fact of conflicting interpretations seems to create difficulty only if one attempts to judge between them in order to arrive at *the* meaning of the text. In fact, everyone who comments on this question believes that his own interpretation of the problem is *the* correct one. Even those who claim that differing historical, cultural, and linguistic situations render the notion of a privileged or normative or correct interpretation impossible believe that they have correctly interpreted the state of affairs. They confidently declare that their interpretation of the problem of interpretation is the correct one, namely, that no one can claim to have "*the* one correct interpretation." Those who claim that it is impossible "to privilege one reading as normative" privilege their own reading as normative. When, in the above quote, Smith declares, There is not *a* reading that is *the* reading of the world or a text," he presents *his own* reading of the world as *the* reading of the world.

But, if our historical, linguistic, and cultural situation means that there is no one correct interpretation, then this creates an especially serious problem for those who believe the Bible to be the Word of God. If there is a *Word from God* that is communicated in and through the Bible, then the fact that there are conflicting interpretations of what the Bible means creates a problem of knowing what God has said. But, if there is no correct interpretation of the Bible, then there is no specific word from God that must be discovered in the biblical text. The explanation of conflicting interpretations, then, becomes simply the fact that different people prefer to understand the Bible differently, and since there is no right interpretation, conflicting interpretations are equally reasonable. Each person believes the Bible says what he wants to hear, and there are no grounds for any one interpreter to critique the beliefs, perspective, or interpretive conclusions of another interpreter.

Before the fact of conflicting interpretations can be addressed, we must consider the question of whether there is such a thing as a correct interpretation. If there is a correct interpretation, then is it accessible? But, the question of a correct interpretation is always predicated on the prior question of the possibility of objectivity. When someone talks about having the right interpretation or the correct understanding, she usually associates this with being objective.

Objectivity is generally associated with being detached and not allowing one's own prejudices, biases, or point of view to distort the meaning. Historically, objectivity has popularly been associated with the natural sciences. A scientist is supposed to be objective and neutral when evaluating and presenting the data. A scientist should be able to "tell it like it is" without reading into the data his own personal point of view. He should just present the facts. He should be objective.

But, when it comes to interpreting the Bible, is it possible to be objective in this sense? Is it possible to have an objective interpretation? In fact, is it even true that a scientist can be objective in this way? To begin to address these issues, one must have a clear understanding of what is meant by the terms 'objective' and 'objectivity.' Does being *objective* simply mean being fair minded? Does objectivity mean neutrality? And if objectivity as neutrality does exist, is it even something to be desired? The authors of one recent book on biblical interpretation claim, "Many writers have pointed out that total objectivity in interpretation is impossible, and we acknowledge this. However, total objectivity is not our goal."[3]

Of course we must ask, What does it mean to have *total* objectivity? Is there a real, distinguishable difference between being objective and being *totally* objective? And, why do many authors assert that total objectivity is impossible? Although these authors believe that total objectivity is impossible, they did not provide any argument to establish this claim. Nor did they attempt to distinguish between objectivity and total objectivity. Rather, they make this assertion as if it were a universally accepted truth of interpretation and as if their readers could understand precisely what they mean. Did these authors assume that their readers could have a totally objective understanding of their statement? Were they being totally objective, or assuming the possibility of total objectivity in their readers?

Objectivity is a topic frequently discussed among philosophers, linguists, philosophers of history, philosophers of science, literary theorists, and hermeneutic theorists, but their discussions are often conducted on the basis of two unstated assumptions: 1) They assume their readers already understand what is meant by the terms. 2) They tacitly assume that their readers can objectively interpret their discussions about the impossibility of objectivity. In a recent book on objectivity the author begins his introduction with a series of questions, one of which is, "Why should I seek to be objective—to proceed as other intelligent people would do in my place?"[4] The author assumes, and perhaps rightly so, that this question will be readily understood by his readers, expecting them to have a certain level of understanding of what it means to be "objective." Hermeneutics texts similarly employ the assumption that the reader understands what is

indicated by the term. Rather than assume that everyone understands what is meant by the terms ‘objective’ and ‘objectivity,’ perhaps we should survey the literature to see how these terms are being used.

Current Notions of Objectivity

A more thorough investigation into the nature of objectivity will be presented later, but there are some preliminary considerations that will be helpful at this stage. The terms ‘objective’ and ‘objectivity’ seem to indicate a complex of notions that is not as simple or fixed as one might at first assume. Lorraine Daston laments the complex and confused usage of the term ‘objectivity.’

> Our usage of the word ‘objectivity’ (French *objectivit*; German *Objektivitt*) is hopelessly but revealingly confused. It refers at once to metaphysics, to methods, and to morals. We slide effortlessly from statements about the ‘objective truth’ of a scientific claim, to those about the ‘objective procedures’ that guarantee a finding, to those about the ‘objective manner’ that qualifies a researcher. Current usage allows us to apply the word as an approximate synonym for the empirical (or, more narrowly, the factual); for the scientific, in the sense of public, empirically reliable knowledge; for impartiality-unto-self-effacement and the cold-blooded restraint of the emotions; for the rational, in the sense of compelling assent from all rational minds, be they lodged in human, Martian, or angelic bodies; and for the ‘really real’, that is to say, objects in themselves independent of all minds except, perhaps, that of God.[5]

Daston goes on to show that contemporary discussions about objectivity have “largely assumed that objectivity is and has been a monolithic and immutable concept”[6] and that philosophers have treated objectivity as “a trans-historical given.”[7] In contemporary usage, the notion of objectivity seems to indicate that it is possible to have knowledge and certainty that is not influenced by one’s prejudices or preconceived ideas. In other words, these terms seem to be used to refer to a knowledge that is unmediated, a direct and immediate knowledge of the world or of the truth about anything. As Bertrand Russell puts the point, “Subjectively, every philosopher appears to himself to be engaged in the pursuit of something which may be called ‘truth.’ Philosophers may differ as to the definition of ‘truth,’ but at any rate it is something objective, something which, in some sense, everybody ought to accept.”[8]

Allan Megill identifies four principle senses of the terms ‘objective’ and ‘objectivity.’[9] The first sense Megill calls the “absolute” sense. This is the notion among some philosophers that the mind is able accurately to represent reality without distortion. The second sense he identifies as the “disciplinary” sense. This is the notion that objectivity is a standard established by the consensus among the members of a particular research community. The third sense, the “interactional” or “dialectical” sense, is the sense of the objective that is the

result of the "interplay between subject and object," which, in Megill's account, "leaves room for the subjectivity of the knower."[10] The fourth sense in Megill's enumeration is the "procedural" sense. Procedural objectivity involves the establishing of rules which provides a standard of judgment outside the subjective evaluations of individuals.

In his chapter titled "Why be Objective?" Paul Helm describes two senses of 'objective.'[11] The first is what Helm calls "ontological" objectivity. This is basically the question of whether the extra-mental reality exists apart from human perception or is the construct of the human mind. As Helm puts it, "Does the character of the world change with the very fact that we are interpreting it?"[12] The second sense is the "epistemic[13] objectivity" or "objective knowledge," which, in Helm's words, "eschews bias, reliance on one-sided information, and the like."[14]

Nicholas Rescher describes objectivity as "a matter of universality (or at least generality) of recognition access, unrestricted availability to the community of standard respondents—in the cognitive case *rational thinkers*, in the photographic case *normal observers*. Such objectivity calls for seeking to eliminate the distorting influence of personal or parochial eccentricities. The crucial thing for objective comportment is that another sensible person, presented with what is essentially the same problem situation, would then say: 'Yes I can see why he resolved the issue that way. In the circumstances, I would have done much the same thing myself.'"[15] For Rescher objectivity has to do with a universally or generally accepted representation that is free from what he calls personal idiosyncrasies or group parochialisms. Objectivity strives for a "sensible solution" that any rational person would accept. Rescher contrasts his notion of objectivity with the "ontological" notion that attempts to "get at the reality of things."[16] As he points out, "The salient contrast [between objectivity and subjectivity] is not between objectivity and appearance as such; rather it is between actual appearance, no-questions-asked, and the normatively geared issue of what sorts of appearances would count as appropriate in given circumstances."[17]

Mary Hawkesworth points out that, "In the context of philosophical and scientific investigations, an objective account implies a grasp of the actual qualities and relations of objects as they exist independent of the inquirer's thoughts and desires regarding them. In the spheres of ethics, law, and administration, objectivity suggests impersonal and impartial standards and decision procedures that produce disinterested and equitable judgments. Objectivity, then, promises to free us from distortion, bias, and error in

intellectual inquiry and from arbitrariness, self-interest, and caprice in ethical, legal, and administrative decisions."[18]

Even this small sampling seems to support Daston's observation that "objectivity" is a complex and multifaceted notion. However, even though there is a multiplicity of notions attached to the term, there does seem to be at least two almost universally accepted characteristics that accompany virtually every discussion of objectivity. First, there is a recurring theme in the discussions that in some sense objectivity involves the notion of a neutral judgment that strives to be free from all biases, prejudices, presuppositions, preconceived ideas, preunderstandings, or other factors that might distort one's understanding or conclusions. Objectivity is almost universally equated with what Richard Bernstein calls "objectivism," which he defines as "a basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness."[19] The second almost universally accepted characteristic accompanying the contemporary discussions about objectivity is the rejection of the notion that objectivity is or should be an attempt to "tell it like it is" or "get reality right."

The Attack Upon Objectivity

Almost everyone who discusses the nature of objectivity attempts to qualify his or her account of objectivity by distancing the definition or description from what seems to be the usual notion that objectivity is somehow a right conception of the real world or a right representation of the way the world really is. In other words, there is an inevitable attempt to distance oneself from a naive realism, the notion that it is possible correctly to represent to one's mind the way reality actually is.

Attack on the Objectivity of Knowledge

It seems to be universally accepted in discussions on objectivity that it is impossible to be objective or have objective knowledge in the sense of "getting it right." The traditional sense of objectivity as an unbiased and ahistorical "view from nowhere" has come under severe attack. As one author asserts, "Not only has everyone his or her own pre-understanding but without such a conceptual framework observation and interpretation are not possible. The only way to approach an object such as a text with a so-called unbiased mind is to be mindless."[20] According to Gail Soffer, Hans-Georg Gadamer "sounds the death-knell of the traditional conception of objectivity, using the historicity of understanding to refute the possibility of trans-historically valid

interpretation."[21] Historicity will be discussed later, but briefly it is the notion that "historical man always sees and understands from his standpoint in time and place; he cannot, says Gadamer, stand above the relativity of history and procure 'objectively valid knowledge.' Such a standpoint presupposes an absolute philosophical knowledge—an invalid assumption."[22]

For Gadamer, understanding is possible by virtue of the prejudice (*Vorurteilshaftigkeit*), or as David Weberman translates this term, the "essential prejudgmentladenness of all understanding."[23] Gadamer explains that "the idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms—i.e., it is not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstance in which it operates."[24] Historicity, then, is the historical-cultural context from within which and in relation to which humans encounter the world. Gadamer refers to this phenomenon as *Wirkungsgeschichte*, "effective history."[25] We might call this someone's 'historical situatedness.' Because everyone encounters the world from a particular historical situatedness the notion of 'absolute knowledge,' or knowledge that transcends one's own historical context, must be rejected. As Jean Grondin puts it, "The quest for universally valid truth undeniably threatens to conceal the reality of understanding and orient it toward a cognitive ideal that it can never in fact realize."[26]

Feminism has also mounted a sustained assault on the notion of objectivity, particularly as this is supposed to be operative in the sciences. Feminist writer Dale Spender declares, "Gone are the days when we could believe that all knowledge existed 'out there' in the wilderness, merely waiting for brilliant men to discover it and to make impartial records uncoloured by their own opinions and beliefs. Like it or not, we have to come to terms with more recent discoveries (to which feminism has made an enormous contribution) that human beings invent or construct knowledge in accordance with the values and beliefs with which they begin."[27] According to many feminist writers, not only is the scientific enterprise not free from the bias and idiosyncrasies of the individual inquirer, but, "Claims of detachment, disinterest, distance, and universality merely serve as mechanisms for male hegemony, substituting certain men's perspectives for an impossible 'view from nowhere.'"[28]

Attack on Objectivity in Interpretation

The rejection of the possibility of objectivity is not only directed at the traditional notion of unbiased and ahistorical knowledge, but it is also directed at the notion of objectivity in interpretation. And this attack on objectivity in

interpretation comes not only from non-religious or non-Christian sources, but from Evangelicals. . Randolph Tate emphatically declares, “There is no such thing as a pure reading, an objective interpretation.”[29] The rejection of objectivity among Evangelicals has approached the status of a mantra. In their *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard declare, “No one comes to the task of understanding as an objective observer.”[30] Gerhard Maier asserts, “Since [the time of W. Wrede] we have come to realize that such ‘objective,’ presuppositionless exegesis is not possible.”[31] The title of an article in a book on Christian apologetics reads, “There’s No Such Thing as Objective Truth, and It’s a Good Thing Too.”[32] Alice Ogden Bellis notes that there is an “emerging consensus” among biblical interpreters that “objectivity is impossible and even dangerous.”[33]

Some theorists add the qualifying terms ‘totally’ or ‘completely’[34] to their characterization of objectivity to indicate the notion of being unbiased or free from all preconditions. We have already quoted Moisés Silva who declares, “*total* objectivity on the part of the interpreter . . . does not exist.”[35] As if it were a universally accepted matter-of-fact truth, Bellis remarks, “Of course no individual interpreter can be completely objective.”[36] Other authors, while not using the specific terms ‘objective’ or ‘objectivity,’ express the same notion by rejecting the idea of a preconditionless approach, or a view that does not come from a particular perspective or framework of preunderstanding. Duncan Ferguson defines preunderstanding as “the phenomenon of perspective which the observer of any event brings to its meaning.”[37] Ferguson goes on to assert, “Whenever anyone attempts to ‘hear’ what the text has to say, that person inevitably hears and identifies the sounds from within a prior structure of experience or preunderstanding. To doubt one’s own capacity to be free from preunderstanding which necessarily colors the perceptions and interpretations of reality is the beginning of epistemological wisdom.”[38] Grant Osborne affirms, “The simple fact is that all of us read a text on the basis of our own background and proclivities. . . . A close reading of the text cannot be done without a perspective provided by one’s preunderstanding as identified by a ‘sociology of knowledge’ perspective. Reflection itself demands mental categories, and these are built upon one’s presupposed world view and by the faith or reading community to which one belongs.”[39] Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton make similar claims in their book on interpretation. They say, “Interpreting any text involves two different types of assumptions. First, underlying all our thinking and interpreting are our presuppositions about life and ultimate realities, our

world view. These provide the basic foundation for how we understand everything. Second are the assumptions which we make about the nature of the text we are reading."[40] And again, Silva declares, "The very possibility of understanding anything depends on our prior framework of interpretation."[41]

Implications of the Attack upon Objectivity

There are, then, two notions that seem to attach to every discussion of objectivity. First, objectivity is understood to entail a neutrality, or a preconditionless approach to the text and to reality. Secondly, preconditionless objectivity must be rejected as a naive approach that ignores the fact a person's interpretive framework, historical situatedness, or world view. In fact, it is these very factors, it is supposed, that constitute the means by which understanding is made possible. Indeed, to assume that one can approach the text with no preconditions is just as much a precondition in itself as any other precondition.

There are two significant implications for biblical interpretation that follow directly from these two notions about objectivity. First, if objectivity is equivalent to neutrality, and no one can be neutral without jettisoning the very preconditional framework that makes understanding possible. So then, no one can approach the text apart from his own preconditional framework, and it is this very framework that unavoidably influences his interpretation of the text. Consequently, every interpretation will necessarily be a product, to some degree, of one's own preconditions, and this fact militates against one's degree of certainty about having arrived at *the* correct interpretation. As one text puts the point, "awareness of the problem should generate the appropriate caution, both in respect of method and in the degree of certainty we attach to our 'conclusions.' We need fully to recognize that *our* reading of the letter to Philemon (or whatever), however certain we may feel it is what Paul meant, *is actually only a hypothesis* —our *hypothesis—about the discourse meaning*. It is the result of seeing certain aspects of the text and providing what *we understand* to be the meaning that provides coherence to the evidence."[42] Commenting on similar conclusions by Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth, James Smart declared, "[Bultmann] and Barth were agreed that it is impossible for any interpreter of Scripture to be uninfluenced by his theological and philosophical convictions and that scholars who claim to achieve this are guilty of an unconscious dishonesty."[43] So, the first implication is that no one can approach a text of Scripture apart from his own preconditional framework, and this framework unavoidably militates against the possibility of an objective, or totally objective, interpretation.

The second implication that follows is that, with the rejection of objectivity, there would seem to be no grounds upon which to adjudicate between conflicting interpretations. If every interpretation is the product of one's preconditions, and everyone's preconditions are the product of his own historical and cultural situatedness, then there can be no *correct* interpretation, only various interpretations or "readings." Smart identifies this problem as following from the very perspectivism which he identified in Bultmann and Barth: "The danger inherent in this development was that theological interpretations of Scripture would be its meaning for this or that theologian. Thus, theological exposition, instead of penetrating to the one word of God in Scripture that brings all Christians into fellowship with one another, would give each segment of the Christian community the license to read its own theological convictions out of the text of Scripture."[44]

The historicity of Gadamer seems particularly inimical to the notion of a *correct* interpretation. As James Reichmann explains, "That this view [Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte*] has profound consequences for Gadamer's truth theory is clear. He may not allow that a text can be definitely interpreted, or that the fullness of its truth can ever be known. Or perhaps more exactly, one cannot properly speak of a correct interpretation of a text. Fresh interpretations are always possible, and each of these in its own way contributes to the rich, varied mosaic of tradition."[45] Indeed, the rejection of the notion of a *correct* interpretation is not only seen as a consequence of the rejection of objectivity, it is often a celebrated consequence among theoreticians. As one author put it, "in spite of Protestant tradition, Scripture does not constitute an objective, fixed, and inflexible source of authority. It is rather an authority which every individual interprets in the light of his total experience and present purpose. . . . Instead of hastily condemning those interpretations that differ from our own, we shall concede that other analyses of Scripture may be valid in relation to other interpreters. . . . In short we shall insist upon adopting those types of interpretations that are most productive of meaning for us . . ."[46]

Unfortunately, with the rejection of objective meaning comes a rejection of objective truth. If truth is a quality predicated of propositions, and if, since propositions are texts that must be interpreted, there is no objective interpretation, then there is no objective truth. This is the conclusion of G. B. Madison in his book, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*: "The truth about what objectivists call 'the truth' is, as Nietzsche declared with uncompromising honesty [truth?], that there is no such thing. Does this mean that everything is up for grabs, that we have fallen back—O horror of horrors!—into the dreadful

abyss of nihilistic relativism? Most assuredly not. For we are certainly seeking to be truthful when we say there is no such thing as 'the truth.' There is no good reason why we should allow ourselves to fall prey to the Cartesian anxiety, the metaphysical either-or (either there is meaning, in which case it is objectively determinate, or everything is meaningless)."[47] And again Ferguson categorically declares, "None may claim an 'Archimedean vantage point' from which to peer at truth."[48] In other words, it seems that if there is no objective meaning, there can be no objective truth. As Robert Greer puts it, "absolute truth . . . is indeed elusive and ultimately unattainable."[49]

Objectivity in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation

Evangelical Repudiation of Perspectivism

Evangelical authors adamantly repudiate the relativism that seems to follow from the perspectivism of a Gadamerian or historicist type of hermeneutics. After a lengthy discussion of the role of the preconditions of understanding in which they assert, "Interpreters approach texts with questions, biases, and preunderstandings that emerge out of their personal situations," and that these preconditions "[i]nevitably . . . influence the answers they obtain," Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard emphatically deny that this situation leads to subjectivity and relativism:

> Following such a discussion of preunderstanding, one may wonder if we are doomed to subjectivity in interpretation. Can we ever interpret the Bible in an objective fashion, or do we simply detect in its pages only what we want or are predisposed to see? Can we only say what is "true for me" and despair of finding truth that is universal or absolute? . . . Recognizing the role of our preunderstanding does not doom us to a closed circle—that we find in a text what we want to find in a text—though that looms as an ever-present danger. The honest, active interpreter remains open to change, even to a significant transformation of preunderstandings.[50]

McCartney and Clayton, who also acknowledge the unavoidability of the preconditions of interpretation, make a similar claim to the possibility of arriving at a "right" interpretation.

> We will argue later that there is a right way to understand Isaiah 53 or any other passage and that the right way is indicated by the nature of the text itself. However, discerning this is not a matter of escaping or suspending our presuppositions, but changing and adapting them. We really cannot escape them. Since the things we assume are to us self-evident, we may be unconscious of them, but they still determine our understanding, and without them there is no understanding. Any time we find "meaning" in a text, we arrive at that "meaning" by fitting it in with our previous knowledge. And this involves assumptions or presuppositions about such things as the nature of the text we are reading, the meaning of life, and how we know things. All our interpreting activity in life involves assumptions, just as in geometry every theorem can only be proven on the basis of previous

> theorems, and "self-evident" assumptions. Presuppositions form the basis of the "interpretive framework" by which we understand things.[51]

On the one hand, Evangelical theorists acknowledge the role of one's historical situatedness, one's world view, and the preconditions of interpretation that are inescapable and that inevitably influence one's interpretation, and on the other hand they shun the perspectivism, subjectivism, and relativism that seems to follow from this approach; a perspectivism that is not only acknowledged outside Evangelical circles, but is celebrated and promoted as the only rational approach among many Evangelicals. But this stance raises some questions: 1) How can one at the same time acknowledge the unavoidability of one's preconditional framework and yet also retain some sense of a correct meaning or objective truth? As many theoreticians have argued, the preconditional framework seems necessarily to militate against the notion of objectivity. 2) Once objectivity is abandoned, on what basis can conflicting interpretations be adjudicated, and is adjudicating between interpretations even a desirable or reasonable task in light of a perspectivist approach? Can the claim of a *correct* interpretation be maintained against the historicist assumption? Let me illustrate the problem. Daniel B. Wallace makes the following comment in a footnote to his discussion about the relation between aspect and *Aktionsart* of a Greek verb: "As much as one might want the theology of a text to be a certain way, just to pull a grammatical category out of the hat—to employ it without regard for its normal semantic situation—is not responsible grammatical exegesis. Yet we all do this . . . partially because there are no unbiased exegetes (though some are more biased than others).[52] But an increasingly better grasp of the parameters of Koine Greek is helping all students of the NT to gain a valid interpretation of the NT message. This 'valid interpretation' is beyond what is merely possible; it has to do with what is probable."[53] The problem that arises is that since, according to Wallace "there are no unbiased exegetes," then who decides what is and what is not "valid"? Even his discussion of the affected and unaffected meanings involves the bias of the observer, and his estimation of what counts and does not count in estimating the relevant evidence must also be affected by one's bias. He talks about the "undisputed" instances of an historical present verb, but according to whose bias are they identified as undisputed? To whose bias does one appeal in order to decide what is a "normal semantic situation"? The data of the text is not self-interpreting, nor is it conveniently labeled for classification. Nevertheless, Wallace still insists that a "valid" interpretation is not merely possible, but in fact "has to do with what is probable." How can one justify the claim to a valid interpretation in the face of an unavoidable bias?

Evangelicals and the "Correct" Interpretation

In light of this seemingly wholesale rejection of objectivity, the possibility of a *correct* interpretation seems to be a moot point. This leads to the conclusion that there can be no means of adjudicating between conflicting interpretations. In fact, the very notion of adjudicating between interpretations seems meaningless since every interpretation is relevant to the preconditional framework of the interpreter. For those theorists who hold to the possibility of objective meaning, this poses a serious problem. Many Evangelical interpreters claim that there is in fact a *correct* interpretation of the biblical text, or at least one that is *more* correct than its rivals, and that it is possible to decide which interpretation is better. Also, many Evangelicals claim that a *correct* interpretation of the text is at least an important part of the interpreter's goal, and the achievement of this goal involves at least two lines of approach: 1) an interpreter must be aware of his own preconditional framework and be diligent to maintain a willingness for this framework to be challenged, reshaped, and redirected, and 2) an interpreter must employ the appropriate methods of interpretation. As Robertson McQuilkin puts it, "One must not only have the right attitude and approach; he must also use good methods and develop skill in their use."[54]

But do these principles work out in actual conflicts? Interpreters who hold conflicting views make claims and counter claims, appeal to Scriptures as evidence against contrary appeals, but little headway toward a solution seems to be made. Everyone appeals to the same body of Scripture, and everyone seems to propose that his own interpretation is superior to the interpretations of his opponents. However, no one seems to convince anyone else, and, with the rejection of objectivity, there does not seem any longer to be an objective standard to which to appeal in order to resolve the conflicts. Often the combatants affirm an adherence to a preconditional framework and a set of hermeneutical principles that are virtually indistinguishable from their opponents'.

Interpretations in Conflict, a Case in Point

Conflicting Eschatological Interpretations

To illustrate the point, let us consider the claims of two Bible interpreters, Robert Van Kampen and Fennis Jennings Dake. Both of these interpreters claim to be telling the reader what the Bible actually teaches, and yet they arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions. There are two questions being addressed in this example: 1) can an observer adjudicate between these conflicting claims,

and 2) can these conflicting claims be explained by different approaches and/or by different interpretive methodologies?

Robert Van Kampen is an Evangelical writer and author of the book *The Sign*.[55] In this book Van Kampen claims, "I began this work with no intention of being sensational, but only with a desire to discover God's truth about the end times by carefully examining all prophetic Scriptures and then harmonizing these in such a way that there would be no contradictions or inconsistencies."[56] Later when he discusses his interpretive principles he says, "To have validity, our method of interpretation (i.e., our hermeneutic) must be consistent and without contradiction, and it must never be governed by a theological predisposition or school of thought. In other words, if our hermeneutic is controlled by our theology, then the Bible can be twisted to say whatever our theology would have it say – which of course is what often happens in the study of the end times."[57]

Like any sincere interpreter, Van Kampen does not want his own preconceived ideas to influence his conclusions. Rather, he wants to understand what the Bible says in itself, and he believes he can somehow avoid the imposition on the text of his own theological perspective as he studies the prophetic Scriptures. Like many Evangelicals, Van Kampen also believes that the reason people come up with different interpretations is because they are using different principles of interpretation or that they are using them inconsistently. He says, "Thus, it is axiomatic that those who use a different method of interpretation (i.e., a different hermeneutic) will end up with basically different doctrines and theology."[58]

Fennis Dake is the author of the popular *Dake Annotated Reference Bible*.[59] He was born the eighth of eleven children in Iberia, Missouri in 1902 and was an esteemed Pentecostal preacher, teacher, and author. In the mid-1920s, Dake enrolled in Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri.[60] Over the years Dake's ministry has had a tremendous impact in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. He has ministered to countless people through a variety of methods such as books, radio, tapes, and pastoral ministries. According to the Dake Publishing company, "Throughout his eighty-four years he pastored several churches, started a Bible school, and lectured extensively. He also hosted a radio broadcast twice daily for thirteen years, answering any Scriptural question posed to him. In the midst of this busy ministry, he managed to write several books, including *God's Plan for Man* and the huge volume of commentary notes in the *Dake Annotated Reference Bible*."[61]

Dake makes claims about his approach to the Bible that are similar to those

made by Van Kampen. Dake asserts:

> We promise and guarantee that we will not change any part of the Bible to fit into our own ideas or those of anyone else, but we will give you chapter and verse for everything we say concerning God's plan for man. Let us proceed with our study with an open Bible, and open heart, and an open mind to all that God says, and be honest to lay aside old theories for the plain, literal, and simple Word of God on all points discussed.
>
> Since the Bible is like other books in that it is written in human language, it must be interpreted like all other literature. . . . One must understand the words and expressions in the Bible the same as if they were found outside of it. There can be no special Bible logic, rhetoric, or grammar. The laws of grammar apply to the Bible as they do to other writings.[62]

Employing their respective approaches and hermeneutical principles in the study of eschatology, each interpreter, Van Kampen and Dake, arrives at a conclusion about the relation of the rapture of the church and the chronology of the end-time events. It is not necessary to agree that such an event as the rapture of the church is an acceptable doctrine of Christianity in order to grasp the force of this example. Their respective conclusions about this topic serve only to illustrate the point that, in this instance, it appears that the ideal of a "right" approach employing "good" principles and resulting in a "correct" interpretation does not seem to account for the differences in interpretive conclusions.

Concerning the question of the rapture, Dake concludes, "We have already proved . . . that the rapture must take place before the fulfillment of Rev. 4–22, which describes the tribulation period and the Millennium and the New Earth after the Millennium."[63] By contrast, Van Kampen, an advocate of the "prewrath" rapture view, asserts, "The essence of the prewrath position is that Christ will rapture His church *immediately after* He cuts short the great tribulation by Antichrist and *immediately before* He unleashes His day-of-the-Lord judgment on the ungodly world."[64] Concerning this conclusion, Van Kampen declares, "Rightly understood, the prewrath view is the only view supported by the New Testament if one's hermeneutic is truly concerned about finding the most natural, normal, and customary meaning of the text."[65] Yet Dake asserts essentially the same thing about his conclusions: "In fact, it would be hard to understand how even one person could fail to understand such a doctrine [his own rapture view] if he will be honest and believe what is plainly written in these passages."[66]

Comparative Hermeneutical Principles

As we have pointed out, according to the assertions of many Evangelicals,

conflicting interpretations can be explained by the conflicting hermeneutical principles employed or the inconsistent application of these principles. In fact, both Dake and Van Kampen make the same assertion about appropriate hermeneutical principles. They both claim that employing the proper hermeneutic will lead to their own particular conclusions. The following chart presents the basic principles of interpretation that each author advocates and claims to practice in his own interpretation of the Bible.

Table #1: Comparison of Van Kampen and Dake

Van Kampen	Dake
The *first principle* is that *all Scripture is to be taken in its customary, natural and normal sense* (*i.e., literal*), allowing, of course for obvious symbolism and figures of speech (Van Kampen, *Sign*, 290).	*Remember this: Take the Bible literally wherever it is at all possible. When the language cannot be taken literally, then we know it is figurative. Then get the literal truth conveyed by the figurative language as if it were expressed in literal language without the use of figures* (Dake, *GPM*. 42).
The *second principle* has to do with *the context of a word, phrase, or larger passage*. Sometimes that involves careful understanding of the complete Bible book being studied, carefully interpreting a given idea or principle in light of the overall thrust and nature of the book as well as in light of its immediate context (Van Kampen, *Sign*, 28).	Often to fully understand a passage of Scripture, the scope or plan of the entire book must be known. . . . If the definite purpose of the book is not stated, the purpose of the book must be gotten from the contents and from the design of the Bible as a whole, as is clear in John 5:39; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17 (Dake, *GPM*, 43).
The *third principle*, equally important as the first two, is that of *comparing Scripture with Scripture* (Van Kampen, *Sign*, 28).	One of the most fundamental rules of interpretation is that of comparing Scripture with Scripture (Dake, *GPM*, 43).
Fourth, antinomies are never acceptable, and the importance of this principle cannot be overstated. An antinomy is "a contradiction between two apparently equally valid principles or between inferences correctly drawn from such principles." . . . If God's Word is inerrant, it cannot be self-contradictory (Van Kampen, *Sign*, 29).	The Bible cannot contradict itself. Its teachings in one part must agree with its teachings in another part. Therefore any interpretation which makes the Bible self-inconsistent must rest upon false principles (Dake, *GPM*, 43).
Fifth, it is recognized that *many passages of Scripture, in both Testaments, have both near and far implications and applications*. In other words, prophecy operates on two levels of fulfillment (Van Kampen, *Sign*, 29).	In some passages two distinct persons are referred to, the visible person addressed and the invisible person who is using the visible one as a tool (Finis Jennings Dake, *Revelation Expounded, or Eternal Mysteries Simplified* (Lawrenceville, Georgia: Dake Bible Sales, 1977), 21. See also, *GPM*, 776).

The hermeneutical principles delineated by Van Kampen and Dake are so similar one might be tempted to think that one of these writers copied from the other, or that they each took their principles from a common source, perhaps an undiscovered and postulated "H" document ("H" for Hermeneutic). Regardless

of how they arrived at their principles, there can be little doubt that they advocate essentially the same hermeneutical methodology, at least as far as their acknowledged principles go.

Both Dake and Van Kampen claim to be reporting to the reader precisely what the Word of God says. Both claim to be understanding the text in its normal, literal signification. Both claim to have put aside their own theological presuppositions. They advocate virtually identical hermeneutical principles, yet they arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions. Van Kampen believes that the rapture of the Church will take place close to the end of the Tribulation period just prior to the pouring out of God's wrath which is followed by Christ's return. Dake believes that the rapture of the Church will take place before the Tribulation period begins. How can these contrary conclusions be explained? The notion that these conflicting interpretations can be explained by different hermeneutic principles seems to fail in this case. A popular response to this problem that is widely advocated today in both Evangelical and non-Evangelical circles is that these conflicting interpretations can be explained because the two authors came to the biblical text with different preunderstandings or different presuppositions, that is, different preconditional frameworks, and these factors determined how each interpreter understood the various passages.

Comparative Preconditional Frameworks

Recalling that each interpreter promised to avoid the illegitimate imposition upon the text of his preconceived ideas, we might ask whether they were successful. An examination of their introductory discussions indicates that in fact they have not only failed to avoid certain theological presuppositions, but they in fact advocated certain presuppositions as the basis for their respective interpretations. If the popular view of the preconditions of interpretation is correct, perhaps we can discover the cause of their contrary conclusions by looking at these theological presuppositions.

On the one hand Van Kampen declares that he comes to the text with the presupposition that the Bible does not contradict itself. He asserts that he will "harmonize" the prophetic Scriptures so that there are "no contradictions or inconsistencies." This is, of course, a theological presupposition that Van Kampen brings to the text as part of his interpretive preconditional framework. However, earlier in his book Van Kampen declared, "To have validity, our method of interpretation (i.e., our hermeneutic) must be consistent and without contradiction, and *it must never be governed by a theological predisposition or school of thought. In other words, if our hermeneutic is controlled by our theology, then the Bible can be twisted to say whatever our theology would have*

it say – which of course is what often happens in the study of the end times."[67] On the one hand he asserted that an interpreter must avoid allowing his interpretation to be governed by a theological predisposition, and on the other hand he asserts that a correct interpretation must employ the theological presupposition of inerrancy. In his initial approach to the text he has already assumed a certain theological perspective which he will use to interpret the text. Whenever there are prophetic statements that seem to be contradictory or inconsistent, he proposes carefully to examine them until the apparent contradiction or inconsistency is resolved. This is certainly an approach that many Evangelicals would admit and adopt. It is, nevertheless, a theological precondition that he brings to the text.

However, Finis Dake does precisely the same thing. On the one hand he says,

> Nevertheless, whatever you do, should you have any doubts that we are stating sound doctrines, look up the references and see exactly what the Bible says and believe it in preference to any man. You cannot go wrong with this kind of advice. But in doing this, be sure you adhere to what is written, and that you do not let preconceived ideas cause you to be biased on any point. Do not try to make the Bible conform to your ideas.[68]

Like Van Kampen, Dake emphatically asserts, "The Bible cannot contradict itself."[69] But, as we have seen with Van Kampen, the assumption of the inerrancy of the Bible is a theological and philosophical presupposition. Nevertheless, the fact that both Van Kampen and Dake assume inerrancy illustrates that each one comes to the biblical text with a preconceived theological and philosophical presupposition through which each will understand the particular statements of the biblical text. Consequently, contrary to their own claims, they in fact did employ their theological presuppositions and preconceived ideas as a hermeneutical precondition.

Admittedly the analysis of Van Kampen and Dake is brief and perhaps not sufficiently deep to reveal even most of the preconditional factors that may be at work in the minds of these interpreters. Nevertheless, this example does seem to emphasize the first fundamental question posed above, namely, how can we explain the fact that these two interpreters, employing the same hermeneutical methodology, and sharing the same theological presupposition of inerrancy, still arrived at contrary conclusions? First, the example of Van Kampen and Dake certainly shows that interpreters do not always avoid the influence of presuppositions even when they claim they do. Second, this example implies that there may be something else besides one's hermeneutical principles that could account for divergent interpretations. By this I mean that, two interpreters may

employ the same hermeneutical principles, and may have some presuppositions in common, and yet can still reach contrary conclusions, and this may be because of some other, perhaps more basic factors. Perhaps there are principles employed of which one or the other interpreter is not even aware, or perhaps there are other, more basic presuppositions which are simply unexpressed by the interpreters or of which the interpreters are unaware that affect their conclusions. In other words, contrary to the common notion that hermeneutical principles account for conflicting interpretations, it seems entirely feasible that different interpreters can employ identical methodologies and still arrive at conflicting interpretations because of some more fundamental preconditions of which they may not even be aware. It seems that the popular notion of the role of one's preconditions may be approaching the root cause of many conflicting interpretations.

Whatever the cause of the divergent interpretations of Van Kampen and Dake, the fact is, we encounter these kinds of conflicts regularly. And the questions remain, "Is the popular account of the preconditions of interpretation sufficient to account for this kind of conflict?" and "With the rejection of objectivity, upon what basis can or should an observer attempt to adjudicate between conflicting views?"

Summary and Conclusion

Factors such as illustrated in the brief example above have caused many theorists to question whether objectivity in interpretation is possible or even desirable. The possibility of objectivity in interpretation has been called into question by both non-Evangelical and Evangelical interpreters. Cotterell and Turner assert, "Any confidence in the 'objectivity' of our findings must be further called into question by the frank recognition that many if not all scholars would be prepared to admit they are *ultimately* studying Paul (or Calvin or whomever) *in order to understand themselves and their God*."[70] They acknowledge that this notion implies the danger of misunderstanding and distortion, but they assert that this does not create a hopelessness in the interpreter's quest for the "discourse meaning." The influence of the interpreter, and the lack of objectivity should, they claim, "generate the appropriate caution, both in respect of method and in the degree of certainty we attach to our 'conclusions.'"[71] This approach is typical of contemporary Evangelical hermeneutic theorists. A multitude of similar assertions can be gleaned from both non-Evangelical and Evangelical authors.

Both Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals attribute the fact of conflicting interpretations to the preconditional framework of the interpreter. Of course this

preconditional framework includes the hermeneutic principles and methodology which an interpreter adopts. Non-evangelical theorists generally applaud the diversity and multiplicity of interpretive conclusions. Evangelical theorists generally affirm the need to adjudicate between conflicting interpretations and the possibility of discovering the *correct* or a "more" correct interpretation. However, the question remains, Can the claim of a *correct* meaning be maintained in the face of the historicist assumption and the rejection of objective meaning? If there is no objectivity, if all conclusions are the product of equally viable preconditional frameworks, and if everyone's framework is the product of his historical situatedness, then on what basis can interpreters adjudicate between conflicting interpretations? On what basis can anyone claim to have "the correct" interpretation? On what basis can Van Kampen's interpretation be accepted over Dake's, or Dake's over Van Kampen's, or both rejected for some other conclusion(s)? Both seemed to employ what most Evangelicals would classify as acceptable hermeneutical principles, and both assumed the inerrancy of the text. A closer examination of the respective application of their principles might uncover inconsistencies, or a more thorough examination of their respective preconditional frameworks might uncover the presence of additional assumptions, but on what basis can either one's interpretation be preferred?

If it is impossible to adjudicate between interpretations, perhaps it might be possible to adjudicate between preconditional frameworks. However, does not even the adjudication between preconditional frameworks necessitate objectivity? If everyone interprets the world through his or her own preconditional framework, then the possibility of adjudicating between frameworks seems to be impossible. Everyone would simply understand his opponent's framework in terms of his own, and any criticisms would be valid only within the framework of the particular interpreter. The rejection of objectivity seems to entail the loss of objective meaning, and the loss of objective meaning seems to entail the loss of objective truth. As William Lane Craig put it, "the abandonment of objective standards of truth and rationality could only undermine the Christian faith in the long run by making its call to repentance and faith in Christ but one more voice in the cacophony of subjectively satisfying but objectively vacuous religious interpretations of the world."[72]

It will, perhaps, be helpful now to restate the issue with which we are concerned and the direction we will take in addressing this issue. We will do this in a series of assertions:

1. Conflicting interpretations are often the result of conflicting perspectives.

2. Conflicting interpretations that are the result of conflicting perspectives seem to be unresolvable.

3. This has led to the generally espoused assertion that objectivity is not possible.

4. However, Evangelicals almost universally agree that it is possible to have a *correct* interpretation of Scripture.

5. Nevertheless, Evangelicals also almost universally agree that objectivity is not possible.

6. The rejection of objectivity is predicated on the fact that everyone approaches the text with a set of preconditions that necessarily and unavoidably influence one's interpretive conclusions.

7. The fact of preconditions seems to be self-evident and undeniable.

8. But, if everyone approaches the text with his or her own set of preconditions, and these preconditions necessarily and unavoidably influence one's interpretive conclusions, it does not seem possible to maintain the assertion that there can be a *correct* interpretation.

9. The recognition of the fact of preconditions seems to entail the rejection of objectivity.

10. But, the rejection of objectivity seems to entail a perspectivism that disallows anyone from claiming that his or her interpretation is *the* correct interpretation, not only of the biblical text, but of anything whatsoever.

11. Question: Is it possible to maintain a notion of a *correct* interpretation of Scripture in the face of the seemingly self-evident fact that everyone comes to the text with his or her own preconditional framework?

The above points are necessarily brief, and there are many other factors that may enter into a fully developed presentation of the current state of affairs in the question of objectivity in interpretation. Nevertheless, the above points set forth the basic contours of the contemporary perspective on the issue. It is the argument of this book that it is not only possible to retain objectivity while

acknowledging the fact of the pervasiveness of preconditional frameworks, but that objectivity is in fact unavoidable and undeniable. This argument will proceed along three lines. First, it will be our task to investigate the notion of objectivity in an effort to discover its nature. Is objectivity equivalent to neutrality? Is it possible, in the light of the preconditions of interpretation, to have any degree of neutrality? Secondly, it will be our task to investigate the notion of the preconditions of interpretation in an effort to uncover the factors that compose one's preconditions and to attempt to discover whether in fact preconditions are necessarily inimical to objectivity. Thirdly, this study will propose an alternative to the popular notions of objectivity and the preconditions of interpretation that will re-define the notion of preconditions in a way that will restore the possibility of objectivity in interpretation. The argument of this book is that objectivity in interpretation is possible, and that it is possible to resolve conflicts that arise as a result of the different preconditions of different interpreters.

2 OBJECTIVITY: A SURVEY

Introduction

In the previous chapter we set forth a general direction for our effort along three lines: 1) to investigate the notion of objectivity in an effort to discover its nature; 2) to investigate the notion of the preconditions of interpretation in an effort to uncover the factors that compose one's preconditions and to attempt to discover whether in fact preconditions are necessarily inimical to objectivity; and 3) to propose an alternative to the popular notions of objectivity and the preconditions of interpretation that will re-define the notion of preconditions in a way that will restore the possibility of objectivity in interpretation.

Let us also restate the logic of our investigation:

First, we acknowledge that there are conflicting interpretations of the Bible, and, as Christians, we want to know which interpretation is the correct one. But, many contemporary thinkers declare that there is no such thing as a *correct* interpretation because everyone comes to the text with his own preconditional framework, and this preconditional framework necessarily impacts one's interpretation. Because it is impossible, according to these thinkers, to jettison one's preconditional framework, this necessarily obviates the possibility of objectivity in interpretation.

This argument may be schematized as follows:

1. Everyone comes to the text with his own preconditional framework.

2. No particular preconditional framework is universally valid.

3. But, universal validity is precisely what is implied in the notion of objectivity.

4. Therefore, no interpreter can be objective in interpretation.

5. But, if no interpreter can be objective, then no interpretation is universally valid.

6. But, if no interpretation is universally valid, then the concept of a *correct* interpretation is at best relative or at worst empty.

7. Since there is no such thing as a *correct* interpretation, there is no means

of adjudicating between interpretations.

8. In fact, the very idea of adjudicating between interpretations is at best relative and at worst empty.

Second, we acknowledge that Evangelical thinkers adamantly maintain that there is a *correct* interpretation of the Bible, or at least one that is more correct than its competitors, and that this interpretation is, at least theoretically, attainable. However, along with theorists who do not espouse any particular religious commitment, Evangelical thinkers reject the notion of objectivity, or what some call "total objectivity," and likewise assert that everyone comes to the text with his or her own preconditional framework.

Third, we acknowledge that if contemporary thinkers are correct in claiming that our preconditional frameworks are unavoidable, and that if they are correct that these preconditional frameworks obviate objectivity, then it does not seem possible for Evangelical thinkers to maintain the notion of a correct or more correct interpretation while holding to the unavoidability of preconditions and rejecting objectivity. This is the principle concern of this book, namely, how is it possible to maintain the fact of the preconditional framework of every interpreter and at the same time maintain the possibility of objectivity in interpretation?

To begin to address these questions, this chapter will investigate the nature of objectivity in contemporary thought. From this starting point, this and subsequent chapters will include a survey of the general notions of objectivity *qua* objectivity as this relates to the disciplines of natural science, history, language, and hermeneutics. Since objectivity is principally brought into question because of the unavoidable presence of the preconditional framework of the interpreter, we will want to consider the relationship of the preconditions of interpretation to the question of objectivity. Finally, we will attempt to evaluate the attacks on objectivity and the current views on the nature and relation of the preconditions of interpretation to the question of objectivity.

We must make clear at this point that the use of the term 'interpretation' does not necessarily confine our investigation to the reading of printed texts. Contemporary, postmodern philosophy proposes the notion that every encounter in life is essentially interpretive. We interpret the actions of others, we interpret the objects that seemingly exist outside our minds, we interpret the words of others, we interpret texts, and so on. So, when we use the term 'interpretation,'[73] we are not necessarily referring only to the interpretation of written documents,

although this will more and more become the focus as our argument progresses. The notion of objectivity in every life encounter, even within oneself, has an impact on how we understand objectivity in the interpretation of texts in general, and of the Bible in particular.

Objectivity in Contemporary Thought

In order to investigate the nature of objectivity in interpretation, we want, first, to understand what is meant by the terms 'objective,' and 'objectivity.' The notion of objectivity is notoriously difficult to define and yet most people seem to have an intuitive grasp of what constitutes objectivity. In the introduction to his article on objectivity in law, Andrei Marmor says, "There is very little agreement on what it [objectivity] means, and there is a great deal of confusion about its different and often conflicting uses."[74] We may perhaps start our investigation with definitions from *The Oxford English Dictionary*. One reason for doing this is that a dictionary is designed to present the uses of words in a given language community. A look at the dictionary will at least give us a starting point by setting forth the way the term is used in contemporary English. For the term 'objective,' the dictionary gives the following definition: "objective . . . Opposed to *subjective* in the older sense = 'in itself': Existing as an object of consciousness as distinct from having any real existence; considered only as presented to the mind (not as it is, or may be, in itself or its own nature). . . . Opposed to *subjective* in the modern sense: That is or belongs to the consciousness itself; that is the object of perception or thought, as distinct from the perceiving or thinking subject; hence, that is, or has the character of being, a 'thing' external to the mind; real."[75] The dictionary definition of 'objectivity' is, "The quality or character of being objective; external reality; objectiveness."[76]

The dictionary definitions are quite disappointing. Nevertheless, two characteristics of objectivity may be gleaned from the dictionary that will send us on our way to consider the modern notions: 1) Objectivity is in some sense connected with the notion of that which appears to exist outside the mind, or what we shall call the extra-mental, and 2) the notion of objectivity assumes a subject/object distinction. In an effort to refine our understanding of the nature of objectivity, let us consider some contemporary explanations.

General Notions of Objectivity

In his chapter on contemporary approaches to interpretation, Moisés Silva makes the following remark: "Throughout the centuries people have assumed without a second thought that our perception of data corresponds exactly with objective reality. If we see a black horse, it *must* be black—and it certainly must

be a horse! After all, how could the work of science proceed without such assurance?"[77] Though this notion of objectivity may have been assumed by the average person throughout the centuries, in contemporary thought, this notion of objectivity is a topic of dispute, not only concerning whether objectivity is attainable, but regarding what precisely is indicated in the concept of objectivity.

R. W. Newell, in his book, *Objectivity, Empiricism, and Truth*, asserts that the idea of objectivity has been "handed down to us bearing two generically different faces":

> The first face of objectivity is an essentially technical conception attached to philosophy most influentially since Kant. It gives objectivity two roles. First, an ontological role ascribing objectivity to 'objects', or particular bodies, entities, complexes or states of affairs existing apart from perceptions more or less continuously in space and time, falling under the heading of 'objective particulars'. And second, an epistemological role in which objectivity is ascribed to items of a different sort, beliefs, judgments, propositions or products of thought about what is really the case, forming a general class of 'objective judgments'. The two roles become linked when objective particulars are seen as the topics of objective judgments and, thus linked, 'objectivity' becomes an explanatory notion.[78]

Newell's second face is the notion of "impartiality, detachment, disinterestedness and a willingness to submit to standards of evidence."[79] Newell characterizes this as "thought to be of less philosophical interest . . ."[80] This conception of objectivity, as Newell describes it, involves a contrast between "prejudice, biased, or dogmatic judgments" on the one hand, and objective judgments, which are "associated with impartiality, detachment, disinterestedness, and a willingness to submit to standards of evidence" on the other.[81]

In *A Companion to Epistemology*, David Bell identifies two notions of objectivity which he characterizes as fundamental: "On the one hand, there is a straightforwardly ontological concept: something is objective if it exists, and is the way it is, independently of any knowledge, perception, conception or consciousness there may be of it."[82] The second notion of objectivity is stated by David Bell in epistemological terms: "According to this conception, the objective/subjective distinction is not intended to mark a split in reality between autonomous and dependent entities, but serves rather to distinguish two grades of cognitive achievement. In this sense only such things as judgements, beliefs, theories, concepts and perceptions can significantly be said to be objective or subjective. Here objectivity can be construed as a property of the contents of mental acts and states."[83] Bell goes on to discuss the notion of the objectivity of mental acts and states. He gives the example of the belief that the speed of light

is 187,000 miles per second as a judgment that is objective, and the dislike of rice pudding as a subjective judgment.

In the introduction to the book *Rethinking Objectivity*, the editor, Allan Megill, identifies four "principal senses" of the terms "objective" and "objectivity." We looked at these briefly in the previous chapter. Megill asserts:

> There is firstly a philosophical or *absolute* sense of objectivity. This type of objectivity derives from (although it is not identical with) the ideal of "representing things as they really are" that has played an important role in the modern philosophical tradition. . . . Secondly, there is a *disciplinary* sense, which no longer assumes a wholesale convergence and instead takes consensus among the members of particular research communities as its standard of objectivity.[84] Thirdly, there is an interactional or *dialectical* sense, which holds that objects are constituted *as* objects in the course of an interplay between subject and object; thus, unlike the absolute and disciplinary senses, the dialectical sense leaves room for the subjectivity of the knower. Finally, there is a *procedural* sense, which aims at the practice of an impersonal method of investigation or administration.[85]

Megill dedicates the bulk of his introduction to an explication of these various notions of objectivity. It is objectivity in the absolute sense that is of interest here. In his exposition of absolute objectivity, Megill asserts that absolute objectivity has a twofold character "of 'representing things as they really are': ontological (things 'as they really are'), and epistemological (since we seek 'to represent' these things, and can go nowhere without that representation)."[86]

In his analysis of absolute objectivity Megill makes reference to Thomas Nagel's claim that absolute objectivity is paradoxical in that "knowledge that is objective in this sense escapes by definition the constraints of subjectivity and partiality; yet if such a view is to be all-embracing it must include the particular views that also make up reality as we know it."[87] Megill is referring to Nagel's claims which are set forth in his book titled *The View From Nowhere*.[88]

Nagel's notion of objectivity is one of degrees. As he explains, "the distinction between more subjective and more objective views is really a matter of degree, and it covers a wide spectrum. A view or form of thought is more objective than another if it relies less on the specifics of the individual's makeup and position in the world, or on the character of the particular type of creature he is. The wider the range of subjective types to which a form of understanding is accessible— the less it depends on specific subjective capacities—the more objective it is."[89]

As an example, Nagel asserts that the "standpoint of morality is more objective than that of private life, but less objective than the standpoint of physics."[90] The means by which an individual might attain a more objective

perspective is characterized by Nagel as a process quite similar to the hermeneutical circle. Nagel says, "we can raise our understanding to a new level only if we examine that relation between the world and ourselves which is responsible for our prior understanding, and form a new conception that includes a more detached understanding of ourselves, of the world, and of the interaction between them. Thus objectivity allows us to transcend our particular viewpoint and develop an expanded consciousness that takes in the world more fully."[91]

Andrei Marmor articulates three concepts of objectivity: semantic objectivity, metaphysical objectivity, and logical objectivity. For Marmor, a statement qualifies as semantically objective "if and only if it is a statement *about an object*."[92] If a statement is about a speaker's own "tastes, desires, perceptions, and so on," it is said to be subjective. A statement is objective in the metaphysical sense, according to Marmor, "if, and only if, there exist objects of the kind purportedly described by that type of statements; and a class of statements is subjective if no such objects exist in the world."[93] Marmor's third kind of objectivity, logical objectivity, "holds that a given class of statements is objective if and only if each and every statement in that class has a determinate truth value."[94]

Nicholas Rescher has dedicated an entire book to objectivity: *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason*. Although a comprehensive grasp of Rescher's notion of objectivity would involve a synopsis of his entire book, he does, nevertheless, set forth two senses of the objectivity of claims and contentions: 1) The first sort of objectivity, according to Rescher, is what he calls *ontological* objectivity. He says ontological objectivity "is object-oriented. It relates to an aspect of subject matter, namely, whether the claims at issue deal with actual *existents*—with concretely realized objects in the real world rather than with mere phenomena or impressions or speculative possibilities and comparable things of the mind."[95] 2) For Rescher, however, the second mode of objectivity which he describes is, in his discussion, "presently more relevant."[96] This second mode he identifies as *epistemic*. For Rescher, "It relates to the appropriateness of *claims or contentions*, addressing the question of whether a claim is impersonally and generically cogent rather than personal and idiosyncratic—whether it holds not just for me (egocentric subjectivity) or for some of us (parochial subjectivity) but for all of us (impersonal or interpersonal objectivity)."[97] For Rescher, this mode of objectivity "pivots on the way the claim is substantiated and supported—namely without the introduction of any personal biases or otherwise distortive individual idiosyncracies, preferences, predilections, etc."[98] Epistemic objectivity, then, involves "rational

appropriateness" and "consists in proceeding in such a way that people at large —or at any rate the reasonable ones among them—will see the sense of it because any sensible person possessed of the relevant information would do the same."[99]

Rescher lists six tendencies and pressures in a person that might "deflect" him from being objective:

- prejudices and "passions": hatred, fear, envy, greed, etc.
- conformity: just "going with the flow" to do the popularly done thing rather than thinking things through
- personal affinity, loyalty and affective involvement with particular individuals and cliques
- ideological or political allegiances
- personal bias: given credit or discredit by appreciation or "symbolic" connection rather than on merit
- "wishful thinking": being guided by our own desires and conveniences rather than by evidence and argument[100]

Many of these factors are included in what other theorists call someone's point of view, perspective, or world view. Rescher is not claiming that objectivity somehow escapes every point of view. Using the analogy of scenery painting, Rescher points out that there is "no feasible way of a painting's depicting a scene except from a particular vantage point."[101] Likewise, objectivity is not a "view from nowhere." Rather, Rescher asserts, "what is at issue with objectivity is not point-of-view-lessness but what might be characterized as photographic accuracy—trying to represent pretty much what any normal observer would recognize as a depiction of that scene from that point of view."[102]

This survey seems repeat the same two basic characteristics that we have already identified: 1) Objectivity is in some sense connected with the notion of that which appears to exist outside the mind, or what we shall call the extra-mental, and 2) the notion of objectivity assumes a subject/object distinction. These discussions also seem to add a third characteristic: 3) Objectivity, at least in the epistemological sense, is associated with the notion of "getting it right" or "representing the world as it is in itself."

The Basic Problem of Objectivity

It is the third characteristic of objectivity listed above that has become the primary target of attack. Roger Trigg has presented the problem of objectivity in general terms.

> We cannot talk or think about reality without talking or thinking about it. This is a truism which seems almost too boring to bother about. We cannot have a conception of something without employing the conceptual scheme we have at our disposal. Yet this obvious point very often provides the starting point for major philosophical doctrines about the relationship between thought and reality, between what there is and what we think there is. Anyone who starts off with the twin notions of thought, or concepts, and reality, may think that the major problem is how we match the two. Our concepts are, we may think, like a vast jigsaw, and the object of the exercise is to fit them together, producing new ones if necessary, so that a picture is constructed which will exactly mirror reality. The snag is that it is normally possible to compare a jigsaw with the original on the box to make sure it is accurate. The relationship of our concepts to reality does not allow the same kind of comparison. To go back to our truism, there is no way of picturing reality without picturing it. We cannot conceptualize reality and then check the concepts we have produced against reality. It is self-defeating to attempt to think of reality as it exists beyond our thoughts. There is no way that we can somehow hold our concepts in suspense, while we compare them with reality.[103]

The problem of one's perception, one's view of things, the structure in the mind that enables the person to make sense of what is perceived, these are the facts which have been seen as the fundamental problem of the notion of objectivity. Every perceiver has his own way of looking at the world. Everyone has his own perspective. Everyone has his own interpretation. The idea that someone's interpretation is objective and true, and someone else's is subjective and false, is outmoded, unverifiable, and unfashionable. The basic problem of objectivity is the assumption that, in order to be objective, one must have a view that is not affected by a point of view—by one's perspective. As Thomas Nagel puts it, "An objective standpoint is created by leaving a more subjective, individual, or even just human perspective behind . . ."[104] However, it does not seem possible, *prima facie*, to get outside one's self to view the world. According to Nagel and a host of others, "the attempt to give a complete account of the world in objective terms detached from these perspectives inevitably leads to false reductions or to outright denial that certain patently real phenomena exist at all."[105] In other words, there is no such thing as a view from nowhere.

This is the principle problem of the notion of objectivity, and some areas of the debate are more removed from the questions of objectivity in hermeneutics, and some are more directly relevant. The objectivity debate rages in three disciplines that are particularly relevant to biblical hermeneutics. The first is the notion of objectivity in natural science. Objectivity in science is important for biblical hermeneutics because the general notion of objectivity principally takes

as its paradigmatic character the notion of objectivity in science. Scientific objectivity is seen, at least on a popular level, as the ideal of what objective knowledge ought to be. The ubiquitous expression, *scientific knowledge*, or the characterization of any conclusion in virtually any endeavor as *scientific* is almost universally held to indicate the accuracy, reliability, and unbiased objectivity of claims. Virtually every discipline seeks to attain the legitimating stamp of being *scientific*. Consequently, it will be important to investigate the nature of objectivity in science.

Secondly, the notion of objectivity in the philosophy of history is pertinent to hermeneutics, and biblical hermeneutics in particular, because the Bible is an historical book. Among evangelicals, the Bible is understood to be the revelation of God through the historical record contained in its pages. If objective knowledge of history is out of reach, this is particularly problematic for Christianity that is based on the historical record of the Bible. Additionally, the problem of historicism poses a serious obstacle to the possibility of objective knowledge. The fact that every interpreter investigates history from his own historical situatedness raises the question of whether an interpreter's understanding of history is simply a view from his own place within history.

Objectivity in language is important for biblical hermeneutics since the Bible was written in languages that were tied to particular ancient cultures. The problem of objectivity is particularly significant to questions of meaning. Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny have pointed out that, "It is in semantics, or 'the theory of meaning', that the theoretical and conceptual chaos mentioned above is most striking."[106] If meaning is determined by the language community or if the culture and language of a group determines how that group views reality, and if either meaning or culture-determined perspectives are incommensurable from culture to culture, then there seems to be an insurmountable obstacle to the possibly of maintaining an *objective* or *correct* interpretation of the biblical text.

Each of these areas of investigation are critical to an understanding of the possibility of objectivity in hermeneutics. As Heracleitus said, "It is necessary for men who love wisdom to have knowledge of very many things."[107] Consequently, the notion of objectivity in other disciplines may be equally important to a well rounded biblical hermeneutic. However, the notions and problems of objectivity in natural science, history, and language are, in a sense, foundational to debates about objectivity in any other discipline. Since the notion of objectivity in natural science has virtually become the universally accepted paradigm for defining the notion of objectivity, our investigation will begin here.

Objectivity and Science

The question of objectivity has taken its particular significance from natural science and has been the topic of much debate in the philosophy of science. As Donald MacKay observes, “In recent years a popular target has been the ideal of objectivity–of value-free (or better value-invariant) knowledge–as the normative goal of the scientist. More extreme writers such as Feyerabend have even questioned whether rationality itself is not overrated in science; but among much less adventurous spirits it has become something of a cliché that even physical science is not guaranteed to yield objective value-invariant knowledge about the world.”[108] The importance of the question of objectivity in natural science is seen in that natural science itself is a major influence in our society. J. P. Moreland observes, “Undoubtedly the most important influence shaping the modern world is science.”[109] With reference to the possibility of objectivity in science, Keith Windschuttle points out, “One of the major figures responsible for the current levels of doubt about scientific knowledge is the American author Thomas Kuhn, whose very influential book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,[110] has been in print continuously since it was first published in 1962.”[111]

The problem of objectivity in natural science touches upon hermeneutics in one sense in that philosophy of science grapples with the problem of the meanings of terms that scientists use to refer to those actual or theoretical entities that are supposed to provide explanations for observable phenomena. Natural science often uses terms to refer to entities or forces that are not directly observable to unaided human perception. As Alex Rosenberg phrases the problem, “Why should a theory about electrons or genes we cannot see, touch, smell, taste or feel be any better at explanation than astrology, New Age mystery-mongering or fairy-tales?”[112] Rosenberg goes on to frame this particular problem of philosophy of science in terms of language and meaning.

In another sense, objectivity in science parallels the question of objectivity in hermeneutics in that many philosophers of science argue that the task of scientific observation of the world is theory-laden. The theory-ladenness of observation is comparable to the relation of preunderstanding to interpretation. It is argued that scientific observation is unintelligible apart from the observer’s theory which provides the context of meaning. No one comes to the data of the world apart from a pre-assumed theory or set of assumptions that directs the act of observation and provides the context of meaning for all the data observed.

Objectivity in the History of Natural Science

The overt claim of objectivity in natural science goes back at least as far as Francis Bacon (1561-1626). In his *Novum Organum*, Bacon asserted, "For it is our opinion that men could hit upon our form of interpretation simply by their own native force of intelligence, without any other art, if they had available a good history of nature and experience, and worked carefully on it, and were able to give themselves two commands: one, to lay aside received opinions and notions; the other, to restrain their minds for the time being from the most general principles and the next most general."[113] Indeed, Bacon referred to his argument in Book I as an effort to "prepare men's minds both to understand and to accept what follows," and that this has been done because the "platform of the mind has been scraped and made level . . ."[114] In fact, Bacon describes the mind as "*expurgata mentis*," the "pure" or "cleansed" mind. Evidently Bacon's task in Book I was, in his mind, aimed at producing a mind cleansed of all false preconceptions (*praeceptio falsa*) and prejudice (*praejudicium*) by having scraped (*abrasa*) the mind and made it level (*aequata area*). In other words, in order to grasp Bacon's assertions, the mind must approach his claims without any inimical preconditions. There must be detached objectivity.

According to Del Ratzsch, the Baconian view holds that "scientists begin by collecting observational data in some purely objective manner, free from all prejudices on the topic being investigated, having no prior preferences concerning what theory should be correct and not hampered by any surreptitious philosophical or religious presuppositions. . . . The lack of any presuppositions or a priori restraints on the process guaranteed its objectivity."[115] This notion of objectivity for many scientists became the standard of the truly *scientific* approach. Israel Scheffler declared, "A fundamental feature of science is its ideal of objectivity, an ideal that subjects all scientific statements to the test of independent and impartial criteria, recognizing no authority of persons in the realm of cognition."[116] According to Scheffler, the ideal of scientific objectivity involves a commitment to "fair controls over assertions" which is "the basis of the scientific attitude of impartiality and detachment."[117] And Donald MacKay refers to the "ideal of objectivity–of value-free (or better, value-invariant) knowledge–as the normative goal of the scientist."[118]

The notion of scientific objectivity is probably the most popular, modern notion of science outside of academia. The scientist is seen as an impartial investigator of the world who does not allow his own perspective, biases, or prejudices to color or distort his conclusions. The scientist simply reports the *bare facts* as he or she finds them. The scientist is supposed to "tell it like it is,"

to, as Lorraine Daston characterizes it, “Let nature speak for itself . . .”[119] Helene Longino observes, “Some part of the popular reverence for science has its origin in the belief that scientific inquiry, unlike other modes of inquiry, is by its very nature objective.”[120] She goes on to describe two senses in which science is thought to be objective.

> Science is thought to provide us with a view of the world that is objective in two seemingly quite different senses of that term. In one sense objectivity is bound up with questions about the truth and referential character of scientific theories, that is, with issues of scientific realism. In this sense to attribute objectivity to science is to claim that the view provided by science is an accurate description of the facts of the natural world as they are; it is a correct view of the objects to be found in the world and of their relations with each other. In the second sense objectivity has to do with modes of inquiry. In this sense to attribute objectivity to science is to claim that the view provided by science is achieved by reliance upon nonarbitrary and nonsubjective criteria for developing, accepting, and rejecting the hypotheses and theories that make up the view. The reliance upon and use of such criteria as well as the criteria themselves are what is called the scientific method. Common wisdom has it that if science is objective in the first sense it is because it is objective in the second.[121]

George Levine characterizes the popular notion of science with six points of summary, the first being most relevant here: “science is distinguished (1) by the ‘objectivity’ and ‘rationality’ of its procedures, and the disinterest of its practitioners.”[122] As Peter Novick points out, the notion that scientific knowledge must be “scrupulously neutral” and disassociated from any influence from the perspectives, biases, and presuppositions of the scientist has been the dominate view of scientific knowledge “[t]hroughout the nineteenth century, and indeed, for many, well into the twentieth . . .”[123] The notion of objectivity in science is the notion that an investigator must observe, discover, and report the bare facts of nature without allowing his own personal perspective, interests, or world view to in any way influence or distort the truth. This notion of objectivity has virtually become synonymous with the characterization of knowledge as “scientific.” In modern parlance, for any claim to be characterized as “scientific” is virtually a guarantee of its accuracy, impartiality, and truth.

Objectivity and the Nature of Science

One of the primary reasons science is thought to be objective is that it works. As Rosenberg puts it, “science has had a long-running record of continual predictive success, especially as evinced in technological improvements that enhance our control of our environment.”[124] The lay person of the latter 20th and early 21st centuries generally believes that knowledge about the world has increased dramatically in his lifetime. Levine included this notion as one of his six summaries of the popular view of science: “[the results of science] are (5)

progressive, the cumulative acquisition of new knowledge of the real world by means of observation and experiment . . .”[125] Even some contemporary philosophers of science, such as David Stove, acknowledge that, “Much more is known now than was known fifty years ago, and much more was known then than in 1580. So there has been a great accumulation or growth of knowledge in the last four hundred years.”[126] This notion is held because of what is perceived to be the predictive success of science. Moreland describes the notion of predictive success as “the realist view that science progressively solves its problems by a fairly continual refinement of its theories toward a true description of the world.”[127]

Science works, the traditional view holds, because, as Novick recounts, science meant “in the first place, a rigidly empirical approach: ‘observations’ were sacred. One could not go wrong at this level. Error could only come from mistaken or overly hasty inference from never-to-be-doubted fact; the road to any needed correction was additional observation.”[128] And, as Shelby Hunt explains, “Traditional empiricism placed great emphasis on the objectivity of specific instances of empirical testing by scientists as the foundation for claims of science’s objectivity: ‘Science strives for objectivity in the sense that its statements are to be capable of public tests with results that do not vary essentially with the tester’ (Hempel 1970, 695). The objectivity of specific empirical tests was premised on, inter alia, the presumed existence of a presuppositionless, theory-free, or theory-neutral observation language.”[129] Scientific knowledge was objective because, from his neutral vantage point, the scientist could observe the bare facts of the world, and on the basis of these observations he could construct his theories that addressed and often solved real world problems. Science explains how the world works, and enables almost anyone to control and manipulate the world and to produce products that make life easier, safer, and more productive.

The Attack on Objectivity in Natural Science

But, it is precisely with the scientist’s observations of the world and theories about how the world works that objectivity has come into question. Indeed, in 1977 Frederick Suppe declared, “If any problem in the philosophy of science justifiably can be claimed the most central or important, it is that of the nature and structure of scientific theories, including the diverse roles theories play in the scientific enterprise.”[130] That, to this day, the central problem of philosophy of science has not moved away from the question of scientific theories is evidenced by the fact that in the forward to the 2001 publication of

David Stove's book, *Scientific Irrationalism*, Keith Windschuttle points out that Thomas Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the purported instigator of the attack on scientific objectivity by an historical examination of the nature of scientific theories, "is the most cited single book, on any subject, of this century."[131]

According to Rosenberg, however, Kuhn was not alone in his conclusions:

> Several opponents of empiricism came in the 1950's to hold this view about observation. They held that the terms in which we describe observations, whether given by ordinary language or scientific neologisms, presuppose divisions or categorizations of the world of experience in ways that reflect prior "theories": the categories we employ to classify things, even categories as apparently theory-free as color, shape, texture, sound, taste, not to mention size, hardness warmth/coldness, conductivity, transparency, etc., are shot through with interpretation. Instead of seeing a glass of milk, we see "it" as a glass of milk where the "it" is not something we can describe separately in a theory-neutral vocabulary.[132]

The problem of theories and objectivity can be described from the perspective of the popular view of science. From the outside, the lay person generally looks upon the scientific enterprise as involving the gathering of raw data, which, when observed by the scientist, naturally comes together in patterns that suggest to the neutral observing scientist certain theories by which the scientist can explain the raw data and integrate it into the store of knowledge about the world that can be used as the basis upon which to articulate what comes to be known as the laws of science. However, according to contemporary philosophers of science, such an understanding of the scientific process does not bare up under scrutiny. Ratzsch describes the problem:

> First, if data were collected simply as they came to one, with no selection principles, the result would be a collection of bits of information largely unrelated to each other and probably irrelevant to whatever one was studying. But sorting the relevant from the irrelevant inevitably involves some prior ideas about what processes are related, what causal principles might be involved and what factors are not relevant. . . .
>
> Second, data do not organize themselves. What category a datum properly goes into often becomes clear only when the theory explaining that datum emerges. . . . But the fact is that *scientists* must organize their data, and they do so in accordance with prior suppositions–or theories–about what is related to what, what items are of the same or distinct kinds and so on.[133]

According to Ratzch's scenario, observation is not neutral, but is intelligible only with reference to some pre-assumed theory. The inevitable presence of a scientist's assumptions and world view provides the theoretical framework for making sense of observations. This is referred to as the "theory-ladenness" of observation. According to Antony Flew, the term "theory-laden" denotes "a

concept, term, or statement that refers to, and can only be understood in the light of, a particular theory."[134] Martin Curd and J. A. Cover give a slightly different definition, however:

> Theory-ladenness: According to some philosophers of science (such as Paul Feyerabend, T. S. Kuhn, and N. R. Hanson), observations are theory laden. What exactly this means is controversial, and whether it is true and what it implies has been hotly debated. One fairly uncontroversial reading of the theory-ladenness thesis is that observation reports, if they are to be evidentially relevant to a theory, must be expressed in the vocabulary of that theory rather than in some theory-neutral observation language. Some philosophers have inferred from this that because observation is theory laden it cannot be appealed to as a neutral ground on which to judge among competing theories. Less tendentiously, it is sometimes claimed, under the rubric of the theory-ladenness-of-observation thesis, that observation and experiment alone cannot rationally compel scientists to accept and reject theories.[135]

A minimum notion of theory-ladenness, then, asserts that observation terms are relative to the theories in which they operate. Thomas Kuhn asserts, "There is, I think, no theory-independent way to reconstruct phrases like 'really there'; the notion of a match between the ontology of a theory and its 'real' counterpart in nature now seems to be illusive in principle."[136] And according to Paul Feyerabend, "Experience arises *together* with theoretical assumptions not before them, and an experience without theory is just as incomprehensible as is (allegedly) a theory without experience: eliminate part of the theoretical knowledge of a sensing subject and you have a person who is completely disoriented and incapable of carrying out the simplest action."[137] And, concerning the nature of theory-ladenness, Harold I. Brown asserts:

> In order to carry out meaningful research we require a research problem and some criteria of what evidence is relevant to its solution. More fundamentally, we require some basis for deciding what research problems are worth pursuing. It is our accepted theories, the systems of presuppositions to which we are already committed, which provide this basis. And because we always do research within a system of presuppositions, both our problems and our data are thoroughly theory-laden.[138]

The significant point of the above assertion by Brown, and the claims of Kuhn and Feyerabend, is that the theory-ladenness of observation is connected to a "system of presuppositions" which forms the basis upon which observations are judged to be problems worth pursuing. Adding to this the notion that our experiences are comprehensible only within some theoretical framework, and the notion that the "meaning of every term we use depends upon the theoretical context in which it occurs,"[139] that "words do not 'mean' something in isolation," and that words "obtain their meanings by being part of a theoretical system," the relation between the problem of objectivity in science and that in

hermeneutics comes to the fore. Observation is not neutral, but is determined by the presuppositions of the observer. And theories are not "objectively" derived from neutral observations. Rather, theories are the presuppositional constructs that provide the context and/or framework of meaning for observed data.

Consequently, its seems that in one sense, the point of contact between science and hermeneutics is the question of meaning. In natural science it is the question of the meaning of the data of observation and their relation to scientists' explanatory theories. In hermeneutics it is a question of the meaning of texts and their relation to the interpreter's explanatory preunderstanding.

Summary

Throughout the Enlightenment, the methodology of natural science was taken as the paradigm for obtaining objectively true knowledge. The natural scientist was viewed as the neutral observer who presented reality "as it is." However, the political use of science brought the neutrality of scientific knowledge into question. As Appleby points out, "Nazi science could be both quite good in scientific terms and singularly evil in political and moral ones. . . . As true believers in heroic science (even Marxism was supposed to be scientific) the Soviets had built the largest scientific and technological establishment in the world, and still managed to be industrially and environmentally backward. The conclusion became inescapable: the inevitable progress promised by the model of heroic science does not fit with reality."[140] Adding to this the fact that new discoveries in the nature of language, which we will consider later, called into question the possibility of a *neutral* observation language that could "tell it like it is," and the notion of scientific objectivity, in the sense of neutrality, presuppositionlessness, or theory-independence seems to have become simply another relic of historical interest.

Objectivity and History

Of course our account of the history of the problem of objectivity in science assumes that it is possible to know the *facts* of history. In other words, it assumes the possibility of objectivity of historical knowledge. The notion of objectivity is by no means peculiar to natural science. It is as significant in historical knowledge as in scientific knowledge. Scheffler points out that, "the ideal of objectivity . . . characterizes not only the scientist, but also the historian, the philosopher, the mathematician, the man of affairs—insofar as all make cognitive claims in a rational spirit. . . . There is no ground for restricting the applicability of the *ideal* of objectivity to *de facto* science, as contrasted, for example, with history, philosophy, or human affairs."[141] Objectivity in history is

a particularly important issue in biblical studies since the Bible presents itself as an historical book. Any problems with objectivity in history generally will pose a serious problem for objectivity in the interpretation of the Bible.

The Notion of the Objectivity of Historical Knowledge

W. H. Walsh has declared that "at once the most important and the most baffling topic in critical philosophy of history [is] the problem of historical objectivity."[142] Many philosophers of history have come to reject the notion of objectivity in historical knowledge. According to Mark Bevir, "There are all sorts of reasons for rejecting the possibility of objective knowledge of the past. But one reason has become particularly prominent in the latter half of the twentieth century. In general terms, the argument is that we cannot have objective historical knowledge because we do not have access to a given past against which to judge rival interpretations."[143] And Keith Jenkins declares, "For the attempt to pass off the study of history in the form of the ostensibly disinterested scholarship of academics studying the past objectively and 'for its own sake' as 'proper' history, is now unsustainable."[144]

Gilbert Garraghan defined historical objectivity as "such a detached and neutral attitude in the historian as enables him to deal with his material in the light of the evidence alone."[145] J. J. Jusserand, in his book *The Writing of History*, provides a quote from Francois de Salignac Fénelon (1651-1715) to the effect that the historian must be absolutely neutral: "The good historian belongs to no time or country; though he lives his own, he never flatters it in any respect. The French historian must remain neutral between France and England; he must as willingly praise Talbot as Du Guesclin; he renders the same justice to the military talents of the Prince of Wales (the Black Prince) as to the wisdom of Charles V."[146]

Probably the best recent summary statement of the notion of historical objectivity has been presented by Peter Novick. Although it is a long quote, it will be immensely helpful in grasping both the notion of historical objectivity and the problems with its possibility.

> The principle elements of the idea [of objectivity] are well known and can be briefly recapitulated. The assumptions on which it rests include a commitment to the reality of the past, and to truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation between knower and known, between fact and value, and, above all, between history and fiction. Historical facts are seen as prior to and independent of interpretation: the value of an interpretation is judged by how well it accounts for the facts; if contradicted by the facts, it must be abandoned. Truth is one, not perspectival. Whatever patterns exist in history are "found," not "made." Though successive generations of historians might, as their perspectives shifted, attribute different significance to events in the past, the meaning of

those events was unchanging.

The objective historian's role is that of a neutral, or disinterested, judge; it must never degenerate into that of advocate or, even worse, propagandist. The historian's conclusions are expected to display the standard judicial qualities of balance and evenhandedness. As with the judiciary, these qualities are guarded by the insulation of the historical profession from social pressure or political influence, and by individual historian avoiding partisanship or bias—not having any investment in arriving at one conclusion rather than another. Objectivity is held to be at grave risk when history is written for utilitarian purposes. One corollary of all of this is that historians, as historians, must purge themselves of external loyalties: the historian's primary allegiance is to "the objective historical truth," and to professional colleagues who share a commitment to cooperative, cumulative efforts to advance toward that goal.[147]

The influence of the traditional notion of scientific objectivity is evident not only in the statements about neutrality of Garraghan and Fénelon, but is also evident in Novick's characterization of historical objectivity. The value of an historical interpretation is "judged by how well it accounts for the facts" that "are seen as prior to and independent of interpretation." The historian must be a "neutral, or disinterested judge" not influenced by "partisanship or bias." As the popular view of science holds, that the scientist "tells it like it is," the ideal of historical objectivity, according to Novick, is that the historian must "tell it like it was." Garraghan made this same statement almost 40 years earlier, "the historian must record a thing 'as it really occurred.'"[148]

Michael Stanford provides a more succinct statement about historical objectivity: "What we mean by 'objectivity' is that our ideas, judgments and statements should be formed wholly from the object (whatever it may be) under consideration. Their truth or falsity should be independent of what anyone thinks or feels. By contrast, subjective ideas, judgments and statements arise from the nature of the knowing subject; their truth or falsity is not independent of what he or she thinks or feels."[149]

The Problem of Objectivity in Historical Knowledge

The problem of objectivity in historical knowledge is analogous to the problem of the theory-ladenness of observation in science. It is the problem of the theory-ladenness, so to speak, of the historian. As early as 1940 Garraghan had pinpointed the problem: "But not all the doings of men as social beings are history. To be so, they must show importance or significance–which are obviously relative terms. The idea of historical significance postulates standards of measurement. What appears significant to one historian may not appear so to another. Philosophy of life, personal viewpoints and prepossessions, the scope of one's writing–for example, whether political or military or economic–can all be factors in determining for the historian whether he is to regard a given datum as

significant or not."[150] That is, the perspective of the historian presents a problem for objectivity in historical knowledge in the same way that the perspective of the scientist presents a problem for scientific observation. Garraghan attempts to obviate this difficulty by declaring, "Objectivity does not require that the historian be actually free from prepossessions or prejudice–racial, political, religious, or of any other kind."[151] Such a blank slate, so to speak, is, in Garraghan's words, "a psychological impossibility."[152] Rather, what is required of the objective historian, according to Garraghan, is that he "allow none of his prepossessions and prejudices, whatever they be, to cloud his judgment, to draw him beyond the evidence, to distort his estimate of persons and things."[153]

However, this seems to be the very problem with the possibility of objectivity, for how would a historian know whether his "prepossessions" are in fact clouding his judgment or drawing him beyond the evidence unless he possess a "prepossession free" point of view by which to compare? In his introduction to the philosophy of history of St. Augustine, Ronald Nash observes, "One thing that will become clear as we proceed is that no speculative philosopher (no matter how many and how loud his claims to the contrary) derives his pattern of history solely from the historical data. No matter how much data Hegel, Marx, Spengler, Toynbee, and the rest may appeal to, their theories, in the final analysis, are *imposed upon* history, not *derived from* it. . . . If nothing else, perhaps Augustine should be given some credit for being more conscious than many of those who followed him that no philosophical principles of history can be abstracted from human experience."[154] The problem of objectivity is precisely that no one, not even the historian, is ever free from the "prepossessions" or presuppositions that are part of his very make-up. As G. F. W. Hegel pointed out, "Even the ordinary, the 'impartial' historiographer, who believes and professes that he maintains a simply receptive attitude; surrendering himself only to the data supplied him–is by no means passive as regards the exercise of his thinking powers. He brings his categories with him, and sees the phenomena presented to his mental vision, exclusively through these media."[155]

For example, Mark Bevir briefly explains how empiricists employ either a methodology of verificationism or falsificationism by which to determine whether a given historical interpretation is true or false: "Verificationists defend the ideal of vindication, arguing that we can decode all reasonable interpretations into a series of observational statements, and we can see whether or not these observational statements are true because they refer to pure perceptions. . . . In contrast, falsificationists deny that any number of positive observations can prove an interpretation to be true. Thus, they defend the ideal of refutation,

arguing that the objective status of interpretations derives from our failure to make observations showing them to be false."[156] Bevir rejects either of these alternatives because he agrees with Hans-George Gadamer, Michael Foucault, and Jacques Derrida that there are no "pure experiences." As Bevir puts it,

> The nature of perception depends on the perceiver. A sensation can become the object of a perception or an experience only when our intelligence identifies it as a particular sensation both distinct from, and in relation to, other sensations. We become aware of a sensation only when we attend to it, and when we attend to a sensation we necessarily identify it, using abstract categories, as a particular sort of sensation. Thus, perception always incorporates theoretical understanding. . . . Because our experiences embody theoretical assumptions, our experiences cannot be pure, and this means that our experiences cannot provide unvarnished data for determining the truth or falsity of our theories.[157]

This aspect of the problem of objective historical knowledge is that the perceptions of the historian are always involved in the process. William Dray points out that the American historian Charles Beard belies the possibility of objectivity in historical knowledge "because historians, unlike chemists or physicists, cannot actually observe their subject matter; because their documentation of the past is fragmentary; because they must make selections even from the partial record that is available to them; because they must arrange their materials in reporting their results; because, in employing organizing concepts, they impose a structure on the past which it never really had; and because what their study involves ethical and aesthetic considerations."[158]

In the introduction to his work on the philosophy of history, Stanford points out that one of the key concepts in history is "meaning." Not only the student, but also the reader of history, indeed anyone who is aware of the past in any way, must continually be asking the question: What does this mean?"[159] As was the case with the question of objectivity in natural science, the point of contact between the philosophy of history and hermeneutics is the question of meaning. But, as we shall see with reference to meaning in hermeneutics, the question is whether the historian can lay claim to a grasp of meaning that is not the product of his own act of perceiving or the result of his understanding by means of his own perspective?

Objectivity and Historicism

The inescapablility of one's perspective and its relation to the problem of objectivity in historical knowledge has been identified as the primary problem of historicism.[160] Jean Grondin offers a helpful description of the conflict between objectivity and historicism: "Historicism . . . is the central and most crippling problem facing philosophy since Hegel, namely, the question concerning the

possibility of binding truth and thus conclusive philosophy within the horizon of historical knowledge. Are all truths and rules of conduct dependent on their historical context? If so, the specter of relativism and nihilism lurks nearby."[161] According to Grondin, "the basic doctrine [of historicism] is that every particular phenomenon must be conceptualized within the context of its age. The point is to avoid judging other times by the standards of our own, and instead to interpret historical events immanently, as expressive of *their* time."[162] Charles Bambach identifies this approach as classical historicism: "Classical historicism was committed to the ideas of value-free judgment and neutral perspective as the very essence of historical objectivity."[163] Yet, a "value-free judgment and neutral perspective" resulted, as Paul Kecskemeti points out, in a "complete relativism as regards values; it [historicism] prohibited the direct application of any value standard one held valid for oneself, as a private person, when talking about past ages. Such direct application was held to be the arch sin which disqualified one as a faithful interpreter and a scientific historian."[164]

The crisis of historicism arises from the realization that historical phenomena can be understood only in terms of one's own historical situatedness. The term "situatedness" indicates that anyone attempting to look back over history does so in terms of his own place within the flow of historical development. Historical situatedness includes the historian's own historical circumstances in which he lives and thinks. Each person is located in a specific place, at a specific time, in a specific culture, with certain social, political, philosophical, theological, etc., perspectives through which he or she perceives and interacts with the world around and within. As Grondin points out,

> if every age is to be explained by reference to itself, this same principle must hold true of our own age. Our view of earlier ages must itself be produced by reference to our present, and it is thereby relativized. Our time merely represents one age among many. How, then is any kind of strict science of history possible? In other words, how is it possible under the auspices of historicism, now generally recognized, to formulate the idea of a binding and yet nonrelativistic truth? Doesn't everything dissolve into present-day perspectives and temporal conditionedness? How, if at all, is it possible to escape from the hermeneutic circle of our historicity? These are the basic problems of historicism?[165]

All of these aspects of the life of a human being in the historical conditionedness of his world can be subsumed under the notion of one's historical situatedness, and all of these factors form the grid through which the historian looks at the past. Since all phenomena can only be understood in terms of one's own historical situatedness, this would imply that the historical situatedness of the interpreter binds him to his own place within the flow of

historical development. Therefore the interpreter of history cannot lay claim to an a-historical, transcendent perspective. If the interpreter cannot lay claim to an a-historical, transcendent perspective, then the possibility of objectivity in historical knowledge is a fantasy. Indeed, the very notion of objectivity becomes meaningless since there is no standard of measure by which to measure the possible objectivity of any claims about history.

Summary

It would seem that the same kinds of problems that beset the question of objectivity in natural science arise with the question of objectivity of historical knowledge. At least the natural scientist has access to the phenomena about which he attempts to make true statements. Not so for the historian. The past is, well, past! And the historian cannot access these events to discover whether a given report is accurate. Additionally, the historian approaches the study of the past from his own perspective bringing with him his own world view that provides the context of meaning. What is or is not relevant to a given historical judgment is determined by the already existing point of view of the historian. Also, every historian does his work from within his own historical situatedness. Historians are as much a part of the history of their own times as the persons and events they desire to know. And, since each person or event of the past must be understood in terms of its own historical conditionedness, so also the historian does his research from his own place in history which is mediated through his own historical conditionedness. As Thomas Haskell puts it, "Without mediation there is no experience. Except perhaps in the case of outright insanity, we enculturated human beings never encounter the world in a manner so direct and primitive as to be unaffected by the ordering influence of explanatory schemes, paradigmatic assumptions, frames of reference, presuppositions, expectations, narrative traditions, memories, and other mediating mental structures."[166] In other words, for Haskell, objectivity is not a question of having an a-historical Archemedian vantage point, or a "God's eye view." Rather, objectivity is objective within the explanatory scheme of the interpreter along the lines of Kuhnian paradigms. Indeed, Haskell acknowledges his indebtedness to Thomas Kuhn: "My position [on the objectivity question] owes much to Kuhn and is more or less congruent with the teachings of pragmatism's founders, Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. . . . I endorse . . . one of the cardinal principles of the pragmatic tradition, which holds that what truth requires is not unassailable foundations, but self-correcting social processes."[167] Consequently, objectivity in historical knowledge seems to be either unnecessary, undesirable, or unattainable.

Objectivity and Language

Of course both the study of history and the study of natural science employ language, either as the medium through which historical documents relate the past, or the means by which the scientists discusses and records his observations, hypotheses, and conclusions. The study of language encompasses a range of disciplines, including sociology, linguistics, philosophy, and more. The problem of objectivity in language arises specifically in the area of semantics. According to John Lyons, "Semantics is generally defined as the study of meaning."[168] However, the meaning of a word or sentence or assertion is communicated from speaker to hearer by means of the signs with which both are familiar. Unless the speaker and the hearer share a knowledge of the same sign system, communication is impossible, for the speaker will be producing signs that the hearer does not understand. But it is at the level of the sign, particularly the linguistic sign, that the problem of objectivity begins to emerge.

Observation and Correspondence

A principal factor in the attack upon objectivity is the persistent notion that observation is supposed to yield a correspondence between the observer and the extra-mental world being observed. Even Karl Popper, a staunch defender of scientific realism, argued that, "the realism of science lies not in a naive correspondence between the empirically tested world and the mind of the scientist, but in the rules of logic, in falsification and verification."[169] The supposed correspondence between thought and thing is traditionally associated with a realist view of science. As Moreland puts it, the first core tenet of rational realism is "the conviction that science uses a correspondence theory of truth: a theory is true if and only if what it says about the world does in fact accurately describe the world."[170] Lanier Anderson describes the correspondence theory in terms of an "external" conception of truth:

> The external conception nicely captures the ordinary notion of truth we use in daily life and theorizing. We routinely think of truth as unique and bivalent, and in terms of correspondence to independent objects. Either it's raining outside, or it isn't (bivalence); if it is, then 'It's raining out' – or something equivalent – is the only true description of the precipitation conditions in the vicinity (uniqueness); this truth depends on how the world is, regardless of my concepts and beliefs (independence); and my belief is true iff [if and only if] it matches or captures how the world really is (correspondence).[171]

According to Anderson, a claim, or perhaps a theory, is true if and only if

its assertions accurately represent the actual state of affairs. Anderson points out that the correspondence view seems to be the "ordinary notion of truth" by which the average individual conducts his daily life. Yet the correspondence view has come under severe attack, not least because all assertions and theories necessarily employ language, and language is understood to be culture-specific having no necessary relation with the extra-linguistic world outside the mind.

Linguistic-Relativity

Based upon the linguistic observations of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), modern views of the relationship between language and reality hold that languages of different cultures "represent a different articulation of the conceptual plane."[172] According to this position, a person's language community dictates how that person views and knows reality. John B. Carroll identifies this position as the "linguistic-relativity hypothesis": "The idea that the structure of one's language affects one's thought processes may be called the *linguistic-relativity hypothesis*, because it asserts that thought is relative to the language in which it is conducted. Sometimes, also, it is called the *linguistic Weltanschauung* hypothesis, because it is asserted that a particular language implies a unique 'world-view' or perception of reality."[173] George Yule identifies this approach as "linguistic determinism." According to Yule, ". . . your language will give you a ready-made system of categorizing what you perceive and, as a consequence, you will be led to perceive the world around you only in those categories. . . . in its strongest version, [linguistic determinism] holds that 'language determines thought.' In short, you can only think in the categories which your language allows you to think in."[174]

The notion that languages reflect the way different cultures perceive reality differently was developed by Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897 - 1941). According to Worf,

> When linguists became able to examine critically and scientifically a large number of languages of widely different patterns, their base of reference was expanded; they experienced an interruption of phenomena hitherto held universal, and a whole new order of significances came into their ken. It was found that the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar, and differs, from slightly to kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds–and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way–an

> agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language.[175]

In Saussurian fashion, Whorf asserted that there are no pre-existing, universally fixed concepts to which the signifiers (words, terms, signs) of a language become attached. Rather, language is at once the instrument that reflects the divergent cultural perceptions and the shaper of those perceptions. Whorf concluded, "This fact is very significant for modern science, for it means that no individual is free to describe nature with absolute impartiality but is constrained to certain modes of interpretation even while he thinks himself to be free."[176] Since different cultures "cut up" reality differently, the language of the observer, his "observation language," must reflect the peculiar perceptions of the language community that constitutes the language of particular observation statements.

As Yule has pointed out, modern linguists have moved away from the extreme forms of linguistic relativism, or what Yule calls "linguistic determinism," proposed by Whorf: "While many linguists have recognized the extent to which languages are subject to variation, they have also noted the extent to which all languages have certain common properties. Those common properties [are] called **language universals** . . ."[177] Franz Boas (1858 - 1942), who, by way of his analysis of the structure of language of American Indian cultures, has been credited with introducing cultural relativism into anthropological theory, nevertheless affirmed the universality of grammatical structure: ". . . the occurrence of the most fundamental grammatical concepts in all languages must be considered a proof of the unity of fundamental psychological processes."[178]

The important observation from the above assertions of Yule and Boas, however, is that the linguistic universals or the universal grammatical structures are properties, so to speak, of the mind, not of any extra-mental reality. The acknowledged universality is a universality predicated of the linguistic, psychological, or mental make up of persons, not of reality or of a supposed relation between the mind and reality or language and reality. So, although human languages evidence aspects of structural universality from culture to culture, the use of languages to speak about the world does not. In other words, the prevailing view is that one's culture determines how one perceives reality.

Linguistic Relativity and the Linguistic Sign

Linguistic-relativity is predicated upon the nature of the linguistic sign as proposed by Saussure. Saussure's analysis requires a more thorough

consideration than can be given at present. However, a brief account of some aspects of Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign are important for a basic grasp of the linguistic relativity thesis. In the chapter entitled "Nature of the Linguistic Sign,"[179] Saussure criticizes what he identifies as the "naming-process" view of language. He defines this "naming-process" as "a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names." His criticism of this view is, "It assumes that ready-made ideas [*idées*] exist before words."[180] What Saussure has said is that words cannot simply be names of things because, "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept [*concept*] and a sound image."[181]

Later, Saussure states, "There are no pre-existing ideas [*idées*] . . ."[182] By this Saussure means that extra-mental reality is not the efficient cause of ideas to which the mind must conform. In his view, ideas are not conformed to reality, rather, reality is arbitrarily divided up by the mind in conformity to whatever way a particular linguistic community has articulated the categories of reality. If reality does not cause the mind to articulate categories according to its pre-existing nature, pre-existing in the sense that reality exists prior to anyone's perception of it, then from where do such categories and concepts arise? Do they arise from the encounter with reality? If so, it would seem that the idea is a representation of reality. The idea "horse" would be a representation of the actually existing "horse." However, if language does not involve a "naming-process" in which a name is applied to the thing in reality, then the sign must be applied to the idea. Indeed, this is Saussure's assertion. He states, ". . . the choice of a given slice of sound (i.e., sound-image) to name a given idea is completely arbitrary."[183]

Saussure makes a distinction between a sign and the two parts that compose it. For Saussure, the sign is composed of the concept (the signified), and the sound-image (the signifier). Now, if the sound-image signifies the concept, then what does the sign stand for? What is a sign? Is not a sign what leads a knowing faculty to something other than itself? The sound-image signifies, or points to the concept. The concept is signified by the sound-image. What does the sign signify? Does the word "arbor" signify anything? For Saussure, the word is a sign of a relationship between its two parts, the signifier and the signified, but it is not a *representation* of the reality outside the mind.

Saussure's approach has been used by some to attack the notion that observation language can represent reality. Since language reflects and shapes the different perceptions of reality, there is no universal perception and hence no universal observation language. All observation language is peculiar to the

specific language community and shapes and reflects the different ways different cultures perceive reality. Additionally, since Saussure demonstrated that the linguistic sign is arbitrary and not naturally connected with extra-mental reality, language cannot be said to *represent* reality in any intelligible way. Hence, as Richard Rorty points out, the question is no longer "whether material reality is 'mind-dependent,'" but "which sorts of true statements, if any, stand in representational relations to nonlinguistic items."[184] Since, according to Saussure, there is no direct connection between the linguistic sign and the *real* world, there can be no sense in which language "gets reality right." A *representation* cannot be tested by an observer outside of his own language to discover the accuracy of correspondence between thought and thing.

Consequently, the notion of objectivity in language is empty. Every perceiver understands the world according to the way his language community "cuts up" the world. As G. B. Madison puts it, ". . . reality in the ordinary sense, the so-called extralinguistic referent of language, is thoroughly relative to language itself and is its 'product' . . ."[185]

Summary and Conclusion

In language as in science and history, objectivity is eliminated because the world as perceived is a product of an already present framework that provides the world with intelligibility and/or meaning. In this case the structure is one's language. The notion of a language structure constituting the world, or at least the meaning of the world, is comparable to the historical situatedness of the historian, or the theory-ladenness of the natural scientist. In each case there is some prior framework or meaning-giving perspective or point of view that supplies the perceiver with the structure that makes the world intelligible, and in some cases, even *makes* the world. The common sense notion of objectivity seems to require some non-perspectival grasp of the world, or, as Bernstein describes it, "some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness. . . . What is 'out there' (objective) is presumed to be independent of us (subjects), and knowledge is achieved when a subject correctly mirrors or represents objective reality."[186]

This chapter has presented a mere glimpse at the question of objectivity in science, history, and language, yet we believe it has shown that the common notion of objectivity is under attack if not completely rejected. If objectivity can be or has been legitimately discredited in these disciplines that are critical and perhaps foundational to traditional notions of what it means to know, the

implications for the possibility of objectivity in biblical hermeneutics are devastating. The eight-fold argument with which this chapter began seems to have been established even by this cursory examination.

1. Everyone comes to the world with his own framework of understanding.

    In natural science this takes the form of the theory-ladenness of observation. In historical studies it takes the form of the historical-situatedness of the observer, and in language it takes the form of cultural/linguistic determinism.

2. No particular framework of understanding is universally valid.

    Such a notion of universal validity assumes the very neutrality that is rejected in the first statement. In the same way one language community, for example, could legitimately declare that their language is the only universally valid language, so no framework can be declared universally valid. Points of view or perspectives are, in a Kuhnian sense, incommensurable, and there does not exist a view from nowhere from which to adjudicate between frameworks.

3. But, universal validity is precisely what is implied in the notion of objectivity.

    As we have seen in our survey, the popular or common notion of objectivity, particularly as this is supposed to exist for the scientist, assumes a universally valid, non-perspectival point of view that is specifically rejected in statement no. 2.

4. Therefore, no interpreter can be objective in interpretation.

    Since objectivity in the popular sense is not possible, then there can be no objective interpretation. Every interpreter will approach his world, or a text, from his already present framework of understanding.

5. But, if no interpreter can be objective, then no interpretation is universally valid.

    Since there can be no objective interpretation, there can be no interpretation that is universally valid for everyone. The popular aphorism, “That’s just your interpretation,” seems to be true.

6. But, if no interpretation is universally valid, then the concept of a *correct*

interpretation is at best relative or at worst empty.

> If no interpretation is universally valid, then there can be no such thing as a *correct* interpretation. No interpretation can be held to be *the* interpretation, and to propose that one's interpretation must be accepted by all is to engage in a power play to subjugate anyone who dares to entertain a contrary understanding.

7. Since there is no such thing as a correct interpretation, there is no means of adjudicating between interpretations.

> Consequently, the urge to decide between conflicting interpretation is artificially contrived. There really is no way to adjudicate between interpretations, and, indeed, there is no need. Every interpretation is valid for the one who accepts it.

8. In fact, the very idea of adjudicating between interpretations is at best relative and at worst empty.

> If the above propositions have indeed been established, then Evangelicals ought to cease their efforts to propose their understanding of the Bible as the *correct* one. They ought to cease their evangelical efforts and rest content to express their understanding as one among many options.

The common thread that runs through the rejection of objectivity generally, in natural science, history, and language, is the realization that no one comes to the world without an already existing framework of understanding. According to the prevailing view in these areas, the prior framework necessarily obviates the possibility of objectivity. As we pointed out at the close of chapter 1, the rejection of objectivity would seem to entail the rejection of objective truth. Such an approach certainly could not, it would seem, be consistent with orthodox Christian belief. The question that arises is what role does this framework of understanding actually play in understanding? In the following chapter we will look briefly at the impact that the notion of the preexisting framework of understanding has on the notion of objectivity.

3 PRESUPPOSITIONS, PREUNDERSTANDING, AND OBJECTIVITY

Introduction

From the previous survey we discovered that the notion of objectivity is almost universally rejected because of what seems to be the necessary preconditions of understanding. Everyone encounters the world from an already-always present framework of understanding, and because this framework of understanding, this perspective, or point of view, necessarily forms the grid through which anyone encounters the world, the possibility of a neutral encounter, an objective perspective, or a "view from nowhere," is impossible. Even natural science, which has for years been the last bastion of objective knowledge, has been severely criticized as being no less perspectival than any other enterprise that relies on the knowing power.

Traditionally, the possibility of objective knowledge, and likewise objective interpretation, has been predicated on the basis of some concept of a foundation of knowledge— as some have characterized it, "an Archimedean point"—on the basis of which all knowledge is grounded. This is the idea that there is some a-cultural, a-historical, transcendent point from which the world can be known that is not subject to the peculiarities of anyone's preconditions, presuppositions, preunderstanding, or world view. This grounding of knowledge has been variously identified as Foundationalism or Classical Foundationalism. However, as we will see, recent proposals on the nature and role of presuppositions in understanding seem to undermine this traditional basis for objectivity also.

Presuppositions and Foundations

Presuppositions and the Foundations of Knowledge

The question of one's framework of understanding and the role of one's preconditions in understanding strikes at the very heart of the question of the foundations of knowledge. The question of the foundations of knowledge is basically the question, "On what basis can we claim to know?" Traditional thought proposed that there is or must be some foundation that ensures knowledge or certainty. Different philosophers have proposed different foundations. Plato proposed the doctrine of *recollection* or *reminiscence* to explain the fact of knowledge and understanding. In other words, Plato proposed that the pre-existence of the "soul," and the soul's prior acquaintance with the "forms," provides a foundation for knowledge in this mortal existence.[187] As Peter Redpath explains, "Plato saw no way to explain how people can go from a state of complete ignorance to knowledge. He thought that we all had to know something upon entering this life before we could know by study. Hence he

attributed to man a prior life as a kind of god in another world where man knew everything."[188] Aristotle discussed the foundations of knowledge in terms of a basic framework based on the first principles of thought and being: "All instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge."[189] Aristotle proposed that there are first principles that are already present in the constitution of the world that provide the foundation for knowledge. Plato's doctrine was adapted by Augustine in his doctrine of illumination, and the basic formulation of first principles in Aristotle was taken up by St. Thomas Aquinas in the exposition of his own epistemology. In the Middle Ages the foundation of knowledge was discussed in terms of *causae veritatis* (causes of truth).[190]

Perhaps more than any other, the term "presupposition" has been used to refer to those prior assumptions, beliefs, or individual items that constitute one's framework of understanding. Richard Garner contends that the notion of presuppositions "was not, as many seem to believe, introduced by Strawson. Frege, in 'On Sense and Reference' (1892), appealed to it when he pointed out that 'if anything is asserted there is always an obvious presupposition that the simple or compound proper names used have a reference.'"[191] Anthony Thiselton points out that the term "'presupposition' [has] become familiar to English-speaking readers as a technical term in the English translation of Rudolf Bultmann's very well-known essay 'Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?'"[192] So it seems to be the case that what has come to be known by the term "presuppositions" is not a completely new subject of consideration but has been a topic of some discussion throughout the history of philosophy, albeit under various titles.

In this age of postmodernism even greater attention has been focused on the role of presuppositions and the foundations of knowledge. As Carl F. H. Henry observes, "The one epistemic premise shared by all postmodernists is their rejection of foundationalism, the belief that knowledge consists of sets of beliefs that rest assuredly on still other sets of beliefs and that the whole is supported by irreversible foundational beliefs."[193] Richard Bernstein identifies this growing rejection of absolute foundations as evidenced in a resurgence of relativism. He describes it as "an uneasiness that has spread throughout intellectual and cultural life. . . . This uneasiness is expressed by the opposition between objectivism and relativism. . . . Relativism, a stream in the philosophy of the past two hundred years that began as a trickle, has swelled in recent times into a roaring torrent."[194] And Robert Greer declares that postmodernism "denies that there is any one singular legitimizing system of thought on which all cultures and all

historical settings depend."[195] In other words, there is no system that forms the foundation for all knowledge.

Carl Henry ties the growth of relativism to the conclusion of postmodernists that the Enlightenment project was a failure because it did not realize its own inherent perspectivalism: "The Enlightenment elevated human reason as the way of knowing. Failure to justify this confidence led to 'the recognition of the dogmatic (and therefore irrational) character of the Enlightenment's belief in reason—a belief much closer to a fundamental act of faith than to a scientific and critical act of reason.' . . . Enlightenment confidence in human reasoning was assailed also by sociologists who protested that humans do not usually think only in valid syllogisms nor can they be wholly objective since hidden presuppositions underlie all human affirmations."[196]

The modern realization of the unavoidable presence of presuppositions and one's framework of understanding seems to militate against any notion of a universal foundation for knowledge or interpretation. Historically philosophers have proposed a variety of principles, ideas, natures, etc., as providing a nonpartisan, a-historical, neutral foundation for knowledge; or as Bernstein characterizes it, "an Archimedean point." However, many theorists take for granted that the modern, or better, the Postmodern, notion of prespectivism has finally put this pursuit to rest. And, if there cannot be a universal foundation for knowledge, there seems to be even less hope for a universal foundation for interpretation.

Modern Rejection of Foundationalism

The modern rejection of foundationalism is predicated on a certain understanding of the nature of foundationalism. Tom Rockmore characteristically describes the contemporary understanding of the nature of foundationalism as the development of the philosophical methodology of Descartes. Rockmore says,

> For present purposes it is irrelevant whether Descartes initiates modern philosophy or whether he merely reacts to earlier thinkers, including Bayle or even Augustine. The important point is that he invents, or at least perfects, the epistemological strategy which has come to be known as foundationalism. In Descartes' position, this strategy can be described as the claim to identify an initial premise, which can be shown to be true, and from which the remainder of the theory can be rigorously deduced. In a profound sense, the post-Cartesian history of philosophy, that is, that part of it concerned with the problem of knowledge, can be regarded as a series of unavailing efforts in the positions of a great many thinkers, in our time including Husserl, Moore, Chisholm, Apel, perhaps the early Wittgenstein and Russell, as well as others, to construct a valid form of a foundationalist theory of knowledge.[197]

As the quote from Rockmore indicates, foundationalism has almost universally been equated with Cartesianism. Richard Bernstein claims that the whole history of Western philosophy since Descartes has been the attempt to uncover or discover the foundations of knowledge:

> Few philosophers since Descartes have accepted his substantive claims, but there can be little doubt that the problems, metaphors, and questions that he bequeathed to us have been at the very center of philosophy since Descartes—problems concerning the foundations of knowledge and the sciences, mind-body dualism, our knowledge of the "external" world, how the mind "represents" this world, the nature of consciousness, thinking, and will, whether physical reality is to be understood as a grand mechanism, and how this is compatible with human freedom.[198]

Heading Bernstein's list of problems bequeathed to subsequent philosophical inquiry is the search for the "foundations of knowledge." For Bernstein, this search is the expression of what he calls a "Cartesian Anxiety" because it leads to the objectivism/ relativism opposition. Bernstein equates objectivism with foundationalism:

> By 'objectivism,' I mean the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness. An objectivist claims that there is (or must be) such a matrix and that the primary task of the philosopher is to discover what it is and to support his or her claims to have discovered such a matrix with the strongest possible reasons. Objectivism is closely related to foundationalism and the search for an Archimedean point. The objectivist maintains that unless we can ground philosophy, knowledge, or language in a rigorous manner we cannot avoid radical skepticism.[199]

Bernstein's reference to the "Archimedean point" indicates the view that foundationalism is deductivist in nature. Archimedes, a 3rd century B.C. mathematician and scientist, reportedly said, "Give me a place to stand on, and I can move the earth."[200] Bernstein's understanding of foundationalism is that it assumes that knowledge must have an absolute, neutral starting point, such as that found in the Cartesian method of doubt. As William Alston describes, "Historically it has been common to require of the foundations of knowledge that they exhibit certain 'epistemic immunities,' as we might put it, immunity from error, refutation, or doubt. Thus Descartes, along with many other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers, took it that any knowledge worthy of the name would be based on cognitions the truth of which is guaranteed (infallible), that were maximally stable, immune from ever being shown to be mistaken (incorrigible), and concerning which no reasonable doubt could be raised (indubitable)."[201]

In his little book titled, *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion*, Nicholas

Wolterstorff devotes a chapter to an explanation of what he understands to be classical foundationalism. After a brief introduction and three definitional statements, Wolterstorff give his definition of foundationalism: “In sum, the foundationalist sees the house of genuine science as firmly based on a foundation of certitudes which can be known noninferentially. He urges that we accept or reject a given theory wholly on the basis of our warranted belief that the theory belongs or does not belong to genuine science. Only if we thus govern our acceptance of theories can we move towards eliminating prejudice, bias, and unjustified conjecture from the enterprise of theorizing.”[202]

Alvin Plantinga concurs with Wolterstorff’s estimation of the nature of foundationalism and asserts, “This picture [of classical foundationalism] has had a long and distinguished career in the history of philosophy, including among its adherents Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and, to leap to the present, Professor Roderick Chisholm.”[203] Plantinga asserts that a foundationalist is one for whom “some propositions are *properly* or *rightly* basic . . . and some are not. Those that are not, are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, ultimately, to what is properly basic.”[204] However, not just any proposition qualifies as properly or rightly basic. Propositions that are properly basic “are not accepted on the basis of other propositions. I *know* the propositions in the foundations of my noetic structure, but not by virtue of knowing other propositions; for these are the ones I start with.”[205]

Alston provides a helpful analysis of the criticisms that have been leveled against foundationalism or Classical Foundationalism: “Thus much anti-foundationalist artillery has been directed at the ‘myth of the given,’ the idea that facts or things are ‘given’ to consciousness in a pre-conceptual, pre-judgmental mode, and that beliefs can be justified on that basis.”[206]

However, the notion of a pre-conceptual or pre-judgmental “mode” upon which beliefs can be justified seems to be the very notion to which some have appealed when discussing presuppositions and preunderstanding as the preconditions of knowledge and interpretation. Anthony Thiselton specifically asserts that one’s horizon is a “pre-intentional background,” and that, “The term ‘background’ calls attention to the fact that these boundaries embrace not only what we can draw on in conscious reflection, but also the pre-cognitive dispositions or competencies which are made possible by our participation in the shared practices of a social and historical world.”[207] Thiselton seems to be describing some pre-cognitive, pre-judgmental mode on the basis of which understanding is made possible, or, as it were, built up.

In fact, a survey of the nature and role of presuppositions, which will be taken up in the following chapter, will reveal a general assumption that understanding and interpretation is possible by virtue of basic, fundamental, and/or foundational presuppositions. However, Alston points out that, "It should also be noted that the term [foundationalism] is used with a deplorable looseness in contemporary literary circles, and even in certain corners of the philosophical world, to refer to anything from realism—the view that reality has a definite constitution regardless of how we think of it or what we believe about it—to various kinds of 'absolutism' in ethics, politics, or whatever, and even to the truism that truth is stable (if a proposition is true, it stays true!)."[208]

Indeed, even though there is confusion and equivocation in the use of terminology, every theorist claims that knowledge, understanding, and interpretation begins with one's preunderstanding, or that one encounters the world with an already-always present set of prejudices or presuppositions. Supposedly these preconditions of understanding are mutable and can be modified or altered by honest interaction with the world or with a text. Yet no theorist entertains the possibility that any encounter with the world will ever be able to alter the basic assumption that all interpretation necessarily involves presuppositions, and that these presuppositions mediate understanding. This seems to be a fixed and immutable foundation upon which contemporary theories are built up.

Representational Foundationalism

In light of the universal rejection of foundationalism in principle based on the fact of the always-already present framework of presuppositions, the question that arises is, Could the presuppositions themselves form some kind of foundation upon which knowledge and interpretation can be built, particularly in light of the criticisms leveled against Cartesian foundationalism? Perhaps as closer look at foundationalism will help to answer this question.

In his analysis, Ronald Nash delineates two kinds of foundationalism—narrow and broad foundationalism. Nash gives the following characterization of these two kinds of foundationalism: "*Narrow foundationalism* insists that only beliefs that satisfy two or three specific criteria are properly basic, that is belong properly in the foundation of a rational noetic structure. *Broad foundationalism* agrees with the distinction between basic and nonbasic beliefs and with the claim that the rationality of nonbasic beliefs depends on the extent to which they are supported by properly basic beliefs. But broad foundationalism breaks with narrow foundationalism over the latter's attempt to limit properly basic beliefs to those that satisfy two or three criteria."[209]

Of the two or three criteria that Nash attributes to the basic beliefs of narrow foundationalism one is what Nash identifies as *incorrigible propositions*. These incorrigible propositions have the earmarks of foundational presuppositions. According to Nash, "*Incorrigible propositions* are statements that cannot be doubted, even though they fall short of logical necessity."[210] Nash gives two statements to illustrate the notion of incorrigibility; 1) There is a red book on the table, and 2) I seem to see a table with a red book on it. In Nash's analysis of statement 1, he describes this kind of statement as one that "makes a report about what you take to be a state of affairs existing independently of your consciousness. You are making a claim about something in the external world, the world outside your consciousness."[211] He concludes that it is not incorrigible because such statements may be mistaken for several reasons: "Perhaps you are color-blind, and even though there is a book on the table, the book is actually green. Or suppose it's not a book at all but only something that looks like a book under the conditions. Or perhaps you're dreaming or someone has hypnotized you. Whenever we make reports about what is or is not the case outside our minds, we might be mistaken. Propositions like 1 are *not* incorrigible."[212]

Of course, Nash's analysis of the corrigibility of statements about extra-mental reality assumes a certain understanding about the relation between the mind and the rest of nature. The view that seems to underlie Nash's analysis is an epistemological dualism of some kind. Traditionally, the most devastating criticism of propositions about extra-mental reality has been the accusation of epistemological dualism that is often involved in making such statements. This epistemological dualism is also known as representationalism. Representationalism in its broadest sense is the belief that, in the knowing process, the mind somehow represents to itself extra-mental reality.

Robert Cummins describes the various views on representationalism in current epistemological theory. He identifies four theories that have attempted to "explain in non-semantic, non-intentional terms what it is for something to be a representation (have content), and what it is for something to have some particular content rather than some other."[213] According to Cummins, "*Similarity theories* hold that r represents x in virtue of being similar to x. . . . *Covariance theories* hold that r's representing x is grounded in the fact that r's occurrence covaries with that of x. . . . *Functional role theories* hold that r's representing x is grounded in the functional role r has in the representing system, i.e. on the relations imposed by specified cognitive processes between r and other representations in the system's repertoire. . . . *Teleological theories* hold that r represents x if it is r's function to indicate (i.e. covary with) x."[214] All of

these theories have in common the basic assumption that what is in the mind of the knower is some representation of the thing known. In other words, the object of knowledge is not the reality that exists outside the mind, but the representation that somehow re-presents to the mind the object outside the mind.

Richard Rorty specifically makes a connection between foundationalism and representationalism in his characterization of modern philosophy:

> Philosophers usually think of their discipline as one which discusses perennial, eternal problems—problems which arise as soon as one reflects. . . . It purports to do this on the basis of its special understanding of the nature of knowledge and of mind. Philosophy can be foundational in respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims. It can do so because it understands the foundations of knowledge, and it finds these foundations in a study of man-as-knower, of the "mental processes" or the "activity of representation" which make knowledge possible.[215]

Not only does Rorty specifically equate foundationalism with representationalism, but he goes on to assert that knowledge is, in philosophical speculation, a representational activity: "To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations. Philosophy's central concern is to be a general theory of representation, a theory which will divide culture up into the areas which represent reality well, those which represent it less well, and those which do not represent it at all (despite their pretense of doing so)."[216]

Rorty asserts that philosophy is primarily concerned with constructing a valid representationalist epistemology. This representationalist perspective derives primarily from two sources, one of which Rorty identifies when he asserts, "We owe the notion of a 'theory of knowledge' based on an understanding of 'mental processes' to the seventeenth century, and especially to Locke."[217] Rorty is referring to Locke's "copy theory" of knowledge. However, Locke constructed his system in the wake of the Cartesian dualism and the Cartesian representationalist system. In fact, Rorty goes on to point out, "We owe the notion of 'the mind' as a separate entity in which 'processes' occur to the same period, and especially to Descartes."[218]

Rorty identifies the final ingredient in the construction of modern representationalist philosophy when he recognizes Kant as the arbiter between Locke and Descartes: "We owe the notion of philosophy as a tribunal of pure reason, upholding or denying the claims of the rest of culture, to the eighteenth century and especially to Kant, but this Kantian notion presupposed general assent to Lockean notions of mental processes and Cartesian notions of mental

substance."[219] Kant himself asserted, "There is no doubt whatever that all our cognition begins with experience; for how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into exercise if not through objects that stimulate our senses and in part themselves produce representations, in part bring the activity of our understanding into motion to compare these, to connect or separate them, and thus to work up the raw material of sensible impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience?"[220]

Rorty's enterprise in this instance is to offer a criticism of modern representationalist philosophy that presumes to put itself in the place of the judge of culture by virtue of its grasp of the foundations of knowledge. As Rorty says, "The aim of the book is to undermine the reader's confidence in 'the mind' as something about which one should have a 'philosophical' view, in 'knowledge' as something about which there ought to be a 'theory' and which has 'foundations,' and in 'philosophy' as it has been conceived since Kant."[221]

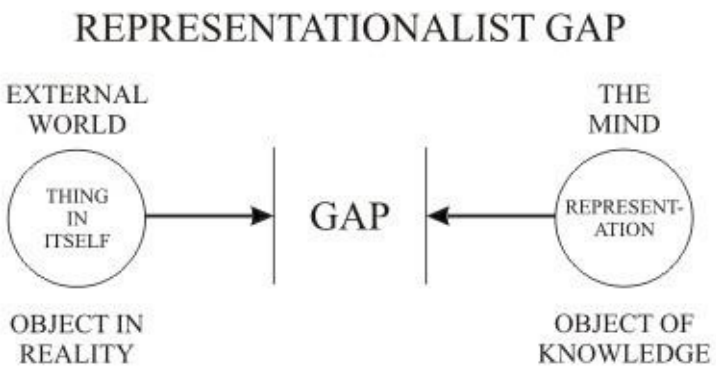
A number of theorists have undertaken to criticize the representationalist foundationalism of modern philosophy including Wilfrid Sellars, Hillary Putnam, and Donald Davidson. Rorty identifies the proposals of these theorists as antirepresentationalism by which he means a view that does not understand knowledge "as a matter of getting reality right, but rather as a matter of acquiring habits of action for coping with reality."[222] According to these theorists, knowledge necessarily involves a distinction between what is outside the mind, i.e. nature, and what is in the mind, i.e. the mind's representation of the extra-mental. Donald Davidson asserts that the dualism of traditional epistemological systems is "in its way too obvious to question,"[223] and the criticisms leveled against a representationalist view appear devastating. As Davidson points out,

> Since we cannot be certain what the world outside the mind is like, the subjective can keep its virtue —its chastity, its certainty for us—only by being protected from contamination by the world. The familiar trouble is, of course, that the disconnection creates a gap no reasoning or construction can plausibly bridge. Once the Cartesian starting point has been chosen, there is no saying what the evidence is evidence for, or so it seems. Idealism, reductionist forms of empiricism, and skepticism loom. . . . If the ultimate evidence for our schemes and theories, the raw material on which they are based, is subjective in the way I have described, then so is whatever is directly based on it; our beliefs, desires, intentions, and what we mean by our words.[224]

Davidson has identified the epistemological problem that has its counterpart in the hermeneutical problem, each of which stems from a similar conception of the starting point in one's mutable preunderstanding. As Davidson points out, though our beliefs, desires, intentions, and what we mean by our words are the

"progeny of our 'view of the world'" taken together, they are in fact what "constitute our view of the world."[225] In other words, there is a circularity in the claim that our world view derives from our view of the world when in fact it is our view of the world that constitutes our world view. As Davidson explains, "they too retain the Cartesian independence from what they purport to be about that the evidence on which they are based had: like sensations, they could be just as they are, and the world be very different. Our beliefs purport to represent something objective, but the character of their subjectivity prevents us from taking the first step in determining whether they correspond to what they pretend to represent."[226] Davidson's critique is graphically represented in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: The Representationalist Gap



Rorty provides an exposition and vindication of the criticisms of Sellars and Willard V. O. Quine which they have leveled against the representationalist epistemology that issues in the assertion that, "no 'account of the nature of knowledge' can rely on a theory of representations which stand in privileged relations to reality."[227] By "privileged relation" Rorty means that in order to have certainty about the accuracy of one's representations, the representationalist theory of knowledge must "find, within the Mirror, a special privileged class of representations so compelling that their accuracy cannot be doubted. These privileged foundations will be the foundations of knowledge, and the discipline which directs us toward them—the theory of knowledge—will be the foundation of culture."[228]

Wilfrid Sellars attacked the representationalist perspective in terms of the "myth of the given."[229] From the Cartesian/Kantian framework of knowledge, certain "givens" were necessarily posited in order to make knowledge possible. For both Descartes and Kant the "given" was the immediate data, either clear and distinct ideas, or the manifold that is formed into a unity by the imposition

of the categories. Sellars' attack is directed at the assumption that there are "givens" which constitute non-inferential knowledge. Sellars argues that in order to assert that something "looks green," this ability "presupposes the concept of *being green*, and that the latter concept involves the ability to tell what colours objects have by looking at them—which, in turn, involves knowing in what circumstances to place an object if one wishes to ascertain its colour by looking at it."[230] His argument is too involved to recite here, but Sellars provides a helpful summary of his point: "*For we now recognize that instead of coming to have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing, to have the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have the concept of that sort of thing, and cannot account for it.*"[231]

Sellars' explanation brings to mind the whole argumentation concerning preunderstanding in hermeneutics. In order to be able to recognize that something is green, the perceiver must already have the concept of "being green" which makes his recognition possible. If the perceiver must have the concept of the sort of thing prior to his being able to recognize that sort of thing, then the idea that perception provides some "given" which constitutes non-inferential knowledge is eliminated. Alan Goldman provides a helpful summary of Sellars' argument against the "given":

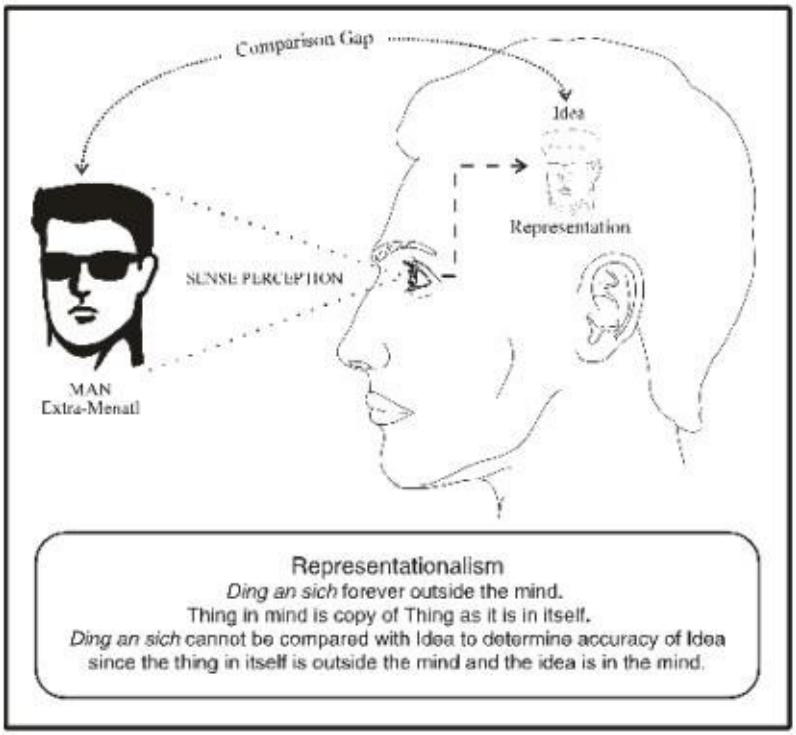
> Arguments against the idea of the given originate with Kant, who argues in Book I of the *Transcendental Analytic* that percepts without concepts do not yet constitute any form of knowing. Being non-epistemic, they presumably cannot serve as epistemic foundations. Once we recognize that we must apply concepts of properties to appearances and formulate beliefs utilizing those concepts before the appearances can play any epistemic role, it becomes more plausible that such beliefs are fallible. The argument was developed in this century by Wilfrid Sellars (1963). According to him, the idea of the given involves a confusion between sensing particulars (having sense impressions), which is non-epistemic, and having non-inferential knowledge of propositions referring to appearances. The former may be necessary for acquiring perceptual knowledge, but it is not itself a primitive kind of knowing. Its being non-epistemic renders it immune from error, but also unsuitable for epistemological foundations. The latter, non-inferential perceptual knowledge, is fallible, requiring concepts acquired through trained responses to public physical objects.[232]

Sellars acknowledged that philosophers have proposed "givenness" in many forms besides the classical sense-datum theories, but he holds that empirical knowledge that is supposedly based on a foundation is an instance of the "myth of the given." The central point, according to Sellars, is, "that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says."[233] The occurrence of an experience does not constitute an instance of epistemic perception such

that truth can be predicated of it. In other words, there are no "privileged representations" upon which a theory of knowledge can be based since even what are characteristically identified as "immediate experiences" are non-epistemic in nature and cannot form the foundation of an "epistemology."

The combination of criticisms from Rorty, Sellars, Davidson, and others constitutes a devastating appraisal of representationalism. These criticisms can be summarized as two apparently insuperable problems for the traditional Cartesian/Kantian view. First, if that which is in the mind is merely a representation of that which is in nature, then the two are really distinct as that which represents is distinct from that which is represented. If these are really distinct, then that which is in extra-mental reality never enters the mind so the mind is never able to compare the mind's representation with the extra-mental entity to discover whether or not the representation is accurate. Nature is always "out there," and our representations are always "in here," and the two can never be brought along side one another for the purpose of comparison. **Figure 2** illustrates this dilemma.

Figure 2: Representationalism



Rorty identifies this problem as precisely the quest of modern philosophy:

> Traditional skepticism had been troubled principally by the "problem of the criterion"—the problem of validating procedures of inquiry while avoiding either circularity or dogmatism. This problem,

> which Descartes thought he had solved by "the method of clear and distinct ideas," had little to do with the problem of getting from inner space to outer space—the "problem of the external world" which became paradigmatic for modern philosophy. The idea of a "theory of knowledge" grew up around this problem—the problem of knowing whether our inner representations were accurate.[234]

The second seemingly insuperable problem for the representationalist was posed by Sellars in the form of three inconsistent propositions which follow from his analysis of sense datum theory, which together demonstrate that a representationalist account of foundationalism is impossible to maintain:

> A. *X senses red sense content s* entails *x non-inferentially knows that s is red.*
> B. The ability to sense sense contents is unacquired.
> C. The ability to know facts of the form *x is φ* is acquired.
> A and B together entail not-C; B and C entail not-A; A and C entail not-B.[235]

Those who propose a non-inferential knowledge based on sense-datum are left with an inconsistent triad of propositions, and choosing to adopt any one will invalidate their claims to a representationalist foundation of knowledge.

If these criticisms and conclusions are valid, then the representationalist account of knowledge offers no possibility of epistemic justification and no possibility of knowing whether the perceiver's representations are accurate representations of the world. Consequently, a representationalist account of knowledge, which, as Rorty has described, is the one notion that defines the quest of modern philosophy, offers no foundation for knowledge.

Of course, for Rorty, this is precisely the point, and precisely the motivation for abandoning epistemology altogether. In Rorty's characterization of the movement from epistemology to hermeneutics, he describes epistemology as "a desire for constraint—a desire to find 'foundations' to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray, objects which impose themselves, representations which cannot be gainsaid."[236] For Rorty, "epistemology proceeds on the assumption that all contributions to a given discourse are commensurable," by which he means, "able to be brought under a set of rules which will tell us how rational agreement can be reached on what would settle the issue on every point where statements conflict."[237] According to Rorty, the demise of epistemology has left a vacuum which should not be filled, and he is not interested in offering a replacement system. Hermeneutics, for Rorty, is certainly not an attempt to take the place vacated by epistemology. Rather, he contends, "Hermeneutics sees the relations between various discourses as those

of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts. This hope is not a hope for the discovery of antecedently existing common ground, but *simply* hope for agreement, or, at least, exciting and fruitful disagreement."[238]

Rorty has prohibited epistemology from participating in the conversation, and he wants his readers to agree with him on the common ground of the rejection of a common ground. Although Rorty describes hermeneutics as a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix, he has stipulated the disciplinary matrix to be conversational. Whereas according to Rorty, epistemology sought to unite speakers with a common foundation of knowledge, he has filled the vacuum of epistemology's common foundation of knowledge with hermeneutic's common strand of conversation. Is an epistemologist who thinks that there should be an end to conversation in the settlement of issues not allowed to participate in the conversation because the conversation must last? For all of Rorty's gainsaying of epistemology's imposition of foundations, Rorty himself seeks to impose a conversation in which all must participate or be in danger of being discarded. He asserts that in order to be considered rational, one *must* accept the special set of terms laid down by hermeneutics in which all contributions to the conversation should be put, and one must also be willing to pick up the jargon of the interlocutor rather than translating it into one's own language.

The very objections that Rorty raises against epistemology are the very constraints he places upon anyone who would participate in the conversation. Rorty complains that, "For epistemology, to be rational is to find the proper set of terms into which all the contributions should be translated if agreement is to become possible."[239] By contrast, he demands that all conversation be translated into the set of terms laid down by his own conception of hermeneutics, or else run the risk of being irrational. But the key to Rorty's criticisms is his insistence that epistemology is necessarily a "representationalist" model. He says,

> The notion of knowledge as accurate representation lends itself naturally to the notion that certain sorts of representations, certain expressions, certain processes are 'basic,' 'privileged,' and 'foundational.' The criticisms of this notion . . . are backed up with holistic argument of the form: We will not be able to isolate basic elements except on the basis of a prior knowledge of the whole fabric within which these elements occur. Thus we will not be able to substitute the notion of 'accurate representation' (element-by-element) for that of successful accomplishment of a practice.[240]

In other words, as Rorty goes on to point out, the hermeneutical circle—the fact that the parts must be understood in terms of the whole, and the whole must

be understood in terms of the parts—makes the "legitimation" of any particular element or elements as foundational an impossible task since their basicality must be understood in terms of the whole. But the whole cannot be understood except it be understood on the basis of foundational elements which cannot be "picked out" until the whole is understood.

There are, however, theories of knowledge that are not representational in nature. The proper characterization of knowledge may not necessarily be "justified, true belief."[241] It may be that knowledge entails a real access to extra-mental reality such that the "foundational" principles of knowledge are not "picked out" by the perceiver, but are prescribed and imposed by the world itself. Rather than the mind forming representations of extra-mental reality, the mind may in some way be directly informed by extra-mental reality. If another notion of knowledge is possible than that criticized by Rorty and company, and if another notion of foundationalism can be articulated than that which is generally rejected by non-evangelicals and Evangelicals alike, then it may be the case that their criticisms would not apply to that alternate notion, and a foundation for knowledge and objectivity may be conceivable and defensible.

Presuppositions and Preunderstanding

Some Basic Distinctions

The representationalism criticized by contemporary thinkers is the epistemological side of the hermeneutical problem of objectivity. Representationalism fails, or so the criticism goes, because there must be an already present framework of understanding that makes knowledge possible. No one has a God's eye view that provides a universal, non-perspectival access to truth. In the same manner there can be no objective interpretation because every person has his own unique framework of understanding from which he views the text. There is no such thing as a view from nowhere by which an interpreter can be assured of discovering *the* meaning of the text.

Of what precisely is this framework composed? In the popular jargon of hermeneutic theory this framework is characterized by many terms, but the most frequently occurring terms are "presuppositions," as we have already observed, and "preunderstanding." It will be necessary now to identify some fundamental distinctions between the current notions of "presupposition" and "preunderstanding" in order to focus in on the problem that the already present framework poses for objectivity against this representationalist background.

The distinctions grow out of observations and evaluations regarding the nature and role of presuppositions and preunderstanding that have been presented in the current literature. In the consideration of the role of

presuppositions in hermeneutics, several theorists either explicitly discuss or allude to distinctions among various kinds of presuppositions and between presuppositions and preunderstanding. Anthony Thiselton discusses the difference between horizons of expectation and presuppositions. The distinction indicated by Thiselton seems to be one of breadth and depth. Whereas presuppositions are narrow and closer to the basis of one's beliefs, Thiselton suggests that one's "horizon of expectation" is much broader in scope including not only one's presuppositions, but "a network of revisable expectations and assumptions which a reader brings to the text, *together with* the shared patterns of behaviour and belief with reference to which processes of interpretation and understanding become operative."[242]

Peter Cotterell and Max Turner talk about an interpreter's "presupposition pool." Although Cotterell and Turner do not provide a definition of this term, they do provide lengthy examples. One's presupposition pool is composed of "information constituted from the situative context . . . as well as the new information from the completed part of the discourse itself."[243] The illustrations presented by Cotterell and Turner indicate that one's presupposition pool includes all of one's perspectives, experiences in life, participation in a language community, shared assumptions, in short all that constitutes a person's world.[244] So, there seems to be a distinction maintained between the parts and the whole. The presupposition pool is the whole which is constituted of the individual parts, at least some of which other theorists would classify as presuppositions, some as attitudes, some as dispositions, etc.

As has been observed, hermeneuticians often imply an underlying distinction between presupposition and preunderstanding. Whereas preunderstanding is generally held to encompass one's total "world," presuppositions are generally narrow and basic. Preunderstanding is also inclusive of aspects that are non-cognitive, such as one's dispositions and one's accumulated experiences and training. Also, within the scope of one's preunderstanding is one's historical situatedness, and one's participation in his linguistic and social community.

In summary, preunderstanding is virtually equivalent to one's world view and is not considered to be essentially propositional in nature. Preunderstanding is a broad-based concept that includes the narrower aspect of presuppositions. Presuppositions, on the other hand, are more often thought of or described in terms of propositions, though they have been seen as both conscious and unconscious.

This distinction may then allow for an explanation of the fact that

Evangelical and non-evangelical theorists, coming from different and often contradictory perspectives, have arrived at the same conclusion about the framework of understanding. Since one's world view or preunderstanding may include within it a set of presuppositions which may be held even though the interpreter is not consciously aware of them, theorists from disparate world views may have presuppositions that are the same, and these particular presuppositions may not be in conflict with the overall world view of the respective theorists. In fact, this seems to be precisely the case. Evangelicals and non-evangelicals both assert the inevitability of the preunderstanding or framework of understanding of the interpreter, and this assertion functions as a presupposition in the hermeneutic theories of both groups. Additionally, both groups presuppose the mutability of presuppositions, as we shall see later. Both groups presuppose that no one comes to the world with a mind that is a *tabula rasa*. Granted these theorists claim that these are conclusions of their research. But, often the conclusions on one level become the presuppositions on another. From the testimony of the scholars involved, it is in fact the case that theorists from disparate world views, or preunderstandings do have some presuppositions in common. These presuppositions include, 1) the inevitability of the preconditions of understanding, and 2) the mutability of presuppositions. These two presuppositions of all theorists are not peculiar to any one theorist's particular perspective, and they do not seem to be affected by the particular perspective or world view of the theorist. But, if this is true, then what better term can be applied to these presuppositions than "objective"?

The Possibility of Objective Presuppositions

The fact that theorists across the spectrum of belief arrive at the same conclusion about the unavoidability of one's preconditional framework and its impact upon understanding seems to imply that all these theorists must have at least some presuppositions in common. Else, how can this seemingly universal and objective criticism be explained. Does this introduce the possibility of objective presuppositions? George Yule comments that, "What a speaker assumes is true or is known by the hearer can be described as a presupposition."[245] There are in fact certain assumptions that lie behind statements. Whereas the statements, "My car is old," or "My brother is old" presuppose that the speaker has a car and/or a brother, the preunderstanding behind the statement "My brother is old" may be quite different from that lying behind the statement about the automobile. However, in some respects, the preunderstanding related to these two statements is certainly the same. For example, in relation to both statements there are at least two assumptions that are

constant: 1) the assumption that the hearer is a participant in the English language community, and therefore 2) the assumption that the hearer understands the relative uses of the term “old” within this social and linguistic community.

Moreover, there are other concepts that seemingly remain constant among all such assertions. Whenever someone makes an assertion that is presented as a truth claim, there are at least three operative presuppositions that are employed, either consciously or unconsciously: namely, the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of excluded middle. The assertion, “My car is old,” makes several valid affirmations about the identity of the car (for example, that it is “my” car, and that it is “old,” and that the car exists in space and time), and this assertion necessarily excludes its contradictory, “My car is not old.” That the car is “old” may be a value judgment on the part of the one making the assertion; nonetheless, it assumes the negation of whatever is properly its contradictory. In fact, it is precisely the assumption of the principle of non-contradiction that often gives rise to contrary assertions. The reason someone would object to such a characterization about the age of the car is because the assertion necessarily denies its contradictory. So, someone may object to this characterization with an opposing point of view, “Your car is not old!” because the opponent immediately grasps the implication of the original assertion and wishes to propose a contradictory perspective.

The law of excluded middle is also operative in any assertion such as the one being considered. To claim, “My car is old,” necessarily asserts that the car is “old,” which we may represent by *A*, as opposed to any other condition which could be characterized as not being old, represented by ~*A* (non *A*). The car might be “middle aged,” or “young,” or “new,” or any other descriptive characterization that is non-old. Nevertheless, any description that indicates that the car is not old is an assertion that it is non-old, or ~*A*. Either the car is old, or it is not.[246] There is no middle term between old and non-old. When the speaker makes the assertion that his car is old, he is necessarily presupposing that his car is “old,” *A*, as opposed to any other condition which is not “old,” ~*A*, according to some acceptable definition of “old.”

Finally, the law of identity means that when the speaker asserts that his car is old, he is asserting that there is such a thing as a car, that the speaker owns or in some legitimate way has a car that can properly be called “my car” by the speaker, and that it is correctly characterized as “old.” The law of identity means that for something to be old, it is what it is; in this case “old.” Although the precise connotations or denotations of the term “old” may vary from speaker to speaker, it is nevertheless necessarily the case that for the speaker who asserts *A*, for that speaker, *A* is *A*. Even if the speaker were making an assertion that is a

figure of speech, such as the use of sarcasm so that he is using the term “old” when he means to indicate “non-old,” this does not alter the fact that when the speaker asserts *A*, whatever *A* is, with reference to that speaker’s assertion, *A* is *A*.

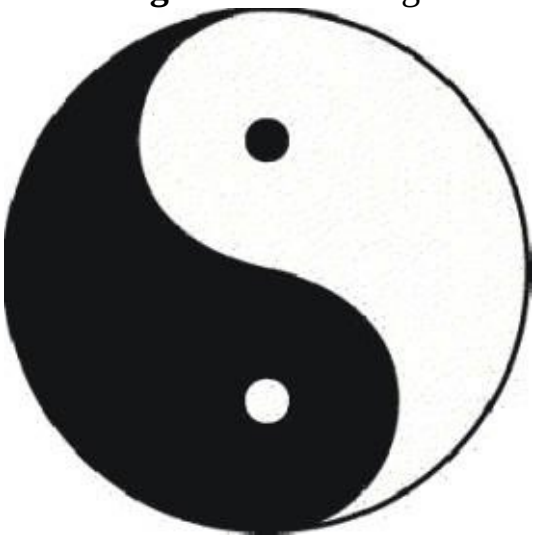
There is no lack of literature establishing the role of these principles of logic in all communication.[247] An individual may attempt to deny these principles or to provide examples in which these principles may appear to be circumvented or obviated. These counter claims, however, are intelligible only on the basis of the application of the very principles which are being denied. To claim that the law of non-contradiction does not apply one must depend on an application of the law of non-contradiction in order to be able to make such a claim. Any attempt to deny these basic laws of logic involves the claimant in a hopelessly, self-referentially incoherent claim.

Likewise, when someone asserts a claim that is self-referentially contradictory, regardless of how simplistic the analysis may seem, the claim is necessarily false. For example, when someone asserts, “There is no such thing as truth,” the self-referentially contradictory nature of this claim is obvious. The claimant is asserting his claim as if it were true that there is no such thing as truth. The assertion self-destructs even though the analysis that points this out may seem simplistic. Undoubtedly the questions of the nature of truth and how one knows truth are complex questions. Notwithstanding the complexity of these issues, however, if a given claim is in fact self-referentially contradictory, it is necessarily false.[248]

It is popular in our culture to belie the universality of the logical principles of non-contradiction, excluded middle, and identity by appealing to the notion that Eastern thought does not operate on this basis nor acknowledge the validity of these principles. However, this is a blatant misrepresentation of the Eastern approach as evidence by the following quote from a book on Buddhist logic.

> The active part of consciousness, its spontaneity in cognition begins with an act of dichotomy. As soon as our intellectual eye begins to glimmer, our thought is already beset with contradiction. The moment our thought has stopped running and has fixed upon an external point, so as to be able internally to produce the judgment «this is blue», at that moment we have separated the universe of discourse into two unequal halves, the limited part of the blue and the less limited part of the non-blue. The definite thougt [*sic*] of the blue is nothing more than the definite exclusion of the non-blue . . . there is nothing intermediate.[249]

Figure 3: Yin-Yang



Of course, even if it were the case that proponents of Eastern thought were to deny the laws of logic, it would be necessary and unavoidable for them to employ the laws in order to deny them. The Yin is not the Yang, and the Yang is not the Yin. Even the small dot of the one in the other maintains the distinct identity of each from the other. If the brief analysis above is an accurate rendering of the state of affairs, then it highlights one significant distinction between preunderstanding (as this is generally understood in the literature), and these logical presuppositions. That point of distinction is the mutability of the one, and the immutability of the other. Though one's preunderstanding may in large part change, these logical presuppositions cannot.

Virtually all theorists assert that one's preunderstanding is and ought to be subject to change and development. As the interpreter interacts with an authoritative text, the interpreter must be willing to allow the text to indicate changes in his world view that would be inconsistent with the authoritative claims of the text. However, one cannot alter the basic laws of logic, because for any claim from any text to be intelligible to the human mind, that claim must necessarily be based on these very same laws. A text that asserts itself to be true, and yet asserts contradictory claims, is an unintelligible text.[250] The interpreter would be unable to know what the text is claiming.

If, for example, the Christian Scriptures claim that God changes and that He does not change in the same sense, then the contradictory nature of these claims would leave the interpreter in the dark as to what the text is claiming about God. It may be the case that God changes in some sense and that He does not change in some other sense, but for the text to claim that He changes and does not change in the same sense renders the text unintelligible. It would be logically

contradictory.

The Implications of Objective Presuppositions

If the previous analysis is correct, it would seem to be the case that some presuppositions are both unavoidable and immutable. This characteristic is sufficient to introduce a real distinction between the notion of preunderstanding, as it is popularly proposed, and these logical presuppositions. The term "presupposition" has a long and established use, and an effort to change or restrict its meaning would be a difficult if not an impossible task. Consequently, on the basis of this distinction observed between preunderstanding and these logical presuppositions, a provisional term will be introduced for purposes of our discussion.

The term "transcendental presupposition" (TP) will be stipulated as the term indicating a truth claim that is operative behind an assertion, whether consciously or unconsciously, that is immutable and undeniable, that transcends all world views, and that is necessarily the case for all world views. This means that, whether it is ultimately discovered that these transcendental presuppositions are restricted only to the three laws of logic, or whether other such transcendental presuppositions are uncovered, these TP's are objective in the sense that they are not subject to the dictates of any particular world view, or preunderstanding, or horizon of expectation, and, as presuppositions, they serve, along with an interpreter's whole world view, to mediate understanding and provide intelligibility. The possibility of TP's also reintroduces the possibility of a viable foundationalism, one that is not subject to the criticisms leveled against the Cartesian brand.

Additionally, the relationship between presuppositions and truth claims that was investigated earlier takes on significant implications in light of the existence of objective, transcendental presuppositions. The falsity of a presupposition seems to call into question the truth of any claim of which the false presupposition is a necessary presupposition. The existence of objective, transcendental presuppositions implies the possibility of adjudicating between preunderstandings or between world views. If TP's exist, then any world view that is built upon presuppositions that violate the requirements of the basic principles of logic, or other TP's, would be less desirable than a conflicting or contradictory world view whose necessary presuppositions do not violate these principles. If seemingly contradictory claims are made between the TP's and subsequent truth claims, the truth of such a world view will be legitimately called into question. Whether this analysis would be sufficient to conclude that a given world view is actually false may be undecidable for various reasons, but

when competing views are found to rest on presuppositions, the presuppositions of one being contradictory while those of the other are not contradictory, it becomes possible to choose between these competing views. For example, when world view *A* (which makes two necessary and crucial truth claims that are seemingly contradictory; such as, that God is three beings and that God is one being in the same sense) is compared with world view *B* (which makes two necessary and crucial truth claims that are not contradictory; such as, that in one sense God is three Persons, but in another sense He is one being), world view *B* should be reasonably favored over world view *A*. There may well be world views *C*, *D*, and *E* that also present truth claims, and logical analysis may not resolve every conflict; nevertheless, such analysis does offer one possibility for adjudication between world views, perspectives, and preconditional frameworks of understanding.

The same would hold true for interpretations within a single world view. For example, if interpretation *A* concluded that an authoritative text asserts contradictory truth claims while interpretation *B* concludes that the same authoritative text asserts claims that are not contradictory, *mutatis mutandis*, interpretation *B* would be preferred to interpretation *A*. Of course it may be the case that a given text simply does make contradictory claims, in which case an interpreter must find some reasonable way to come to a conclusion about which claim is true and which is false. This is not a counter example, however, since, if the text is actually making contradictory assertions, this is not a case of an interpretation concluding contradictory results. If a given text simply makes contradictory assertions, then the interpreter is not arriving at contradictory conclusions. Rather, the interpreter is concluding that the text itself makes such claims. It is not the case that the interpreter is at once concluding that it both does and does not make contradictory claims in the same sense. Much depends upon the distinction being made here between cases of contradictory conclusions by an interpreter and cases of contradictory claims of an authoritative text.

Assuming that a given author endeavors to make logically consistent claims (an assumption that is particularly relevant to an authoritative text), an interpretation that identifies this logical consistency will naturally be preferred to an interpretation that denies this consistency and arrives at contradictory conclusions as a result of interpretation. Conversely, if it can be shown that interpretation *A* in fact arrives at contradictory conclusions, or entails implications that are contradictory, then one can conclude that, *ceterus paribus*, this interpretation is unacceptable.

Admittedly, it will be necessary to work out further details and implications of this brief sketch, but, if it is the case that objective, transcendental

presuppositions do exist, they would provide 1) an objective starting point that transcends every world view and every network of preunderstanding, 2) a basis upon which one may arrive at objectively based interpretation, and 3) a standard by which one could adjudicate between some interpretations. Of course the mere existence of such TP's would not ensure that a given interpreter would inevitably achieve the desired end. Rather, the existence of such presuppositions would only indicate an objective *starting* point. They would not secure an infallible *conclusion*.

Nevertheless, the possibility of such presuppositions is nothing less than the possibility of an objective foundation for interpretation. Transcendental presuppositions, if such there are, would provide an objective starting point. An objective foundation, or starting point, for interpretation implies the possibility of objectivity per se. This also implies that TP's would play a fundamental role in interpretation. In other words, the existence of transcendental presuppositions implies a existence of a foundation of interpretation, and perhaps even a foundation for knowledge.

Conclusion

It must be stressed at this point that an objective starting point that transcends one's preunderstanding, as it is characterized in the literature, is entertained here only as a possibility at this point. However, the possibility of an objective starting point as an alternative approach seems naturally to arise from the preceding observations. On the basis of the methodology that is generally advocated in the literature, it is an approach that cannot be rejected *a priori* since theorists universally assert that no explanation exhaustively accounts for all of the data. Nevertheless, the possibility that an alternative approach may offer something closer to an exhaustive account of the data than other theories so far proposed is still an open question.

The possibility of an objective starting point does raise a question, however, about the nature of this starting point and its relation to one's preunderstanding. If such a starting point is not an aspect of one's preunderstanding, or is in some way distinct from it, then what could be its nature? Of what could such a starting point be composed? From where might one obtain indubitable presuppositions?

As we will see in the next chapter, almost all theorists identify various basic, fundamental, and foundational presuppositions. This may offer at least part of the answer to this question of whether TP's actually exist. The previous study has indicated that there is a distinction between preunderstanding and presuppositions that may allow some presuppositions to be considered as objective in nature. At this point, however, the nature of this starting point, if

such exists, is not clearly delineated.

The above considerations seem to have indicated that an objective starting point for interpretation is possible if in fact there are transcendental presuppositions (TPs). If the nature and existence of these transcendental presuppositions can be shown, there may in fact be a possibility of objectivity in interpretation. Additionally, it would seem that a denial of objectivity, either in terms of advocating or promoting relativism, or in terms of current views of historicity, opens one to the criticism of self-referential inconsistency. To indicate the possibility of an objective starting point, however, requires a more thorough investigation of the nature and role of presuppositions.

4 PRESUPPOSITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

Introduction

As we have seen, objectivity is under attack from many quarters and in many disciplines. This attack is principally based upon what seems to be the undeniable fact of the prior existing framework of understanding, what has been variously referred to as our presuppositions, our preunderstanding, our world view, and so on, and the insistence that these frameworks are necessarily incommensurable. Everyone encounters the world with his or her own point of view, perspective, or world view. This framework of understanding, these presuppositions, provides the intelligibility and meaning that the mind needs in order to make sense of the world. The fact that everyone has a framework, or set of presuppositions, seems to militate against a notion of objectivity in knowledge and understanding. No one is able to approach the world apart from a certain already existing perspective or set of presuppositions. There is, the current reasoning declares, no possibility of a neutral perspective. No one has a "God's eye view," or a "view from nowhere."

If it is the case that everyone encounters the world with his own perspective, then, as Nietzsche said, "No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations."[251] Such a conclusion bodes ill for Evangelical Christianity. Orthodox Christianity has long heralded a message predicated on the objectivity of truth that is based on an objectivity of meaning. Notwithstanding the many conflicting interpretations, Evangelicals have nevertheless traditionally held that there is a right way and a wrong way to understand the Bible. It would not be a surprise to an Evangelical Christian that the non-Christian community would reject the Evangelicals' claim that they have *the* truth about God, life, and the world. But certainly Evangelical writers would not follow the secular theorists in rejecting objectivity. But, if they do not follow the secular writers, if they do not reject objectivity in interpretation, how do they deal with what seems to be the undeniable fact of the prior framework or set of presuppositions of the interpreter? And, if it turns out that Evangelical writers are not able somehow to address what seems to be the unavoidable consequences of the framework of understanding, how can they then maintain a notion of objectivity in interpretation? Indeed, do they in fact even attempt to maintain such a notion? As we have seen, even most Evangelicals are either denying or retreating from the notion of objectivity in interpretation. In order to address these questions, it will be necessary to understand what is being talked about when the literature refers to presuppositions. This chapter will look at presuppositions and attempt to discover what the current literature says about what they are and how they

function.

Definitions of Presuppositions

A first step toward uncovering the nature and functions of presuppositions is to consider various definitions that have been given. This step is not without its controversies, however. For many theorists, the definition of "presupposition" or "presupposing" is directly tied to one's understanding of how presuppositions function. Additionally, since almost all theorists hold that no one interprets anything without the already present set of presuppositions, one must wonder how one's definition can be anything but a product of these very presuppositions. A survey of definitions may resolve this self-referential problem, so we will begin with definitions from sources that do not espouse a commitment to an Evangelical perspective, then we will survey definitions from the perspective of Evangelicals.[252]

Definitions from Non-evangelical Sources

According to the second edition of *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, to "presuppose" means, "to suppose or assume beforehand; to take for granted."[253] One reason for reflecting upon this particular dictionary entry is that in its definition of "presuppose," the dictionary uses the word "suppose." This may be evidence of the difficulty one confronts in attempting to define "presupposition." Unless the user of this dictionary understands the word "suppose," he will not be enlightened by the definition provided. Going to the entry "suppose" in this same dictionary, one finds more helpful information: "to assume to be true, as for the sake of argument or to illustrate a proof; to believe to be; to imagine; to think, to presume."[254]

The implication that comes from the association of these two entries is that a presupposition is simply an assumption, or a belief, or a thought, or some other *ens rationis*[255] (being of reason) that exists or is held prior to some other belief, thought, or claim. However, the definition of "presuppose" found here seems to raise more questions. Particularly acute is the need to understand the relationship between what is presupposed to that of which it is a presupposition. Of course, dictionary definitions are not necessarily designed to address this type of issue, but these definitions do provide a convenient starting point for our investigation. It is clear that a presupposition is at least some kind of rational "something" the is prior to some other rational "something." One may find that presuppositions encompass more that simply the rational in the strict sense, but they are not less than rational in the sense that they are in the mind and can be thought or thought

about. Also, it is clear that a presupposition is in some important way prior to some other thought, or belief, or rational entity, or mental event. The dictionary seems to imply that presuppositions are a class of or are a certain kind of supposition.

Up to a point, Ted Peters' definition of presuppositions follows the implications from the dictionary entries considered above. He holds, however, that presuppositions and suppositions are different. He asserts, "Presuppositions are different from suppositions and propositions. Presuppositions make suppositions possible, just as suppositions make further suppositions possible. Presuppositions are different because they do not rest upon prior suppositions, but rather derive from a more basic or foundational level of one's way of viewing things. Fundamental presuppositions refer us to the basic structure of one's experience with the world, and this structure makes articulation of that experience possible."[256]

Peters maintains that presuppositions are prior to suppositions. The dictionary defines "presupposition" as a certain kind of supposition. Seemingly, then, Webster's presuppositions are distinguished from suppositions simply because they are "prior to" suppositions. Peters claims that presuppositions "derive from a more basic or foundational level of one's way of viewing things," but he does not describe what form this "more basic or foundational level" takes. When he says, "Fundamental presuppositions refer us to the basic structure of one's experience with the world," he seems to be indicating that the notion of presuppositions should be divided into two categories—presuppositions and fundamental presuppositions. The fundamental presuppositions involve the "basic structure of one's experience with the world." By these statements, Peters seems to be describing experiencing *qua* experiencing, or perhaps one's "raw" experience which must be converted into some propositional form in order to be identified as a "fundamental presupposition."

Peters has added some helpful content, but it would seem that his observations leave some questions unanswered. For example, does the more basic or foundational level of one's way of viewing things consist of statements, or propositions, or is it an attitude or disposition of the mind? And, what form does the "basic structure of one's experience with the world" take? What Peters has contributed, however, is the notion that presuppositions are not simply "prior," but that they are or can be somehow more basic and foundational in nature. In some way, presuppositions seem to form the basis upon which suppositions rest.

In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Avrum Stroll approaches the question by defining the concept of "presupposing" in contrast to his understanding of the

nature of "contextual implication." Both presupposing and contextual implication have to do with the conditions that are logically prior to a statement. He writes,

> Presupposing is a concept referring to those conditions that must be satisfied before an utterance can count as a statement, or if "statement" is so defined that statements need be neither true nor false . . . then presupposing applies to those conditions that must be satisfied before statements can be either true or false. Contextual implication, on the other hand, is a concept that applies to those conditions that must be satisfied before an utterance can count as "normal" in the circumstances in which it is made—that is, it applies to those beliefs a speaker has when he makes the utterance he does in certain circumstances and which rule out that he is lying or deliberately deceiving someone.[257]

Stroll further distinguishes between "presupposing" and "contextual implication" by the differences in the "range of entities" to which each concept refers. Presuppositions are a range of entities relating to "either the class of statements as such or the class of those statements that are either true or false."[258] The range of entities referred to by contextual implication "is the class of beliefs held by the speaker (and, derivatively, by his auditors)."[259] The range of entities, which Stroll calls contextual implication, will be seen below to be closer to what evangelical hermeneuticians have identified as preunderstanding. It would seem from this description that Stroll understands presuppositions as "statements" or propositions. However, as we have seen from the assertions by Ted Peters, presuppositions may be described as more than simply a class of statements.

Nevertheless, Stroll has addressed the question of the relationship between presuppositions and statements in terms of truth and falsity. A presupposition is not simply prior to another statement, nor is it simply basic or fundamental. A presupposition also determines, in some sense, the truth or falsity of a statement for which it is a presupposition.

In *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, Antony Flew defines "presupposition" as follows: "An assumption that involves either a necessary or a contingent truth. If *p* is logically presupposed by *q* then it is a necessary truth that to deny the assumption *p* while asserting *q* would be a contradiction. Presuppositions that do not satisfy this requirement involve contingent truth."[260] Flew does not assert in his definition that presuppositions are *prior* assumptions. Rather, he simply asserts that they are assumptions. However, in his examples, he employs the term "presupposed" as if the reader already understands what it means to presuppose something. Additionally, Flew's example seems to indicate that presuppositions have at least a relation of "logical priority."

This raises the question of whether the relationship between

presuppositions and assertions are only logical in nature. This would also seem to imply that there are no metaphysical presuppositions and that presuppositions do not involve emotional or attitudinal aspects. Additionally, this raises the question of whether presuppositions may be chronologically prior but not logically prior, or perhaps logically prior but not chronologically prior. And, if presuppositions are logically prior, what does this say about a person's awareness of his own presuppositions? Must a person be aware of his presuppositions in order for them to function as presuppositions? Flew does not address these questions, but he does introduce the distinction between presuppositions that involve necessary truths and those that involve contingent truths. If a presupposition is necessarily assumed by a given statement, then, according to Flew, the falsity of the presupposition necessarily entails the falsity of the statement of which it is the necessary presupposition.

Robert Stalnaker addresses the question of the possibility that presuppositions might include something more than simply "statements." He asserts, "the presupposition relation cannot be explained solely in terms of the meaning or content of sentences, but must be explained partly in terms of facts about the users of sentences: their beliefs, intentions and expectations."[261] He goes on to define presuppositions as "propositions" or "background assumptions" which a speaker takes for granted or are used by a speaker. Stalnaker's definition and proposals will be considered more fully in dealing with the function of presuppositions. However, even at the level of definition one can see that Stalnaker has included more in the notion of presuppositions than that they are simply statements. In fact, later in this same article he claims that a presupposition is a kind of attitude: "First, whatever the details of the definition, it is clear that a presupposition is a propositional attitude. More specifically, it is an attitude of accepting something to be true."[262] Since truth is predicated of propositions, this would seem to indicate that a presupposition is an attitude of assenting to the truth of a proposition. Stalnaker is emphasizing the attitude more than the proposition, but he is not denying that the object of this assent is a statement—a proposition. Hence, whether one defines "presupposition" in terms of the acceptance of the truth of a proposition, or the proposition itself, presuppositions still seem to involve statements or truth-claims.

Paul Larreya defines presuppositions in what seems to be an even more broad category. He says that a presupposition involves "the information the speaker assumes *or pretends to assume* to be known to himself and the addressee."[263] Larreya is interacting with a proposal by M. A. K. Halliday and Ray S. Jackendoff that "presuppositions" should be defined as, "the information

the speaker assumes to be known to himself and the addressee."[264] In other words, these theorists have defined "presuppositions" as "known or given" information in contrast to "new" information. Larreya objects that often, "in order to produce particular effects, the speaker does not respect what might be called the rules of the game: he uses the syntactic or lexical forms of presupposition (which normally convey 'known' information) with a view to transmitting 'new' information."[265] Larreya does not propose to dispense with the original definition, but to modify it to include the possibility that presuppositions may be information which the speaker pretends is known to his addressee, but may in fact be new information for the addressee. Whether presuppositions should be considered as known or new information, Larreya seems to understand their nature to be statements or propositions or truth-claims or what can be loosely identified as "information."

In his article, "Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich?" Rudolf Bultmann does not define the term "presupposition" (*Voraussetzung*), but describes the kinds of presuppositions that relate to exegesis. However, according to Anthony Thiselton's analysis, Bultmann's notion of pre-understanding includes more than simply the rational: "Bultmann actually uses Schleiermacher's term, or here especially *Dilthey's* term 'pre-understanding' (*Vorverstndnis*). For Dilthey himself, whose work Bultmann is discussing, this preliminary to understanding is a relation to *life*, as it was also to be for the later Wittgenstein. My pre-conceptual relation in life to music, to mathematics, to law, or to love, would both influence, and provide operative conditions for, how I came to understand texts of music, mathematics, law, poems, or letters or declarations of love."[266]

Bultmann's idea is that a presupposition involves a pre-conceptual relation to life, or as Bultmann puts it, a "life-connection" (*Lebenszusammenhang*).[267] Bultmann identifies undesirable presuppositions as "dogmatic prejudice"[268] (*dogmatischen Vorurteilen*), and he identifies other presuppositions, such as one's biases and habits, or gifts and weaknesses, as inevitable but capable of being "held off" (*ausschalten*) by the exegete. The "historical method of interrogating the text" (*die historische Methode in der Befragung der Texte*) is a presupposition which he asserts cannot be dismissed (*unabdingliche*).[269]

According to Thiselton's analysis of Bultmann,[270] the terms "presupposition" and "preunderstanding" can be understood to be synonymous and can encompass more than propositions, or attitudes, or beliefs. Presuppositions and preunderstanding encompass all that entails one's relationship to life. Presuppositions are not only conceptual, then, but as pre-conceptual, they seem to be determinative of one's conceptions in that they

include one's very connection with life and the world.

In summary, the non-evangelical sources reviewed so far seem to agree that presuppositions are properly understood to be prior to statements or beliefs. They can be propositions, or attitudes. They can have a logical relation to other rational entities such as statements or beliefs. They can be related to other statements as the necessary truths upon which other propositions rest, or they can be contingent truths which do not have a necessary relation to other statements. Presuppositions can be conceptual or pre-conceptual. Also, the term "presupposition" is sometimes used synonymously with the term "preunderstanding."

John Lyons also understands presuppositions to be more than simply propositions or statements. He observes that, "Most of the definitions of presupposition to be found in the recent literature take the presuppositions of an utterance to be a set of propositions."[271] Lyons goes on to discuss the notion of presuppositions as "conditions that must be satisfied before the utterance can be used felicitously to perform its function as a statement, a question, a promise, a request, etc."[272] This notion of presupposition involves certain "felicity-conditions of an utterance." A consideration of what constitutes "felicity-conditions" will be taken up in the consideration of types of presuppositions, but it is significant to point out that "the felicity-conditions of an utterance need not be described as propositions to whose truth the speaker subscribes, though they can be, and frequently are, so described."[273] In other words, Lyons points out that presuppositions are not necessarily conditions which must be held as true by a speaker. A speaker could make an assertion for which its presupposition is not believed to be true simply for the purpose of illustration or argument.

Definitions from Evangelical Sources

Of the Evangelical books on hermeneutics that consider the role of presuppositions in interpretation, the investigations are generally quite extensive. However, there seems to be a tendency of neglecting to provide a working definition of the term "presupposition." Accordingly, these investigations seem to imply that a presupposition can be almost anything that is a part of the whole pre-condition of interpretation from one's doctrinal system, to one's philosophical system, to one's attitude and personal spiritual condition. For example, Grant Osborne says, "The primary barrier to a valid interpretation is, as already stated, one's preunderstanding."[274] He then refers to preunderstanding as a "presupposed system."[275] So, preunderstanding seems to be something that can be presupposed. In fact, in his effort to distinguish between "presupposition" and

“prejudice,” the terms “presupposition” and “preunderstanding” seem to become interchangeable: “I must distinguish ‘presupposition’ from ‘prejudice.’ The key is to follow Ricoeur’s suggestion and place ourselves ‘in front of’ rather than ‘behind’ the text, so that the text can have priority. This allows us to determine which types of preunderstanding are valid and which are not, as the text challenges, reshapes and directs our presuppositions.”[276]

In this statement, Osborne seems to indicate that either presuppositions and preunderstanding are synonymous, or presuppositions are a subcategory of preunderstanding. Either way, he claims that by placing ourselves in front of the text, we allow the text to evaluate our preunderstanding so that our presuppositions can be challenged and reshaped. Later he identifies various kinds of presuppositions, but he does not offer a definition of the term “presupposition.” He seems to assume that the reader understands what presuppositions are. Like so many evangelical hermeneuticians, Osborne provides descriptions and examples of presuppositions rather than attempting to give an analytic definition. Osborne has shown that presuppositions are subject to change or modification.

Robertson McQuilkin begins chapter one of his book on hermeneutics with the assertion, “The basic presupposition about the Bible that distinguishes believers from unbelievers is that the Bible is God’s revelation of Himself and of His will for man.”[277] McQuilkin quotes from Ernest Best who gives the following explanation about presuppositions: “Each of us approaches Scripture with his own, or her own presuppositions. These presuppositions are part of our world view, part of our personal theology.”[278] McQuilkin then spends the rest of the first chapter delineating the presuppositions that he advocates. He does not define the term itself, but he does provide descriptions of the kinds of presuppositions which he believes should be a part of an interpreter’s world view as he approaches the Scripture.

From McQuilkin’s descriptions the reader can learn some things about his understanding of presuppositions. He delineates several presuppositions that are spiritual in nature. A believer will hold the presupposition of the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible, and that the Bible, though divine, is also natural in character. That is to say, the believer will come to the biblical text with the presupposition that it is “a human communication, using language in its common sense.”[279] What these descriptions indicate is that sometimes, the conclusions of some propositions or activities may become the presuppositions of other propositions or activities.

In his book on science and hermeneutics, Vern Poythress asserts that one

must become aware of his presuppositions: “First, it is valuable for an exegete or a theologian to be aware of the role of basic commitments or presuppositions in the formation of knowledge.”[280] According to Poythress, these basic commitments are “fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world.”[281] Prompted by the claims of Thomas Kuhn, Poythress acknowledges the inevitability of presuppositions, and he asserts that there are “fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world”[282] which form the background for exegesis and theological reflection.

A problem arises, however, concerning the precise definition of “presupposition” or “basic commitment.” According to Poythress, basic commitments play a role in the “formation of knowledge.” However, this seems to imply that the presuppositions *qua* presuppositions are not a part of the knowledge which they “form” since that which forms would seem to be distinct from that which it forms. Poythress asserts that these presuppositions are “fundamental assumptions,” but this seems to conflict with the notion that presuppositions, if they are not the knowledge formed, can be assumptions since assumptions indicate knowledge assumed. If presuppositions are knowledge assumed, and knowledge is formed by basic commitments, then how were the basic commitments formed? This seems to lead to an infinite regress of commitments formed by prior assumptions which are themselves commitments formed by prior assumptions, etc.

Poythress would certainly not be so easily entangled, but the discussion provided does not seem to address the questions that it raises. There is an informality in the discussion that tends to foster confusion in the definition. One is not clear on the relationships between the various aspects of knowledge, assumptions, and commitments. In the next paragraph Poythress implies that basic commitments include “standards of evaluation, whether these be explicit or implicit.”[283] Although a precise definition is absent, he does provide a lengthy description of various presuppositions so that the reader is able to get a general idea from the examples provided what the author means when he talks about basic commitments or presuppositions.

He does add to the notion of presuppositions that a knowledge of one’s own presuppositions is a prerequisite for exegesis. Additionally, Poythress associates the presence of presuppositions with the question of neutrality. He asserts that at the level of evaluating one’s methods and results, “there can be no neutrality.”[284] This stems from the fact, according to Poythress, that “not everyone cherishes the same values or the same standards!”[285] This would also seem to imply that, for Poythress, presuppositions include one’s value system as well as

propositions, attitudes, and other rational entities.

Moisés Silva seems to equate presuppositions with one's "prior framework": "Whether we mean to or not, and whether we like it or not, all of us read the text as interpreted by our theological presuppositions. Indeed, the most serious argument against the view that exegesis should be done independently of systematic theology is that such a view is hopelessly naive. The very possibility of understanding anything depends on our prior framework of interpretation. If we perceive a fact that makes sense to us, the simple reason is that we have been able to fit that fact into the whole complex of ideas that we have previously assimilated."[286]

Silva does not provide a definition, although, like other evangelical writers, he does provide descriptions. For Silva, presuppositions seem to constitute a "prior framework of interpretation" through which all understanding takes place. In another place Silva asks the question, "Could it be that it is impossible to shed our presuppositions precisely because it is they that mediate understanding?"[287]

Silva's description might also raise the question of an infinite regress of complex ideas. In his discussion there is no attempt to identify what might constitute a "first idea," or whether such a thing exists. The claim that each fact makes sense only against the whole complex of ideas that has already been assimilated leaves one with the unanswered question about how the process begins.

In *The Art of Biblical History*, V. Philips Long maintains that "fundamental assumptions, presuppositions, premises, beliefs, worldview, model of reality and so forth" are many different terms for the same concept.[288] These presuppositions or this world view includes "fundamental assumptions about the world and reality" and are at the "fundamental level."[289] An interpreter's world view includes his "basic intellectual and spiritual commitments ('how he or she sees the world') . . ."[290] Long's discussions provide a rich supply of descriptions and examples, and he comes much closer to actually providing a definition.

However, to say that one's world view is his "model of reality" does not provide a precise definition. It is not clear whether this confines one's world view to what a person consciously models. Also, Long pours all these terms into the broad concept of "worldview" and goes from there, and yet he provides no explanation to account for the rise of so many terms to describe the same concept. These different terms may simply be describing different aspects of one's whole world view. Long does not deal with this issue however. This raises questions about the differences, no matter how subtle, between the referents of these various terms. This is not to suggest that true synonymity is not possible,

but if there are differences, what are the relationships between these concepts?

Millard Erickson defines presuppositions specifically as they relate to the task of interpretation. He asserts, “A presupposition is a conception brought to the task of interpretation. It is a prior belief held as one of the givens within which the task of interpretation occurs. It is part of the very framework of the interpreter.”[291] Here again presuppositions are understood in terms of statements or concepts. Erickson indicates that presuppositions are a “part” of the framework of the interpreter, but he does not address the question of what constitutes the other part or parts of one’s framework.

This raises a host of questions which were obviously not within the scope of Erickson’s task. What are the other aspects of one’s mental framework which are not identified as presuppositions? Are the other parts of one’s framework not identified as presuppositions because they are not statements or beliefs? If they are not statements or beliefs, what are they? And, are these other aspects prior to interpretation? What is the relationship between one’s presuppositions and the other aspects of one’s framework?

Anthony Thiselton maintains that the term “horizon” offers an advantage over the more popular term “presupposition.” By “horizon” he indicates “a space within which the text can be intelligibly ‘slotted’ in terms of provisional linkages with the familiar that allow[s] patterns of recognition.”[292] Yet one’s horizons include a “realization that what seems familiar is not quite what I had expected or assumed it to be,” and this realization “necessitates an expansion of my horizons to make room for what is new.”[293] By contrast, Thiselton asserts that, “the term ‘presupposition’ seems to suggest a different flavour. It conveys the impression of rooted beliefs and doctrines which are not only cognitive and conceptual, but which also can only be changed and revised with pain, or at least with difficulty.”[294]

Whereas “presupposition” indicates “rooted beliefs and doctrines which are only cognitive and conceptual,” the term “horizon” introduces the notion that some existential “prior” condition or state exists which must be understood in terms of one’s being or one’s nature. In other words, Thiselton seems to be advocating a way of being which is prior to a way of knowing and that presuppositions are confined to the “cognitive and conceptual,”—the way of knowing.

In summary, from Evangelical sources one might conclude that virtually the only common thread that ties together all the different notions of presupposition is that they all propose that presuppositions are prior to interpretation (and/or perhaps to affirmations of beliefs) and invariably form a basis, or framework, or

state of being on the basis of which statements are made, beliefs are held, or actions are performed. Lyons offers a helpful summary statement about presuppositions when he says that "what is presupposed is what the speaker takes for granted and assumes that the addressee will take for granted as part of the contextual background."[295]

From this summary it may be inferred that presuppositions take the form of propositions, or attitudes, or states of being, or whatever might be the relevant background to the truthfulness or meaningfulness of utterances or acts. If a satisfying definition of "presupposition" seems elusive, it may be that presuppositions are basic in their nature and do not admit of analysis—for that which is most basic cannot be broken down or analyzed into more basic components, which is the nature of analysis. Perhaps presuppositions are the starting point of thought such that one cannot get behind them. This would account for the frequent recurrence of the adjectives "basic" or "fundamental" in the discussions of presuppositions. Consequently, one may not be able to provide a definition *per se*, but may be able to provide only a description. Nevertheless, this broad notion of what presuppositions are (and that they always influence knowledge, beliefs, and understanding) is sufficient for the moment to move on to a consideration of the various types of presuppositions and their functions in thought and life.

Nevertheless, there are some features that seem to be universally held by Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals: 1) Presuppositions are inevitable and inescapable; 2) presuppositions are primarily rational in nature existing as statements, beliefs, assumptions about the world, life, etc.; 3) the presence of presuppositions necessarily and unavoidably form the basic framework through which anyone understands and grasps meaning; and 4) the conceptual framework composed in whole or in part of fundamental or basic presuppositions necessarily obviates the possibility of neutrality.

Types and Functions of Presuppositions

Types of Presuppositions

Types of Presuppositions Discussed in Non-evangelical Sources

Closely tied to the various definitions of presuppositions are the claims about the various types of presuppositions. Schematizing or categorizing the various types of presuppositions has not taken a uniform pattern. One approach is to classify them in terms of whether they are basic or derivative. Ted Peters seems to take this approach:

> Presuppositions, it would seem, come in at least two varieties: fundamental or ultimate

> presuppositions and those which are dependent upon them. The latter variety are articulable as suppositions or propositions themselves, and they can become so through drawing out the necessary conditions implied by existing propositions. To state, for example, that "the president is a Republican" presupposes that there exists an office of the presidency, that the man who fills this office truly exists, and other such contingent facts which may also be articulated in propositional form. Of course, once the presupposition is articulated, by definition, it ceases to be a *pre*-supposition and becomes a supposition.[296]

So, presuppositions, according to Peters, are either fundamental or derivative. But, *pre*-suppositions must be distinguished from suppositions, as Peters goes on to explain.

> But fundamental or ultimate presuppositions are different. They resist being made into suppositions or propositions. They function to provide the basic framework or pre-understanding which make reflective understanding and articulated propositions possible. They refer us to our fundamental vision of reality and the self-evident truths which are tacitly acknowledged in everything we comprehend and assert. They can be pointed to as ostensively present but cannot themselves be fully drawn up into propositional form. It is this character of standing in the background like a horizon that makes such a presupposition what it is.[297]

Why do fundamental or ultimate presuppositions resist being made into suppositions or propositions? It would seem that this resistance is due to the fact that for a presupposition to be fundamental or ultimate it must not be based on or derive from other more basic assumptions. These fundamental presuppositions have to do with the "fundamental vision of reality." But, fundamental presuppositions, according to Peters, only "refer us to" our fundamental vision of reality. It would seem that one's fundamental "vision of reality," by virtue of it being something to which fundamental presuppositions "refer" may be more basic than these fundamental presuppositions. Additionally, Peters seems to be saying that in the same way fundamental presuppositions "refer us to" this vision of reality, they also "refer us to . . . the self-evident truths which are tacitly acknowledged in everything we comprehend and assert." This confusion may arise from the difficulty of explaining the nature of fundamental presuppositions without implying a specific content. Fundamental presuppositions "refer us to" this vision of reality because the vision of reality may be in need of being converted into a propositional form in order to be conceptualized.

Peter's analysis does raise the question of the relationship between self-evident truths and fundamental presuppositions, a relationship which he does not clarify. It would seem to follow that they are distinct in the way that which refers is distinct from that to which it refers. The direction of reference is also unclear. One is not sure whether these fundamental presuppositions refer down to the fundamental vision of reality and to self-evident truths, in which case this vision

and these truths are more fundamental than the presuppositions, or whether the fundamental presuppositions refer up to this vision and these truths, in which case one wonders what constitutes a fundamental presupposition. If a fundamental presupposition is neither a fundamental vision of reality nor a self-evident truth, then what is it?

That Peters entertains a distinction between fundamental presuppositions and self-evident truths seems to be further indicated by his definition of axioms. He says, "Hypotheses and axioms could be classified as non-fundamental or non-ultimate presuppositions. . . . An axiom is a basic assumption, usually conceived as self-evident, and from which certain consequences can be rationally deduced and conclusions drawn by logical necessity. However, axioms are articulated and function as a link in a rational chain with theorems and other axioms. But because they are drawn from basic self-evidence, they come closer than hypotheses to fundamental presuppositions."[298]

An axiom, according to Peters, is conceived as self-evident but is also said to be "drawn from basic self-evidence." Peters does not say whether self-evidence is something more basic than an axiom. It would seem that according to this scheme, self-evidence is distinct from axiom as that which is drawn is distinct from that from which it is drawn. If, however, an axiom is *self*-evident, does this not imply that it is not evident by anything other than *itself*? It would seem that Peters' descriptions and categories are at best confusing and at worst confused. The category of "fundamental presuppositions" has lost all identifying characteristics other than the fact that they are fundamental or ultimate. They do not appear to be axioms, or hypotheses, or self-evident truths, or fundamental visions of reality, or suppositions, or propositions, or any other identifiable thing.

Another classification of presuppositions is made by John Lyons' felicity conditions. Felicity-conditions are "conditions that must be satisfied before an utterance can be used felicitously."[299] These conditions are classified by John Lyons into three main heads. They involve preparatory conditions in which "the person performing the [speech] act must have the right or authority to do so."[300] They involve sincerity conditions, in which case, "If the person performing the act does so insincerely . . . his illocutionary act will not be nullified, but he will be guilty of what Austin calls an abuse."[301] Felicity conditions also involve essential conditions in which case "the person performing the act is committed by the illocutionary force of his utterance to certain beliefs or intentions; and, if he thereafter produces an utterance which is inconsistent with these beliefs or conducts himself in a way that is incompatible with the intentions to which he is committed, he may be judged guilty of a breach of commitment."[302] According

to Lyons, “This view of presupposition has the advantage that it provides a unified and theoretically motivated account of most of what has been considered, pre-theoretically, to be the case of presupposition.”[303] So, instead of asserting that a proposition presupposes the truth of some prior proposition, it claims that a proposition “presupposes that a certain event took place.”[304] Difficulties relating to the functions of presuppositions, which shall be considered later, are supposedly obviated by understanding presuppositions to be more than simply propositions.

One possible shortcoming of this approach, however, is that it does not seem to address the question of the possibility that some presuppositions should be considered more fundamental than or foundational to others. Additionally, it would seem that felicity conditions are themselves based on more fundamental assumptions about the nature of authority, what constitutes a belief a “certainty,” and how to evaluate consistency between claims and beliefs. In other words, felicity conditions do not *prima facie* admit of being basic or fundamental, but themselves seem to be built on other assumptions which provide identity and meaning to what constitutes conditions. Of course the objection may be raised that something more fundamental is not necessary. However, whether something more fundamental is or is not necessary is a question that is not addressed by the felicity conditions. Other than the claim that they are presuppositions, nothing is proposed that would argue for or against the need for more fundamental assumptions. Consequently, one is left with the question, “Are these conditions *the* basis for thought and speech?”

Jonathan Culler points out that linguists distinguish presuppositions into the categories of logical and pragmatic. He observes, “In discussing the presuppositions at work in a natural language linguists find it convenient to distinguish between *logical* and *pragmatic* presupposition.”[305] Culler seems to adopt this distinction, and identifies logical presuppositions as “what must be true in order that a proposition be either true or false. . . . An explicit definition of logical presupposition is as follows: ‘A sentence S logically presupposes a sentence S' just in case S logically implies S' and the negation of S, ~S, also logically implies S'.’”[306] Pragmatic presuppositions, according to Culler, “are defined not on the relations between sentences but on the relations between utterance and situation of utterance. . . . That is, the context must be such as to allow one to interpret the utterance as the kind of speech act which it is.”[307] So, the command to *Open the door* “presupposes, pragmatically, the presence, in a room with a door that is not open, of another person who understands English and is in a relation to the speaker which enables him to interpret this as a request

or command."[308]

Edward Keenan, in an article titled, "Two Kinds of Presuppositions in Natural Language," employs the same distinction between presuppositions that Jonathan Culler delineates. Keenan is primarily concerned with the relationship of presuppositions to meaningful sentences. He takes a general notion of presuppositions and then considers them under these two kinds (literal and non-literal): "In general I want to consider that the presuppositions of a sentence are those conditions that the world must meet in order for the sentence to make literal sense. Thus if some such condition is not met, for some sentence S, then either S makes no sense at all or else it is understood in some nonliteral way, for example as a joke or metaphor."[309]

Keenan holds that presuppositions are the conditions which must be met in order for the sentence to make literal sense. Consequently, for the logical notion of presupposition, if the presupposition S' is not true, and if S' is the necessary presupposition of sentence S, then, according to Keenan, "S can be neither true nor false (and must in the formal logic be assigned a third or 'nonsense' value)."[310] The pragmatic notion is defined by Keenan as "the relation between the utterance of a sentence and the context in which it is uttered."[311]

Classifying presuppositions by kind has been carried to a more precise degree by Paul Larreya. He identifies four categories: "(I) 'logical' (sometimes called 'semantic') . . . (ii) 'pragmatic' . . . (iii) the 'illocutionary' . . . (iv) 'informationist.'"[312] In his analysis, Larreya concentrates on the informationist category and does not expound on the other categories. But, his classification roughly follows Culler's and Keenan's with reference to the logical and the pragmatic. The illocutionary category of presuppositions has to do with the relation of presuppositions to speech acts, which has been briefly considered in the references from John Lyons about felicity conditions and speech acts. The informationist category, on which Larreya concentrates, has been touched on under "Definitions" in the previous section of this chapter.

A final means of classification of the types of presuppositions derives from the speculative philosophy of Martin Heidegger as this has been integrated into the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer speaks of prejudice (*Vorurteile*) rather than the more recognizable and less emotionally laden English term "presupposition." As Gadamer explains, "It can be shown that the concept of prejudice (*Vorurteile*) did not originally have the meaning we have attached to it. Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial

directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases (*Neigung*) or our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us."[313]

Gadamer's account of the nature of prejudice introduces a decidedly ontological sense. Thus far the classification of presuppositions has been in terms of the cognitive in the sense of the logical or informationist, or in terms of the psychological in the sense of pragmatic context or felicity-conditions. What Gadamer seems to introduce is the possibility that interpretation is based, at least in part, on the way one exists in relation to the world. As he asserts, "In *Being and Time* [Heidegger] gave the general hermeneutical problem a concrete form in the question of being (*Seinsfrage*)."[314] The ontological nature of "prejudice" (*Vorurteile*) and its relation to "preunderstanding" (*Vorverstndnis*) in Gadamer in particular and phenomenological hermeneutics in general will be taken up later. At present it is sufficient to introduce the idea that presuppositions have been categorized in terms of the ontological conditions of the interpreter as well as cognitive or psychological aspects of the presuppositions themselves.

However, the concept of ontology or "being" in Heidegger is understood in a phenomenological sense rather than a metaphysical sense. Consequently, the reference to the question of being is not a question of extra-mental existence in a realist sense. The ontological characteristic of prejudice, though discussed in terms that have historically been employed in metaphysics, are redefined and reinterpreted in the wake of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological method.

Types of Presuppositions Discussed in Evangelical Sources

Another approach to classifying the types of presuppositions is to think of them in terms of their content. For example, Grant R. Osborne states, "Presuppositions can be external (philosophical or theological starting points) or internal (personality, pressure to publish) but must be recognized and taken into account when studying the text. My basic point is that they *can* be identified."[315] This would seem to indicate that presuppositions may not be only theoretical in nature, in the sense that they may not be abstract in content. Rather, they may also be psychological in the sense of one's attitude or emotional state.

Still another approach to identifying the types of presuppositions is to classify them according to these kinds (theological, philosophical, and methodological) as Millard Erickson does: "There are *theological* presuppositions. These are doctrinal beliefs, such as the nature of God, or of man, which affect the understanding of specific passages. There are also

philosophical presuppositions. These are conceptions shared with other disciplines or pertaining to broader topics than the strictly theological or religious. Here are beliefs about truth, meaning, the nature and direction of history, etc. Finally there are *methodological* presuppositions. These pertain to the use of logic, inference, induction and deduction, and the like."[316]

Erickson's classifications seem to include presuppositions that have to do with theory and those that have to do with practice. Theological presuppositions are identified by the content of which they are composed, while methodological presuppositions are identified by the practices which are performed. Indeed, others have taken this mixed approach to the nature of presuppositions and classified them according to these two categories, theory and practice. One might distinguish between the theoretical and the practical in terms of the consciously held and the unconsciously held assumptions as does Vern Poythress: "Presuppositions include not only consciously held philosophical assumptions but unconsciously assumed elements of one's world view. These are one's basic commitments."[317]

In his article entitled "The Presuppositions of the Historical-Grammatical Method as Employed by Historic Lutheranism," Raymond Surburg discusses fifteen "presuppositions" which he asserts were held by the historic Lutheran interpreters. Briefly these are: 1) the Bible is the Word of God in its entirety; 2) recognition of only the canonical books as Scripture; 3) only the text in the original languages was determinative; 4) the Bible was the supreme and final authority in theological matters; 5) the literal meaning was the usual and normal one; 6) the *autograph* text is the authoritative text; 7) the biblical books were literary documents which allowed for literary criticism; 8) the Holy Scriptures constituted a unity; 9) Scripture can be used to interpret Scripture; 10) the autograph text was inerrant; 11) centrality of justification by faith as the chief article of the biblical revelation; 12) the entire Bible is Christocentric; 13) the fundamental doctrines of Law and Gospel should not be confused; 14) the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of the Bible; and 15) the Scriptures are profitable according to the declaration in 2 Tim. 3:16.[318] It is not necessary to enter into any consideration of the accuracy of Surburg's claims. Rather, the point is to consider these propositions in terms of their identification as presuppositions. Some sound more like hermeneutical principles rather than presuppositions upon which hermeneutical principles were built. But, as has been seen above, what constitutes a presupposition does not seem to enjoy a universally agreed upon identity by philosophers or hermeneuticians. In the same way that definitions lacked any uniformity among theorists, so the classifications and identifications

of the types of presuppositions lacks uniformity.

Functions of Presuppositions

The question of the function of presuppositions has become a complex and controversial debate over the relation between statements, sentences, speech acts, beliefs, etc., and their respective presuppositions. The debate is conducted most rigorously among linguists who are trying to develop a general notion of the presupposition relation—that is, the relationship between presuppositions and the propositions, beliefs, assertions, etc., that are based upon them—and how this enables the linguist or semanticist to explain the different roles that the same words can play in different sentences. As David Cooper characterizes it, "Unless we make a distinction between assertion and presupposition, it is impossible to see why, for example, questions will be interpreted differently with respect to what it is they call in question."[319] Of course, as was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, philosophers have been interested in presuppositions, or assumptions, almost since Thales predicted the eclipse.[320] However, in the writings of Evangelicals on the question of presuppositions, the presupposition relation is discussed in terms of hermeneutical methodology. Consequently, this investigation will concentrate on the philosophical and linguistic debate, and the positions of Evangelicals on the presupposition relation will be considered under the section dealing with presuppositions and hermeneutical methodology.

An Overview of the Various Views on the Presuppositional Relation

In current thinking a distinction is made between "presupposing" and "presupposition." The former has to do with the act or attitude one has, while the latter concerns the thing itself. The act of presupposing is considered in the discipline of linguistics as well as in the area of philosophical semantics. However, John Post's analysis seems to bring into question the whole idea of "presupposing" as being an act of thought. He writes,

> With a few clearly definable exceptions, 'presuppose' typically has the following properties. Perhaps the most striking is the lack of a plausible imperative. It sounds very odd to tell someone 'Presuppose that there is a king of France' or 'Presuppose that John has children.' This contrasts strongly with the frequent and important imperative use of the root verb 'suppose.' . . . 'Presuppose' typically has no performative use. It sounds odd to say 'I (hereby) presuppose that there is a king of France' . . . 'Presuppose' has no adverbial use, unlike its root-verb 'suppose.' For 'suppose' the adverb 'supposedly' has frequent and important use, but 'presupposedly' is not even a word. . . . Finally, it appears that in spite of its frequent personal use, 'presuppose' typically does not denote an act; it is not an act-verb.[321]

Post's analysis seems to indicate that presupposing is not an act but is a condition. As he explains, "The verb 'presuppose' functions primarily to comment on acts, often but not always speech acts; and a presupposition is best construed as a necessary condition of the proper performance of an act."[322] If we provisionally accept Post's conclusion, this leads into the more prominent controversy on the relation between a presupposition and a proposition, and the truth-value of the presupposition(s) as it relates to the truth-value of the proposition of which it is the presupposition.

According to Robert Stalnaker, the notion of the presupposition relation that has become the "standard account of presupposition which has been given by philosophers and linguists"[323] originated with P. F. Strawson in his article "On Referring,"[324] and later in his book, *Introduction to Logical Theory*, first published in 1952. In that work, Strawson provided the following definition of "presupposition":

> For if a statement S presupposes a statement S' in the sense that the truth of S' is a precondition of the truth-or-falsity of S, then of course there will be a kind of logical absurdity in conjoining S with the denial of S'. This is precisely the relation in our imagined case, between the statement that all John's children are asleep (S) and the statement that John has children, that there exist children of John's (S'). . . . What I am proposing, then, is this. There are many ordinary sentences beginning with such phrases as 'All . . .', 'All the . . .', 'No . . .', 'None of the . . .', 'Some . . .', 'Some of the . . .', 'At least one . . .', 'At least one of the . . .' which exhibit, in their standard employment, parallel characteristics to those I have just described in the case of a representative 'All . . .' sentence. That is to say, the existence of members of the subject-class is to be regarded as presupposed (in the sense described) by statements made by the use of these sentences; to be regarded as a necessary condition, not of the truth simply, but of the truth or falsity, of such statements.[325]

Stalnaker summarizes Strawson's definition as follows: "According to this standard account, one sentence presupposes another just in case the latter must be true in order that the former have a truth value at all."[326] As Stalnaker points out, this has become the standard view of presupposition which he identifies as the "semantic" notion.

Since Strawson's work, several different views on the nature of presuppositions have been developed. Strawson was offering a criticism of Bertrand Russell's analysis of complex statements such as (1) *The King of France is bald*. According to Russell, the proposition expressed in (1) is roughly equivalent to the statement, (2) *There is one, and only one, King of France and he is bald*.[327] However, since there was no king of France when Russell made this analysis, the proposition asserted by (1) was considered by Russell to be false. Russell held that (1) was false since the existential proposition, (3) *There is*

a King of France, was false.[328] Consequently, anyone asserting the proposition (1) would be asserting a false proposition if France had no king.

Strawson's opposition to Russell's analysis was predicated on the claim that Russell had failed to distinguish between the assertion and its presupposition. Strawson proposed that existential propositions such as expressed in (3) are to be considered necessary conditions "not of the truth simply, but of the truth or falsity."[329] In other words, if (3) is true or false, then (1) is true or false accordingly; but if there is no king of France, then the existential presupposition is not satisfied, and (1) of which (3) is the existential presupposition, is neither true nor false. That is to say, (1) has no truth-value.

Other philosophers and linguists have entered the fray making modifications of the various positions to support their claims. For example, some have claimed that the truth-value of (1) is neither-true-nor-false. As John Lyons observes, "What these various theories of presupposition have in common, despite these differences, is their acceptance of the principle that if *p* is a necessary condition of the truth of both *q* and ~*q*, then *p* is a presupposition of *q*."[330]

Stalnaker offers an alternative to the various semantic theories with what he identifies as a *pragmatic* notion. As he explains,

> According to the contrasting idea that I will focus on, the basic presupposition relation is not between propositions or sentences, but between a person and a proposition. A person's presuppositions are the propositions whose truth he takes for granted, often unconsciously, in a conversation, an inquiry, or a deliberation. They are the background assumptions that may be used without being spoken— sometimes without being noticed—for example as suppressed premisses in an enthymematic argument, or as implicit directions about how a request should be fulfilled or a piece of advice taken.[331]

Stalnaker considers presuppositions to be a matter of the propositional attitude of the person making an assertion or offering a truth-claim. The definition he offers is supported by his examination of various examples. He provides what he calls a "rough definition": "A speaker presupposes that *P* at a given moment in a conversation just in case he is disposed to act, in his linguistic behavior, as if he takes the truth of *P* for granted, and as if he assumes that his audience recognizes that he is doing so."[332] He explains the phrase "acting as if" by an example in which a speaker makes an assertion that both he and his audience know to be false or to be in doubt, but which is accepted for the purposes of the conversation.

Stalnaker is not rejecting the semantic notion of presuppositions. As he asserts,

> Now as linguists use the term, it is *sentences* that have presuppositions. Although according to the notion I have sketched it is persons, and not sentences, that have presuppositions in the primary sense, we may say that a sentence has a presupposition in a derivative sense just in case the use of the sentence would *for some reason* normally be inappropriate unless the speaker presupposed a particular proposition. In such a case, I will say that a sentence *requires* a presupposition. This notion of presupposition *requirement* will be the explication of the linguists' notion of presupposition.[333]

Stalnaker proposes a pragmatic notion of presupposition that is a broader understanding of the nature of presupposing, and that "it is in terms of this intuitive [pragmatic] idea of presupposition, or a refinement of it, that the linguistic phenomenon of presupposition should be explained."[334]

David Cooper has produced a lengthy study on presuppositions, and he identifies several approaches to the presuppositional relation. The first kind of relation he classifies as the "'Family Resemblance' view of presupposition."[335] Cooper's description of this kind of relation is quite similar to Wittgenstein's description of language games. Describing this kind of relation, Cooper says,

> Presuppositions are a bit like games. There are all sorts of games, and there need be no single feature or set of features belonging to all games. . . . We may at first apply it to a certain range of cases of a certain specific type; but as we note various, more or less loose, resemblances between these cases and others, it is reasonable to extend the scope of the term. No more than in the case of games will it be sensible to search for a single feature or set of features which must belong to all presuppositions.[336]

Another classification of presupposition relation is identified by Cooper as the Austere View. "According to this view the term 'presupposition' should be restricted to the paradigms alone. We should only say that S presupposes S' where S lacks a truth value unless S' is true."[337] Cooper dedicates a chapter to a discussion of the Austere View which he calls the "Truth Condition Account." Cooper maintains that, "anyone provides a 'Truth Condition Account' of presupposition if he holds: one sentence presupposes another if and only if they pass the TVG test."[338] He discusses several counter examples that seem to indicate that it is possible "to envision situations in which it would be quite natural to regard sentences . . . as *false* (or even as *true*) where, nevertheless, their presuppositions are false."[339]

The "Catholic View," according to Cooper, asserts that "both the Family Resemblance and the Austere views are too pessimistic. For both assume the impossibility of providing a general, precise characterization of presupposition which would cover most, if not all, of the cases so far encountered."[340] Cooper spends two chapters describing and criticizing two forms of the Catholic View.

The first form is what Cooper identifies as the Pragmatic Account of the presuppositional relation. This is the position that asserts, "if S is neither true nor false where S' is false, this is incidental to S presupposing S'."[341] His criticism of this view is that it is simply "too vague to be helpful."[342] The second form of the Catholic view is called the Conceptual Account. The Conceptual Account would understand the presupposition relation in terms of "concepts" or "meanings." As Cooper characterizes it, "An immediate and natural answer to the question as to how (3) [*Harry regretted that he killed his grandma*] presupposes (3') [*He killed his grandma*] might be: 'Because 'regret' means what it does. It is part of the very concept of regret that a person cannot regret doing what he never did.'"[343] Cooper maintains that this account is inadequate also: "From the start the Conceptual Account faces a difficulty. It may be argued that it is *trivial* to claim that presuppositions are carried by meanings, for the simple reason that presupposition is itself a semantic feature, an aspect of meaning. If so, to say that S presupposes S' in virtue of what S means is to say nothing, for it will be impossible to specify the meaning of S without specifying what it presupposes. Hence one could not non-circularly explain how S presupposes S' in terms of its meaning."[344]

Cooper argues for a version of the Catholic View of presupposition which he characterizes as presuppositions of "Speech Acts." His explanation of this view is lengthy, but necessary in order to grasp the subtle distinction between his view and those he has rejected:

> The importance of speech acts in connection with presupposition becomes apparent when we reflect on how misleading has been the assumption so far made, that it is *sentences* which carry presuppositions. Unless this assumption is severely qualified, it cannot be true. For one and the same sentence, say 'He is bald', can be used to make quite different assertions—for example, that Napoleon is bald, that Harry is bald, that Charlie is bald, and so on. In each case what is presupposed is quite different. If so, it cannot be the sentence *per se* which presupposes that, for example, Napoleon exists, but rather the assertion made with the sentence on some occasion of its use. This is not to say that we cannot talk of a sentence's presuppositions. It is to say that such talk will be derivative from talking of the presuppositions of a speech act. To say that a sentence, on some occasion of its use, presupposes X will mean that the assertion (command, question, etc.) which it was used to make presupposes X.[345]

For Cooper, presuppositions are the "necessary conditions for the success of speech acts."[346] For a speech act to succeed is for it to accomplish the intent of the one who utters it. Cooper concentrates on the concept of assertion in order to explicate his view:

> in the standard cases of assertions made with sentences of the subject/predicate type, where the

> subject-expression putatively refers to some particular thing or person, it is the speaker's intention that the audience shall believe, in a certain basic sense of 'believe', that the subject has a certain property. Unless the subject referred to exists, speakers cannot succeed in that intention. Nor, unless the speakers believe the subject to exist can they even have that intention. To say that such assertions presuppose the existence of subjects is simply to make these points about the conditions for assertion of successful, fully felicitous assertion.[347]

For Cooper, then, the presupposition relation includes the intention of the speaker in the speech act being performed. Presuppositions "are certain necessary conditions for making that assertion [or any other speech act] successfully."[348] An implication of Cooper's view seems to be that, at least in the case of assertions, if the presupposition is false, then the intention of the speaker does not succeed primarily because the assertion is false. In other words, if the speaker intended his audience to believe the assertion, and the presupposition was false which prevented the audience from believing his assertion, the audiences' rejection of his assertion is tantamount to considering it false.

The linguistic and philosophical debate over the presupposition relation is a complex issue in its details, but, as Lyons has pointed out, all the various theories start with the assumption that there is a relation between a truth-claim and its presupposition(s) such that the presupposition(s) of any truth-claim is a necessary condition for the truth or falsity of the truth-claim. Consequently, whatever the relation of complex questions may be to the truth-condition of their existential presuppositions, if the presupposition is false, then the truth-claim of which it is a necessary condition will necessarily be false. This assertion is not convertible, however. So, although a presupposition is true, this does not necessarily mean that the truth-claim of which it is a necessary condition is true. For example, in the proposition, (1) *The King of France is bald,* assuming the truth of the existential presupposition (3) *There is a King of France,* this does not entail that (1) is true. Rather, it allows for the possibility of the truth of (1) which would have to be validated on the basis of whether the king was or was not actually bald. Existential presuppositions function as necessary but not as sufficient conditions for the truth of the propositions of which they are the conditions.

An Evaluation of the Linguistic Analysis of the Presuppositional Relation

In his analysis of various views on the presupposition relation, Cooper observed, as did Stalnaker, that the standard view among linguists is the Austere or Truth Conditional Account of presupposition. This is the view that originated with Strawson's criticism of Russell. In order to evaluate this view, it will be

necessary to recount Cooper's presentation of the Truth Conditional Account as it emerges from the criticisms of certain claims made by Russell in his article, "On Denoting." Cooper writes:

> According to Russell a sentence is either true, false, or meaningless. Consider then the sentence
>
> (1) The king of France is bald
>
> as uttered in 1972. It is not meaningless, and it is certainly not true. So, for Russell, it must be false. And Russell indeed analyses (1) in such a way that its falsity is apparent—into the form: There is one and only one king of France, and he is bald. Since the claim that there is a king of France is false, the whole sentence is therefore false.
>
> Yet Russell's analysis seems mistaken. For he is making
>
> (1') There is a king of France
>
> an assertion of (1). But one feels that a speaker who asserts (1) is asserting merely that the king is bald, not in addition that there is a king of France. Moreover, it seems odd to regard (1) as false; for this suggests that
>
> (1") The king of France is not bald
>
> would be true; which, in turn, suggests that
>
> (1'") The king of France has hair
>
> would be true—which, of course, they are not. If this is so then not merely is (1') not asserted in (1), it is not *entailed* by it either. For if (1) entailed (1') then the falsity of (1') would render (1) false, which it appears not to be.
>
> These objections to Russell are sometimes summarized by saying: (1) *presupposes* (1'). Russell's original trichotomy—true, false, or meaningless—ignores the role of presuppositions. A meaningful sentence need be neither true nor false. It will only have a truth value if its presuppositions are true. By introducing the notion of presupposition, then, it seems we avoid the implausibility of regarding (1') as asserted in, or entailed by, (1), and that we reveal the fallacy in Russell's bogus trichotomy.[349]

Others have argued that such criticisms of Russell's argument are themselves mistaken. If it is the case that the assertion (1) *The king of France is bald* presupposes the assertion (1') *There is a king of France*, then (1') is presupposed by (1). The relationship between (1) and (1'), then, would seem not simply to be a logical or semantic relation, but an existential relation. That is, the implication that (1) presupposes (1') is the existential copula "is." To assert that the king of France *is* bald assumes that the king of France *is*. But, if there is no king of France, then it would seem to be false to assert that the king of France *is* anything at all. The fact is, the king of France *is not*, or *does not exist*. If there is no king of France, then it is false to say that he *is* bald since such a person *is not*, i.e., does not exist.

Cooper's response is that "it seems odd to regard (1) as false; for this suggests that (1") *The king of France is not bald* would be true; which, in turn, suggests that (1'") *The king of France has hair* would be true—which, of course, they are not."[350] However, this response has been challenged as an equivocation on Cooper's part. To assert that (1) is false may in fact suggest that (1") is true.

But, if we restate (1") to read (1"") *The king of France is non-bald*, then the equivocation between (1") and (1"') is more easily seen. It is possible to hold that by saying (1) is false, one is not necessarily asserting the existence of the king of France in a condition of having hair. What one may be indicating by saying (1) is false is that the king of France does not exist. If the king of France does not exist, then he does not exist as either being bald or as having hair. Any condition in which the king of France does not exist as being bald is a condition of being not bald, or non-bald. To say that the king of France is not bald because he does not exist is not the same as to say the king of France is not bald because he has hair. It could be maintained that this is the point Russell makes when he says, "Thus 'the present King of France is bald' is certainly false; and 'the present King of France is not bald' is false if it means 'There is an entity which is now King of France and is not bald,' but is true if it means 'It is false that there is an entity which is now King of France and is bald.'"[351] This move seems to avoid Cooper's criticism. Because the question is an existential one, i.e., the existence or non-existence of the king, proposition (1) *The king of France is bald* and proposition (1"') *The king of France has hair* are not contradictories. Rather, they are contraries, and as contraries, though both cannot be true, although both can be false.[352] Additionally, (1) and (1") are contradictories, since the existential presupposition of (1) is the assertion that the king does exist, and the existential presupposition of (1") is that the king does not exist.

Several problems have been debated with reference to the criticisms of Russell's view, and there seems to be much confusion about the issue. This confusion has serious implications for the possibility of adjudicating between truth claims. For example, if someone makes the claim (2) *This event was a miracle of Allah*, then (2) presupposes (2') *Allah exists*, at least according to the Russellian position. According to the critic's analysis, if it can be shown that (2') is false, then (2) simply does not have a truth value. Consequently, there seems to be no means of adjudicating between (2) *This event* was *a miracle of Allah* and (3) *This event* was not *a miracle of Allah*, especially in the case that (2') is demonstrated to be false. Likewise Cooper's own claim (4) *Russell's trichotomy is bogus* presupposes the truth of (4') *The falsity of (1) suggests the truth of (1") which also suggests the truth of (1"') neither of which is true*. But, if it can be shown, as seems to be the case, that (4') involves an equivocation and is therefore false, does it thereby follow that the critic's claim (4) is neither true nor false? An affirmative answer would seem to be extremely odd and virtually nonsensical. In fact, the critic of Russell has shown that Russell's trichotomy (5) presupposes the truth of his analysis (5'), and he believes he has also

demonstrated that Russell's analysis (5') is false. But, by the critic's own principles, he in fact has not demonstrated that Russell's trichotomy is false.[353] Rather, since Russell's presupposition (5') is false, the critic has only shown that Russell's trichotomy (5) is without truth value. But, the critic intuitively realizes the truth-value implications of his own demonstration and consequently makes the assertion that Russell's claim (5) is false—earlier he says it is "mistaken"—not that it simply has no truth value. So, if by claiming that Russell's trichotomy is bogus he means to say that it is false, then he has abandoned his own principles in favor of Russell's trichotomy.

Regardless of where one comes out on this controversy, there are some conclusions with reference to our concerns here that seem to follow. First, it has been sufficiently established that if a given presupposition is a necessary condition for the truth or falsity of a truth-claim, then the falsity of the presupposition may at most entail the falsity of the truth-claim, or may at least entail the lack of truth value of the truth-claim. However, as has been argued above, the truth of the presupposition does not insure the truth of the truth-claim. The truth of a truth-claim will have to be established on its own terms and is not necessarily entailed by the truth of its presuppositions. The truth of (1') does not *necessarily* entail the truth of (1). In other words, the presupposition is a necessary condition for the truth of a truth-claim although it is not a sufficient condition for its truth.

Second, whether one accepts the assertion of Russell or Strawson (Cooper) about the truth-value of a proposition when the existential presupposition has not been satisfied, one conclusion is clear. If the existential presupposition is not satisfied, then the proposition of which it is a necessary condition is, at the very least, devoid of any truth-value. But, a proposition that is devoid of truth-value is not true. On the basis of Russell's analysis, proposition (1) may be considered false if (3) is not satisfied, or, on the basis of the Strawson/Cooper analysis, proposition (1) may be considered to have no truth-value. But, what one cannot do is to claim that proposition (1) is true when its existential presupposition (3) is not satisfied—it may be false, but at least it can be said to have no truth-value at all. Consequently, by demonstrating that a given presupposition is false, the truth-claim of which it is a necessary condition can no longer function in a system as part of the body of truths for that system, since that proposition is either false or has no truth-value. For the purposes of determining the role of presuppositions in hermeneutics, these conclusions are sufficient to continue our investigation.

Summary and Conclusion

What seems to have emerged from this survey is a notion among Evangelicals of the nature and role of presuppositions that is very much like the notion one gets from non-evangelical writers. Of course, this may indicate only that both groups are simply recognizing what is in fact the case. When both Evangelicals and non-evangelicals consider the role of presuppositions, each group reports what it finds to be the case, and since they are both discussing the same thing, it would seem to follow that their independent investigations could reach the same conclusions. But this would certainly be an odd conclusion to draw in light of what seems to be a universal rejection of "bare facts" and of objectivity that is brought about by the undeniable presuppositions and preconditional framework of understanding. Can it really be the case that two groups of theorists, espousing contrary and often contradictory systems, in examining the same data, arrive at the same conclusion? Wouldn't this be an instance of the very objectivity that has been so adamantly denied?

Let us consider this important question a little further. If Evangelicals and non-evangelicals both approach the question of the preconditions of knowledge from their own presuppositional frameworks, and prior commitments, and since Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals would hold many contrary and even contradictory assumptions, presuppositions, and prior commitments, how is it the case that they arrive at almost identical conclusions about the nature and role of presuppositions? If one's presuppositions and preunderstanding forms the grid through which one understands, then would it not follow that one's understanding of the nature and role of presuppositions would likewise be mediated through one's presuppositions? If this is the case, how can opposing frameworks yield almost identical conclusions?

There would seem to be only three scenarios that could account for this fact. Either 1) the Evangelicals have articulated the nature and role of presuppositions, and the non-evangelicals have largely adopted their conclusions; or 2) the non-evangelicals have articulated the nature and role of presuppositions, and the Evangelicals have largely adopted their conclusions; or 3) both the Evangelicals and non-evangelicals are operating from some presuppositions that are the same, or else so similar that they issue in similar conclusions.

It is unfortunately the case that the first option can probably be readily dismissed. Non-evangelical writers give no evidence of having interacted with Evangelicals in arriving at their conclusions. Additionally, the conclusions of non-evangelicals arrived on the scene many years prior to what Evangelicals are now doing.

The second option, however, is a possible explanation. Evangelicals often

quote prominent figures in their discussions, such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Palmer, and Kuhn, as the sources or influences of assertions they make, and the explanations given by Evangelicals often parallel those already given by non-evangelicals. Vern Poythress acknowledges the work of Thomas Kuhn in alerting Evangelicals "to the fact that such basic commitments or presuppositions do exist."[354] Moisés Silva states, "Such thinkers as Martin Heidegger, for example, have forced us to take seriously the role that *preunderstanding* plays in the process of interpretation."[355] N. T. Wright talks about one's access to knowledge in terms of a "spiralling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known*,"[356] which parallels the kind of description one finds in Gadamer. Roger Lundin acknowledges that, "Cartesian assumptions have done much to shape our theories about the interpretation of the Bible, literary texts, and works of art."[357] Lundin goes on to point out, "The Cartesian approach, especially as it has been assimilated and transmitted by the Enlightenment tradition, has extended its dominion over so much of modern thought that even when certain groups—such as the romantic poets and various orthodox Christians—have protested its encroachment, they have largely done so in language of the Cartesian theoretical kingdom in which they unwittingly dwell."[358]

However, Evangelicals are certainly not merely parrots. Among evangelical writers are some of the more erudite and accomplished scholars in the world. Although it seems clear that Evangelicals have adopted many of the conclusions of non-evangelical writers, it would be a difficult task to show that they have uncritically accepted these claims or have adopted anything they did not believe to be in concert with Christian orthodoxy and of benefit to Evangelical theology and hermeneutical theory. It remains possible, however, as Lundin has said, that much of this influence is unwittingly operative. If this were to be shown to be so, it may be the case that Evangelical theorists have adopted views that lead to conclusions they might have wished to avoid; e.g. that truth claims, even biblical ones, are relative rather than absolute.

The third option seems to be a likely explanation also. Similarity of content does not necessarily indicate identity of origin. It is possible that the two groups, though perhaps interacting with each other according to standard scholarly practice, have arrived at similar conclusions about the same object of investigation. If however, as both groups assert, presuppositions form the grid through which one advances knowledge, it reasonably follows that there must be some aspects of the preconditions of understanding, some presuppositions, between these two groups that are the same in their respective systems of

thought. It may be the case, then, that these parallel conclusions indicate that there are at least some presuppositions that are the same for thinkers with otherwise opposing points of view—presuppositions that transcend one's otherwise unique preunderstanding or world view. If this is the case, then an objectivity based on these transcendent presuppositions may well be a possibility. Indeed, this very result would seem to be an instance of objectivity in interpretation.

Is this the perspective of Evangelical hermeneutic theorists? Do Evangelicals hold that there is or can be objectivity in interpretation? How do Evangelicals relate the notion of presuppositions to the methodology of hermeneutics? The next chapter will address the notion of presuppositions as this relates to hermeneutics in general and biblical interpretation in particular.

5 PRESUPPOSITIONS AND HERMENEUTIC METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the previous chapter we looked at the nature and role of presuppositions in general. From that investigation it seemed evident that theorists from otherwise and often diametrically opposed points of view arrived at the same conclusions. One implication that seemed to emerge from this observation is that either one group is simply obtaining its conclusions from the other, or there must be some presuppositions that are the same across systems. Since the presence of one's presuppositions is universally understood to be beyond dispute, and since one's presuppositions account for the possibility of understanding, it seems to follow that the only way to account for the fact is that these theorists from opposing perspectives must have some presuppositions that are the same. If this is an accurate observation, then how does this impact the question of objectivity in hermeneutics? To address this question we will need to consider the nature and role or presuppositions as this relates particularly to hermeneutics.

The All-Pervasiveness of Presuppositions in Interpretation

As we have seen, the notion that presuppositions and preunderstanding constitute the very possibility of understanding is a pervasive perspective among those who discuss the question of objectivity. This also proves to be the generally accepted notion among hermeneutic theorists. It is universally held that interpretation necessarily involves the presuppositions and preunderstanding of the interpreter. Typical of this perspective is the following assertion by Richard Palmer: "There can be no 'presuppositionless' interpretation. A biblical, literary, or scientific text is not interpreted without preconceptions. Understanding, since it is an historically accumulated and historically operative basic structure, underlies even scientific interpretation. . . . Inside or outside the sciences there can be no presuppositionless understanding."[359]

This perspective is in large part due to the focus on the nature of understanding. Since Descartes' epistemological revolution in which the starting point of philosophy was shifted from the known to the knower, and since Schleiermacher's hermeneutical revolution in which the focus of hermeneutics was shifted from the principles of interpretation to the nature of the interpreter's understanding, the question of what makes understanding possible has become ever more prominent in philosophy and in hermeneutics. Writers in virtually any field are implicitly required to begin their theorizing with the question of the role of presuppositions in the interpretation of the data relevant to their discipline. In a book on the Jesus-Paul debate for example, David Wenham acknowledges the

role of presuppositions: “The Jesus-Paul question is one in which scholars’ differing presuppositions and assumptions are influential.”[360] In this text the subject matter is not presuppositions and preunderstanding, but the author exhibits this felt necessity to address this issue, at least in passing, before getting on with his own topic.

In her study on the exegesis of Job from Calvin to the modern era, Susan Schreiner claims that Gadamer’s arguments against objectivity in interpretation have been very persuasive. If the historians cannot be free of “prejudices,” then the historian cannot be assured that the author’s intent can be known. Presuppositions thus become preconditions for interpretation. As Schreiner describes:

> No one has done more to shake the confidence of historians in the old ideal of objectivity than Gadamer. As Gadamer explained, the goal of Romantic hermeneutics to find authorial intention presupposed the Enlightenment ideal of a mind free from prejudices. Historians were to enter the mind of the author and to transpose themselves into the culture of an earlier age. To this presupposed ideal of objectivity and historical empathy, Gadamer opposed the historicity of understanding. Rejecting the “prejudice against prejudice” inherited from the Enlightenment, Gadamer argued that readers cannot free themselves from their prejudices and thereby recover the mind of the author. Such shedding of presuppositions is neither possible nor desirable. Presuppositions or prejudgments are the necessary preconditions for understanding.[361]

An acknowledgment of the all-pervasiveness of presuppositions in interpretation has virtually become a precondition for any rational discussion of the nature of understanding and interpretation. Palmer’s assertion that there is no presuppositionless interpretation takes its cue, as he acknowledges, from the title of Rudolf Bultmann’s famous article, “Is Presuppositionless Exegesis Possible?”[362] and follows the exposition of Gadamer. Both Gadamer and Bultmann identify the seminal work of Heidegger who proposed the view that all interpretation necessarily involves preconditions, as he asserted in *Sein und Zeit*: “All interpretation (*Auslegung*), moreover, operates in the fore-structure (*Vor-struktur*), which we have already characterized.”[363]

The inevitability of presuppositions in interpretation has likewise become a recurring theme in contemporary Evangelical hermeneutics. For example, in their recent work on biblical interpretation, William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard assert that no one interprets anything without a set of underlying assumptions:

> When we presume to explain the meaning of the Bible, we do so with a set of preconceived ideas or presuppositions. These presuppositions may be examined and stated, or simply embraced unconsciously. But anyone who says that he or she has discarded all presuppositions and will only

> study the text objectively and inductively is either deceived or naive. So as interpreters we need to discover, state, and consciously adopt those assumptions we can agree to and defend, or we will uncritically retain those we already have, whether or not they are adequate and defensible.[364]

According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, not only is the interpretation of the Bible subject to the presuppositional perspective of the interpreter, but all inquiry necessarily requires preunderstanding. As they go on to say, "we argue simply that an appropriate level of preunderstanding is necessary for any kind of knowledge. This, as we have seen, is the nature of all inquiry."[365]

In his book on Old Testament interpretation, John Goldingay acknowledges that the study of the Bible necessarily involves the presuppositions of the interpreter: "It is actually impossible to study without have [sic] one's own beliefs and framework of thinking, and being influenced by them. Indeed, we need some such framework if we are to make coherent sense of the data we examine. What is important is to be open to recognizing our presuppositions, and then to be prepared for the material we are studying to challenge them and to modify the perspective with which we approached it."[366]

In his examination of the inductive method of Bible study, Elliott Johnson asserts that the inductive method of Bible study is inadequate because it does not take account of the interpreter's presuppositions that are necessarily involved in the study of the biblical text. Johnson believes inductive methods fail "because there is no such thing as 'pure' inductive study. We all necessarily bring premises or presuppositions to the study of the text. Those premises affect the way we comprehend the meaning, the way we understand—that is, they have epistemological influence. This influence in the interpreter has been at the center of hermeneutical concerns since the time of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)."[367]

In the volume that heads the series *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, Moisés Silva made the same kind of observation. After a brief overview of the influence of recent philosophy on hermeneutical thinking, Silva observes that the influence of the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger has forced evangelical theorists to acknowledge the role of preunderstanding in all kinds of thinking. In Silva's words: "This idealist tradition is vulnerable to some powerful criticisms, yet within the context of that tradition some of the most crucial questions about hermeneutics have arisen. Such thinkers as Martin Heidegger, for example, have forced us to take seriously the role that *preunderstanding* plays in the process of interpretation. None of us is able to approach new data with a blank mind, and so our attempts to understand new information consist largely of adjusting our prior 'framework of understanding'—integrating the new into the old."[368]

Silva goes on to question the possibility of presuppositionless interpretation when he says, “The common insistence that we should approach the text without any prior ideas regarding its meaning becomes almost irrelevant. . . . Could it be that it is impossible to shed our presuppositions precisely because it is they that mediate understanding?”[369]

Although Grant Osborne uses the terms “preunderstanding” and “presupposition” almost synonymously, he asserts the same notion that the inevitability of one’s preunderstanding provides the perspective for understanding: “A close reading of the text cannot be done without a perspective provided by one’s preunderstanding as identified by a ‘sociology of knowledge’ perspective. Reflection itself demands mental categories, and these are built upon one’s presupposed world view and by the faith or reading community to which one belongs. Since neutral exegesis is impossible, no necessarily ‘true’ or final interpretation is possible.”[370]

Finally, Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton make the same point. They assert that the interpreter must know himself and his own presuppositions and how they influence his understanding of the Bible: “Interpreting any text involves two different types of assumptions. First, underlying all our thinking and interpreting are our presuppositions about life and ultimate realities, our worldview. These provide the basic foundation for how we understand everything. Second are the assumptions which we make about the nature of the text we are reading.”[371]

The realization of the fundamental role of presuppositions in interpretation is not entirely new. In his work, *Hermeneutics of the New Testament*, published in English in 1877, A. Immer addressed the question of the perspective of the interpreter: “Lastly, *d*) the interpreter has to remove the difference between the *work* of the author and his own view of the matter. The work of the author in its totality is just a historical fact, and is to be treated as such. In this, the more perfectly the interpreter can abstract himself from his own opinions or knowledge, and, by virtue of his historical information, can throw himself into his author and his time, the more successful he will be.”[372] In his massive work on interpretation published in 1883, Milton Terry recognized the place of “presumptions” in biblical hermeneutics. He said, “The question should be, not what does the Church say, or what do the ancient fathers and the great councils and the œcumenical creeds say, but what do the Scriptures legitimately teach? Still less should we allow ourselves to be influenced by any presumptions of what the Scriptures *ought* to teach.”[373] It seems that both Immer and Terry are advocating the very approach that contemporary hermeneutic theorists declare is

not possible.

This assertion by Milton Terry sounds quite similar to the assertion that would latter be made by Rudolf Bultmann. In his article on presuppositions and exegesis, Bultmann asserted that exegesis must be presuppositionless in the sense that "it not presuppose (*voraussetzt*) its results (*Ergebnisse*)."[374] However, Bultmann goes on to assert that the condition of being absolutely presuppositionless is not possible. He declared, "The question of exegesis without presuppositions in the sense of unprejudiced exegesis must be distinguished from this same question in the other sense in which it can be raised. And in this second sense, we must say that *there cannot be any such thing as presuppositionless exegesis*. That there is no such exegesis in fact, because every exegete is determined by his own individuality, in the sense of his special biases and habits, his gifts and his weaknesses . . ."[375]

Bultmann makes a distinction between certain presuppositions which he calls "dogmatic prejudice," (*dogmatischen Vorurteilen*) which every exegete can and should avoid, and those presuppositions which constitute one's "individuality," (*Individualitt*) which he believes can be eliminated by the exegete "educating himself to the kind of hearing that is interested in nothing other than the subject-matter of which the text speaks."[376] So, although presuppositionless interpretation is not possible in one sense, it seems to be possible to mediate this fact in some sense. Some presuppositions must be "switched off" (*ausschalten*) at the start to allow for a "pure objective hearing" (*rein sachlich Hren*) of the text. It is noteworthy that Bultmann asserts that the presuppositions of one's special biases (*Neigungen*) and habits (*Gewohnheiten*), and his gifts (*Gaben*) and weaknesses (*Schwchen*) are of "no significance in principle" (*keinen grundstzlichen Charakter*). Rather, these kinds of presuppositions, although inevitably present, can be "held off" to allow for "pure objective hearing."

That Bultmann allows for a "pure objective" (*rein sachlich*) hearing of the text must be understood in context of his argument. As he later explains, "to historical understanding belongs the objective understanding," (*zum historischen Verstndnis gehrt das sachliche Verstndnis*),[377] and this historical understanding is itself a "life-context" (*Lebenszusammenhang*) in which the interpreter is grounded (*begrndet*). The relation of this "grounding" of the interpreter in his own "life-context" will be dealt with later, but from this brief consideration it appears that Bultmann is not proposing an "absolute objectivity" in the sense that this has been the subject of controversy in hermeneutics. Rather, this is an objectivity that exists within the life-context of the interpreter.

As we have observed, Anthony Thiselton prefers the term "horizon of expectation" to the traditional term, "preunderstanding." Nevertheless, Thiselton affirms the inevitability of the horizon of expectation as an unavoidable precondition of interpretation. He says, "First, [horizon of expectation] includes a network of provisional working *assumptions* which are open to revision and change; second, the reader or interpreter may not be *conscious* of all that the horizon of expectation sets in motion, makes possible, or excludes. The expectations and assumptions concern the kind of questions and issues which we anticipate the text will address, and even the types of genre or mode of communication which it might use."[378]

Thiselton's description of the horizon of expectation as distinguished from "preunderstanding" is further distinguished from "presupposition." Whereas the term "presupposition" seems to suggest "the impression of rooted beliefs and doctrines which are not only cognitive and conceptual, but which also can only be changed and revised with pain, or at least difficulty,"[379] the term "horizon of expectation," or simply "horizon," avoids the conceptual baggage and implies one's "relation to *life* . . . My pre-conceptual relation in life to music, to mathematics, to law, or to love" which "both influence, and provide operative conditions for, how I came to understand texts of music, mathematics, law, poems or letters or declarations of love."[380] Ultimately, Thiselton's description of the term "horizon" indicates that he conceives horizon in a very broad sense, roughly equivalent to what has become popularly known as a world view.

> The horizon or pre-intentional background is thus a network of revisable expectations and assumptions which a reader brings to the text, *together with* the shared patterns of behaviour and belief with reference to which processes of interpretation and understanding become operative. The term "horizon" calls attention to the fact that our finite situatedness in time, history, and culture defines the present (though always expanding) limits of our "world", or more strictly the limits of *what we can "see"*. The term "background" calls attention to the fact that these boundaries embrace not only what we can draw on in conscious reflection, but also the pre-cognitive dispositions or competencies which are made possible by our participation in the shared practices of a social and historical world.[381]

Whether we employ the terms, "presupposition" or "preunderstanding," or whether we adopt the broader terminology of Thiselton, it is generally agreed by contemporary hermeneuticians that some form of pre-condition not only precedes the act of interpretation, but that this pre-condition is the means by which interpretation is possible. As Roger Lundin asserts, "Rather than standing as impediments to right understanding, then, 'prejudices' are the basis of all understanding. The goal of all thinking—and reading —should not be to cast

these assumptions aside in order to take on those belonging to another person. . . . Rather, the goal of thinking should be to test, clarify, modify, and expand our assumptions, to bring them more in line with a more comprehensive truth."[382]

Lundin provides a helpful summary of the prevailing perspective of contemporary hermeneutical theory with respect to the role of presuppositions, prejudices, or horizon: ". . . modern hermeneutical reflection calls into question the Cartesian and Enlightenment claims for the supremacy of skeptical detachment and rational reflection. On a practical level, hermeneutics has questions whether such complete detachment is a possibility. Do we ever read with all our assumptions held in abeyance? Do we completely set aside our beliefs when we enter the alien world of a text? To such questions, hermeneutical theory responds with a convincing 'No.'"[383]

This small sampling of contemporary evangelical texts on hermeneutics should not mislead. These examples represent an almost universally held assumption about the task of hermeneutics, namely, that interpretation necessarily and inevitably operates from the perspective of the presuppositions of the interpreter.[384] In other words, it would seem that the presuppositions of the interpreter are the omnipresent grid through which he or she interprets or understands anything.

The idea that knowledge and interpretation inevitably involve the presuppositions of the interpreter seems to be an inescapable conclusion. It seems not only to be the case that the assumption of presuppositionless interpretation is a naive approach, but even the idea that one can approach the text without presuppositions is itself a presupposition.

The Mutability of Presuppositions

The inevitability of presuppositions and preunderstanding that constitute the framework of interpretation is universally held to be the case in hermeneutics as in other areas of thought. There is another notion that is no less universally affirmed by contemporary hermeneutic theorists. Although presuppositionless interpretation is understood to be impossible, according to the contemporary wisdom, this does not mean that interpretation must be static or without growth. Rather, growth in understanding is possible because an interpreter should be able to change his presuppositions. Contemporary theorists maintain the possibility and indeed the necessity of altering, modifying, and developing the preconditions, presuppositions, prejudices, or horizons of expectation that make understanding possible. As Palmer asserts, "The point is that our own presuppositions must not be taken as absolute (for these are the foundation of

our expectations) but as something subject to change. . . . What is needed in literary interpretation is a dialectical questioning which does not simply interrogate the text but allows the thing said in the text to interrogate back, to call the interpreter's own horizon into question and to work a fundamental transformation of one's understanding of the subject."[385]

Even though our presuppositions, or prejudices, or horizons of understanding are inevitable, they are not immutable. The interaction of the interpreter with the text creates the possibility that the text can impact the interpreter so as to cause the interpreter to modify his pre-conditions of interpretation.

As we have pointed out, the notion that presuppositionless interpretation is impossible is held as axiomatic not only by philosophers in general, but is likewise popularly espoused by Evangelical hermeneutic theorists. KBH emphatically assert the impossibility of objective, or presuppositionless interpretation: "No one comes to the task of understanding as an objective observer. All interpreters bring their own presuppositions and agendas, and these affect the ways they understand as well as the conclusions they draw. In addition, the writer or speaker whom the interpreter wishes to understand also operates with a set of presuppositions. We humans mediate all our understanding through a grid of personal history and bias. Our prior experiences and knowledge—our total background—shape what we perceive and how we understand."[386]

By acknowledging the inevitability of the pre-conditions of interpretation, Evangelicals have not thereby abandoned the hope of adjudicating between interpretations, as is evidenced in the following claims of McCartney and Clayton.

> We will argue later that there is a right way to understand Isaiah 53 or any other passage and that the right way is indicated by the nature of the text itself. However, discerning this is not a matter of escaping or suspending our presuppositions, but changing and adapting them. We really cannot escape them. Since the things we assume are to us self-evident, we may be unconscious of them, but they still determine our understanding, and without them there is no understanding. Any time we find "meaning" in a text, we arrive at that "meaning" by fitting it in with our previous knowledge. And this involves assumptions or presuppositions about such things as the nature of the text we are reading, the meaning of life, and how we know things. All our interpreting activity in life involves assumptions, just as in geometry every theorem can only be proven on the basis of previous theorems and "self-evident" assumptions. Presuppositions form the basis of the "interpretive framework" by which we understand things.[387]

Although McCartney and Clayton hold that "all our interpreting activity in life involves assumptions," they still claim that it is possible to change and adapt these preconditions as the interpreter encounters the text. Indeed, it is not only

possible to change and adapt one's presuppositions, but it is possible to eliminate some presuppositions altogether. Other Evangelicals acknowledge the mutability of preunderstanding as well: "The honest, active interpreter remains open to change, even to a significant transformation of preunderstandings."[388]

Basic, Fundamental, and Foundational Presuppositions in Hermeneutic Thinking

Along with the inevitability and mutability of presuppositions, there is a third ingredient that is important in understanding the contemporary view of the relation of presuppositions and preunderstanding to interpretation. In the survey of the nature and role of presuppositions in hermeneutical theory, several theorists were noted as having made references to "basic" or "fundamental" assumptions or presuppositions. Palmer refers to understanding as "an historically accumulated and historically operative basic structure" that "underlies even scientific interpretation."[389] Ted Peters refers to presuppositions deriving from "a more basic or foundational level of one's way of viewing things."[390] He refers to what he calls "fundamental presuppositions" which "refer us to the basic structure of one's experience with the world" which "makes articulation of that experience possible."[391] Peters even refers to the existence of fundamental presuppositions, self-evident truths, and axioms.[392]

Similar descriptions are found among Evangelical theorists. McCartney and Clayton identify "presuppositions about life and ultimate realities, our worldview" as providing "the basic foundation for how we understand everything."[393] McQuilkin discusses the "basic presupposition about the Bible that distinguishes believers from unbelievers."[394] Poythress talks about "basic commitments or presuppositions in the formation of knowledge"[395] which are "fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world."[396] Poythress identifies some presuppositions as "unconsciously assumed elements of one's world view" which constitute "one's basic commitments,"[397] and which are part of the interpreter's presuppositions or world view, and include "fundamental assumptions about the world and reality," and that these are found at the "fundamental level."[398] Long also refers to "basic intellectual and spiritual commitments ('how he or she sees the world')."[399]

Theorists repeatedly employ the terms "basic," "fundamental," and "foundational" in attempting to identify that "something" beyond which there is no need to go and upon which understanding and interpretation is built. As has already been pointed out, Thiselton also refers to an interpreter's horizons as

"background" which makes understanding possible.[400] Horizons are pre-intentional and pre-cognitive dispositions and competencies that provide the basis upon which one participates in the social and historical world.

As observed earlier, many theorists even go so far as to use the term "foundational." Peters asserts that there is some foundational level from which presuppositions derive.[401] Palmer declares that although presuppositions "must not be taken as absolute" they nevertheless "are the foundation of our expectations."[402] With many seeking to jettison foundationalism, theorists cannot seem to do without a foundation.

One crucial omission by virtually all theorists becomes obvious from this review, however. This omission is a complete lack of any claims regarding the origin of these basic, fundamental, and foundational presuppositions. If all interpretation takes place "only in light of previous commitments,"[403] as Silva (along with virtually all hermeneuticians) asserts, then from where do these "previous commitments" come?

Concerning prejudices Gadamer writes, "It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. . . . 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."[404] Gadamer goes on to explain, "The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust."[405]

Basically, Gadamer's prejudice has taken over the place of Descartes' innate ideas or Kant's categories and constitutes the grid through which a text is made intelligible. Bernstein concludes that, "If Gadamer is right in claiming that not only understanding but all knowing 'inevitably involves some prejudices,' then it is difficult to imagine a more radical critique of Cartesianism, as well as of the Enlightenment conception of human knowledge."[406]

On the contrary, however, if Gadamer is in fact right, then it is difficult to imagine a view more consistent with the very Cartesian/Kantian and Enlightenment conception of human knowledge than that which Gadamer proposes. Gadamer has simply translated the Cartesian innate ideas and the Kantian categories into Heideggerian prejudices which constitute our being. It seems to be the same idealism in existential/phenomenological clothes. Instead of referring to innate ideas or categories of the mind, one simply talks about metaphors and presents the appearance of having solved the problem of knowledge. Nevertheless, the problem of the foundations of knowledge still remains.

Bernstein argues that, "in these [Cartesian and Enlightenment] traditions

there are sharp dichotomies between reason and prejudice, or between knowledge and prejudice."[407] Another basic problem with Cartesian and Enlightenment epistemology is the conception of the nature of reason itself and the starting point that constitutes the Cartesian foundation of knowing. Bernstein argues, following Charles Peirce and Gadamer, that, "There is no knowledge without *pre*conceptions and *pre*judices. The task is not to remove all such preconceptions, but to test them critically in the course of inquiry."[408]

Presuppositions and the Hermeneutical Circle

There begins to emerge a relationship between the unavoidable preconditions of interpretation and the foundational nature of at least some of our presuppositions on the one hand, and the circularity of the hermeneutic enterprise on the other. Although, according to the current wisdom, there is no interpretation apart from the presuppositions and prejudice of the interpreter, these presuppositions and prejudices that form the preconditions of interpretation are not beyond scrutiny. According to the predominate understanding, presuppositions and prejudices can be measured against the world in a circular or spiral dialectical motion.

Peters, for example, applies the principle of criticism to understanding in terms of the hermeneutical circle: "What is required for an understanding of texts, or of one's tradition, is some sort of pre-apprehension or pre-understanding of the whole of which the objects of study are parts. . . . In order to interpret anything, we must begin by projecting a preunderstanding of what it is we are about to interpret."[409] Peters has applied the hermeneutical circle to understanding itself. If presuppositionless exegesis is not possible, at least in the sense that everyone comes to the text with convictions, points of view, experiences, assumptions, and a philosophical framework, then a point of urgent consideration is how one can be sure that one's presuppositions and preunderstanding facilitate interpretation rather than hinder it.

The inevitability and mutability of presuppositions has given new significance to the old problem of the hermeneutical circle. Friedrich Schleiermacher attributes the articulation of the hermeneutical circle to his predecessor Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) when he says, "The hermeneutical principle which Ast has proposed and in several respects developed quite extensively is that just as the whole is understood from the parts, so the parts can be understood only from the whole. This principle is of such consequence for hermeneutics and so incontestable that one cannot even begin to interpret without using it."[410] The hermeneutical circle, according to Schleiermacher, can

best be illustrated by the relationship of words to a sentence. A complete sentence provides the contextual framework within which the parameters are set with respect to the possible meanings of the individual words. However, it is the contribution of each individual word that constitutes the meaning of the complete sentence. “The circle as a whole defines the individual part, and the parts together form the circle.”[411] So, the individual concepts that are expressed in any literary piece, whether they be written or oral, are determined by the context in which they stand. Yet, the context is constituted by the combination of the individual concepts. “By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular, then. Because within this ‘circle’ the meaning comes to stand, we call this the ‘hermeneutical circle.’”[412]

With the contemporary understanding of the all-pervasiveness and mutability of presuppositions, the hermeneutical circle, which at one time was discussed in terms of the text, now applies to all of life. As Brice Wachterhauser describes it, “The hermeneutical circle involves the ‘contextualist’ claim that the ‘parts’ of some larger reality can be understood only in terms of the ‘whole’ of that reality, and the ‘whole’ of that reality can be understood only in terms of its parts. This is to say that understanding any phenomenon means, first of all, situating it in a larger context in which it has its function and, in turn, it also means letting our grasp of this particular phenomenon influence our grasp of the whole context.”[413]

Wilhelm Dilthey applied the concept of the hermeneutical circle to the question of historical understanding. Not only is the record of the event or historical situation that one is endeavoring to understand located in its own historical setting, but the interpreter is likewise operating from his own historical setting. As Peters describes, “Interpretation, then, is always an event taking place in a situation, the context in which the interpreter and the text or any other expression of life stand. Meaning is, therefore, always meaning in relationship.”[414] The impact upon hermeneutics of the broadening out of the hermeneutic circle to encompass lived experience is that understanding itself is circular. As Palmer observes, “there is really no true starting point for understanding, since every part presupposes the others. This means that there can be no ‘presuppositionless’ understanding.’ Every act of understanding is in a given context or horizon; even in the sciences one explains only ‘in terms of’ a frame of reference.”[415] Consequently, the circle of life experience disallows the possibility of a transcendental, or a-historical perspective —a view from nowhere. “Since we understand always from within our own horizon, which is

part of the hermeneutical circle, there can be no nonpositional understanding of anything."[416]

With Martin Heidegger the hermeneutical circle takes on proportions that extend it to the very nature of reality. He argues that all interpretations must already understand, in some sense, that which is being interpreted: "In every understanding of the world, existence is understood with it, and *vice versa*. All interpretation, moreover, operates in the fore-structure (*Vor-struktur*), which we have already characterized. Any interpretation which is to contribute to understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted."[417]

Heidegger expands the traditional view of the hermeneutic circle to encompass the very being of *Dasein*. Traditionally, the hermeneutic circle assumed a distinction between subject and object in which the knowing subject stood over against the known object. As David Hoy describes, "Heidegger conceives of Dasein and world as forming a circle, and he thus extends the traditional hermeneutic circle between a text and its reading down to the most primordial level of human existence."[418]

Note, however, that the circle, for Heidegger, is not a vicious circle. He contends that "if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just 'sense' [*empfinden*] it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up."[419] Heidegger asserts that the hermeneutical circle "belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of Dasein."[420] The goal is not to attempt to escape the circle, but to "come into it the right way."[421] This means that the interpreter should not allow his fore-structure to be dictated by arbitrary habits or fancies, but he must concentrate on "the things themselves."[422] In this way, the circle involves a dialectic or conversation, as it were, to constantly revise one's fore-structure of understanding in terms of the things themselves as the interpreter moves toward a better understanding.

Gadamer adopted Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutical circle and, along with Dilthey's emphasis on historical situatedness, once again applied it to the interpretation of texts. As Gail Soffer explains, "Gadamer explicitly applies the Heideggerian hermeneutical circle— intended as a completely general analysis of human existing—to the specific activity of interpreting texts. According to this application, when one reads a text the fore-structures (also named 'prejudices' or prejudgments [*Vorurteile*] by Gadamer, in his polemic against the Enlightenment) results in an anticipatory projection of the meaning of the whole text. However, as in Heidegger, there is a dialectical relationship

between fore-structures and projected meaning."[423]

Gadamer understands this dialectical process in terms of a conversation with the text. As he explains, "The process that Heidegger describes is that every revision of the fore-projection is capable of projecting before itself a new projection of meaning; rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is; interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation."[424]

So, it would seem that the existence of the hermeneutical circle is predicated upon a broad conception of the preconditions of understanding. These preconditions project a pre-understanding of what is to be interpreted. As the interpreter interacts with the text, as it is in itself, certain prejudices are altered and even replaced by those that are "more suitable" to the emerging understanding of the text. As Ted Peters explains, "Whenever we attempt to interpret an event in our life, it is already in some sense understood; and from there we attempt to explicate or articulate it as it is found in that already understood character."[425]

Indeed, as we have seen, all interpretation proceeds upon the basis of the pre-conditions of interpretation, and, as Moisés Silva indicated, it is our presuppositions that mediate understanding. This is precisely the perspective that has been adopted in Evangelical theories. There is perhaps no better example of this view than the position that has been argued by KBH: "Every interpreter begins with a preunderstanding. After an initial study of a Biblical text, that text performs a work on the interpreter. His or her preunderstanding is no longer what it was. Then, as the newly interpreted interpreter proceeds to question the text further, out of this newly formed understanding—perhaps, different—answers are obtained. A new understanding has emerged. It is not simply a repetitive circle; but, rather, a progressive spiral of development."[426]

By way of illustration, KBH offer the diagram in **Figure 4**. The starting point for understanding is within the field of the preunderstanding of the interpreter. As the interpreter interacts with the text, the text is allowed to have its influence on the preunderstanding of the interpreter, and the action moves back and forth from interpreter to text and from text to interpreter. KBH acknowledge that their analysis admits "an inevitable circularity in interpretation."[427] They seem to sense a viciousness to this circularity and attempt to blunt this implication:

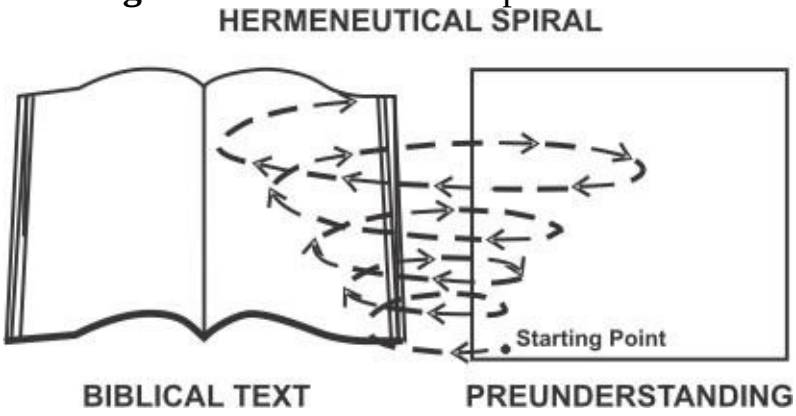
> When we posit the requirement of faith to understand the Bible fully and then we go to the Bible in order to understand God's self-revelation in Christ in whom we have faith, the process has a definite

> circularity. But we argue simply that an appropriate level of preunderstanding is necessary for any kind of knowledge. This, as we have seen, is the nature of all inquiry. Thus, one must have some knowledge of God even to arrive at the preunderstanding of faith. Then that stance of faith enables the Christian to study the Bible to come to a deeper understanding of God and what the Scriptures say. As we learn more from our study of Scripture we alter and enlarge our preunderstanding in more or less fundamental ways. In essence, this process describes the nature of all learning: it is interactive, ongoing, and continuous.[428]

In the view of KBH the circle, or spiral, is predicated on the "appropriate level" of preunderstanding. Unfortunately, there is no attempt to define what is considered an "appropriate level." This is not an isolated perspective peculiar to these particular theorists, however. This seems to be a view of the role of presuppositions and preunderstanding in hermeneutical methodology that is almost universally held.

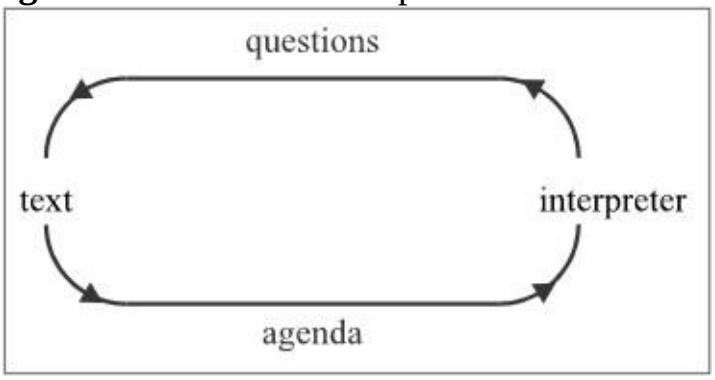
William Larkin asserts that the hermeneutical circle is actually "a hermeneutical spiral in which interpreters through successive exposure to God's Word are able to bring their preunderstanding and, as a result, their interpretation and application closer and closer to alignment with Scripture's truth."[429]

Figure 4: Hermeneutical Spiral of KBH



Grant Osborne offers his own diagram (**Figure 5**) of the hermeneutical spiral, and offers the following explanation: "The text itself sets the agenda and continually reforms the questions that the observer asks of it."[430] At this point, Osborne does not discuss the starting point by which one enters the circle, or spiral. Earlier he discusses the relationship of meaning and understanding, and one can assume that it is by virtue of one's preunderstanding that questions are formed which are addressed to the text. The text, then, acts on the interpreter who is able to refine his questions, and the spiral continues.

Figure 5: Hermeneutical Spiral - Grant Osborne



McCartney and Clayton offer the same estimation of the nature of the relation between presuppositions and interpretation, albeit without the benefit of a diagram:

> We can think of this as a "hermeneutical spiral" or a "spiral of understanding." Although one must know the forest in order to understand the trees, it is also true that a knowledge of the trees builds up the understanding of the forest. Our presuppositions about the overall meaning of the Bible, and life in general for that matter, form the interpretive framework for understanding particular texts of the Bible, which in turn act as a corrective to the overall interpretive presuppositions. This continual interaction moves us up a spiral toward a "meeting of meaning" and understanding of the truth.[431]

Among Evangelical and non-evangelical theorists, it is generally held as virtually axiomatic that presuppositions and preunderstanding constitute the preconditions for interpretation. It is also generally held that if the interpreter comes to the object of his investigation with a willingness to interact with the text-in-itself, then this dialectical or conversational interaction can serve to shape the interpreter's preconditions into a greater conformity with the object of interpretation.

It is perhaps instructive that, amid the constant assertion that one's presuppositions form the foundation and possibility of interpretation, that this very framework can be changed by interaction with the text, and yet no theorist proposes that the assumption that all interpreters approach a text with presuppositions is itself subject to change. This assumption is never the object of change. An interpreter can apparently change any other presupposition he might hold, but he cannot change the presupposition that he always approaches the text with presuppositions. Additionally, the preunderstanding of the nature of understanding is not the object of change either. Yet cannot the question be asked, What if the text proposes a scenario of understanding that is contrary to the notion that understanding is a spiral? What if the text were to assert that understanding is linear, or entirely circular? Theorists do not entertain the possibility that the nature of understanding can be anything but a spiral. This assumption is never questioned, nor is the possibility entertained that a text might seek to change this scenario. It would seem that one must ask, Why are not these presuppositions about the nature of understanding subject to change? Are not these presuppositions just as much a part of the preunderstanding of these interpreters as any other presupposition? Perhaps not all presuppositions are mutable after all.

A Critique of the Current Evangelical View

To the careful observer it may seem that some evangelical theorists may not have explicitly considered all of the implications of their current thinking on the role of presuppositions in interpretation. At times they seem to be arguing that *unacceptable* presuppositions can lead to *acceptable* conclusions, which issues in a realization that the unacceptable presuppositions must be revised. Since no interpretation is ever be done apart from one's presuppositions, as the current thinking repeatedly warns, any given interpreter may come to the text with unacceptable presuppositions and employ these very unacceptable presuppositions in his initial encounter with the text. But current thinking says that somehow this interpreter arrives at the conclusion that at least some of his

initial presuppositions are unacceptable and should be altered or eliminated. It would seem to follow that in this situation the interpreter would have arrived at the conclusion that the very presuppositions that were employed in the interpretation of the text are unacceptable, and that this conclusion was reached on the basis of these very same unacceptable presuppositions. In such a scenario, it would clearly seem to be the case that unacceptable presuppositions have yielded an acceptable result. But if *unacceptable* presuppositions yield an *acceptable* understanding of the text, then what would be the evidence that would lead the interpreter to realize that his presuppositions were unacceptable? Acceptable results would not imply that revisions were needed in the interpreter's presuppositions, for it was these very presuppositions that yielded the acceptable result.

However, most Evangelicals respond that interpretation is not a purely logical process (moving only from premises to conclusions), but that there are, at least for the Christian, other factors to be considered in the interpretive process, such as the work of the Holy Spirit or the impact of the living and dynamic Word of God. In the experience of the Christian interpreter, unacceptable or faulty presuppositions are often overturned or reworked as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the interpreter. But this is precisely the point. If it is the case that the Holy Spirit of God can override, in a sense, the unacceptable presuppositions of an interpreter [and this author believes that this can and often must happen], then the work of the Holy Spirit transcends the function of presuppositions and preunderstanding in the interpretive process as this is described in the literature. If the work of the Holy Spirit or the human interaction with the living and dynamic Word of God transcends the function of presuppositions in the interpretive process, then the account of the role of preunderstanding and presuppositions found in contemporary explanations needs to be modified to account for this factor, since neither the Holy Spirit nor the Word of God as living and dynamic can be readily subsumed under the explanations of preunderstanding and presuppositions that are popularly expounded today.

Why cannot the work of the Holy Spirit or the Word of God as living and dynamic be subsumed under the explanations of preunderstanding and presuppositions that are popularly expounded today? Because in the initial encounter with the Word of God one would need to have these presuppositions before one could get them. These presuppositions would come either from the World of God itself, or by special, direct revelation. Barring any direct, special revelation to a given interpreter, the notion of the work of the Holy Spirit, for example, would either be something completely outside the preunderstanding of

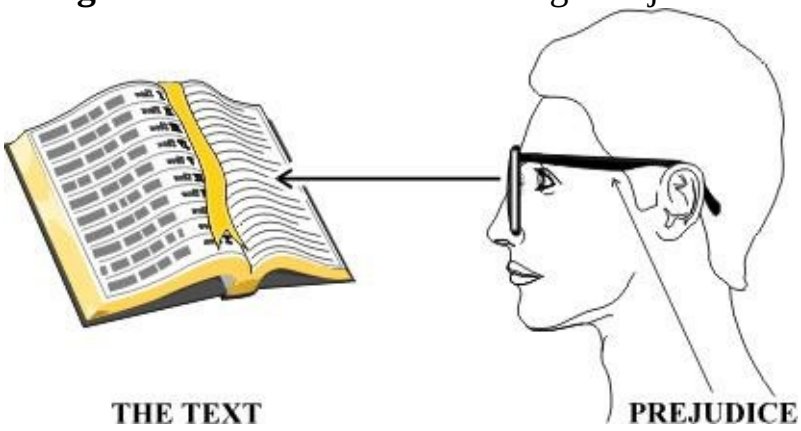
the interpreter, in which case this is contrary to the popular characterization, or the interpreter would need to have this presupposition already present before he initially comes to the text which would be the source of this presupposition. So, the interpreter would need to have the presupposition before he could get it. But, of course, this is contradictory.

However, returning to the strictly philosophical analysis of the current explanation of the role of presuppositions in interpretation, a more serious problem in this methodology seems to present itself. The seriousness of this problem is seen in the fact that, if the criticisms are accurate, a failure to adjust the current account of the role of presuppositions could seriously weaken the hermeneutical systems of which this scenario seems to be a necessary assumption.

As has been pointed out, assumptions that are faulty have adverse implications for the truth-claims of which they are the assumptions. The truth-claim of which a faulty assumption is a necessary condition can no longer function in a system as part of the body of truths for that system, since that proposition either is false or has no truth-value; the truth-claims which presuppose faulty assumptions become questionable themselves. It is one aim of this study to eliminate this weakness by identifying such faulty assumptions and to offer a direction toward an alternative explanation. Since it is an assumption of this book that the hermeneutical systems of Evangelical theorists are reasonable and viable, it is essential that the notion of the role of presuppositions be strengthened so as to help retain the integrity of the hermeneutical systems and methods proposed by these theorists.

According to the view described above, the starting point of interpretation is within the preunderstanding of the interpreter. As KBH describe the process, “After an initial study of the Biblical text, that text performs a work on the interpreter. His or her preunderstanding is no longer what it was.”[432] Their extensive textbook provides the student of the Bible with sound principles of interpretation incorporating the most recent advances in genre analysis coupled with traditional grammatical-historical interpretation. However, their proposals about the presuppositions and preunderstanding of the interpreter do not seem to provide the philosophical basis to sustain their hermeneutical system. The problem is not that their analysis is wrong. Rather, their characterization of the role of presuppositions and preunderstanding does not go far enough. They have not provided an adequate explanation to support the hermeneutic principles they espouse. It is not my goal to deny the truth of their explanation, but to add to their explanation what seem to be the necessary ingredients to secure the objectivity they affirm.

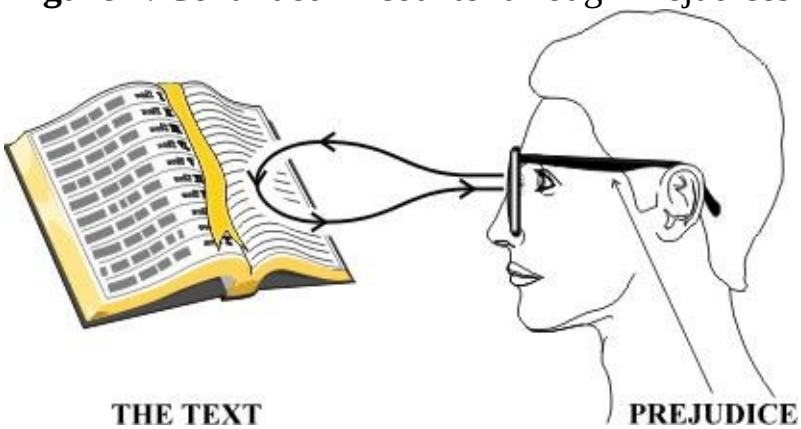
Figure 6: Initial Encounter through Prejudices



If it is the case, as KBH and most other theorists propose, that no one interprets anything without presuppositions, then upon approaching a given text, the interpreter will necessarily initially interpret the text through the grid of his presuppositions, or prejudices, as depicted in **Figure 6**.

This being the case, setting aside for the moment the supernatural factors mentioned above, the initial conclusions at which the interpreter arrives from his study of the text will be conclusions mediated through his always-already present presuppositions. According to the methodology proposed, the interpreter should then allow this understanding of the text to evaluate his presuppositions. The understanding that was initially gained in the interpreter's very first encounter with the text, however, was an understanding that was mediated through the very presuppositions which he now hopes will be changed by the text. However, it is through his always-already present presuppositions that he has gained this understanding in the first place.

Figure 7: Continued Encounter through Prejudices



Ultimately then, if it is one's interpretation, which has been made possible through his presuppositions, that the interpreter now employs to evaluate these very presuppositions, it seems that one's own presuppositions are employed to evaluate one's own presuppositions, as illustrated in **Figure 7**. The problem with this scenario is that, apart from the intervention of someone or something from outside the spiral, it is not the text *qua* text that is performing a work on the interpreter's presuppositions, prejudices, and preunderstanding. Rather, it is the text *after* the interpreter has interpreted it through his presuppositions in his very first encounter with the text that is supposed to exercise this function. As Nietzsche put it, "how should a tool be able to criticize itself when it can use only itself for the critique?"[433]

The text is interpreted through the presuppositional framework of the very interpreter whose preunderstanding is in need of modification. If it is the interpreted text that performs this work on the interpreter, then the limits of change of the interpreter's preunderstanding are preset by the interpreters always-already-existing presuppositional framework, and change at the starting point is not possible, apart from the intervention of something or someone that transcends the interpreter's presuppositional framework. The diagram by KBH in **Figure 4** indicates the inability to change the starting point by the fact that the first loop of the spiral returns to the preunderstanding of the interpreter above the level of his starting point.

Let us attempt to illustrate this problem. If an interpreter comes to the biblical text with an antisupernatural bias as part of his preunderstanding, then his interpretation of texts that make reference to supernatural events will be interpreted through this grid of antisupernaturalism. But, since his initial encounter with these texts is through this always-already present antisupernatural grid, his interpretation will, according to the popular methodology, yield conclusions that are supposed to instruct him that his antisupernatural presuppositions were unacceptable. But this does not seem to be a reasonable scenario. An interpreter who presupposes the impossibility of the supernatural will not naturally or logically interpret the text in such a way as to issue in a conclusion that would require the rejection of the very presuppositions through which he has interpreted this text. Unless someone or something outside the spiral intervenes there is no basis upon which to alter his perspective, and there is no basis for claiming that this should be possible. If, in fact, the interpretation of the text issues in the conclusion that his antisupernatural presuppositions were unacceptable, is it reasonable to think that it was these very antisupernatural presuppositions that yielded this interpretation? Would it not be more reasonable to think that some other assumptions of which the interpreter

may not have been consciously aware, such as objective, transcendental presuppositions, issued in the realization that an antisupernatural prejudice was unacceptable? But other such assumptions are not accounted for by the methodology proposed by contemporary theorists because this methodology talks strictly in terms of mutable frameworks of preunderstanding that cannot be universally true.

In fact, this is the strength of the relativist assertion. On what basis can it be argued or demonstrated that a thoroughgoing materialist would suddenly interpret the Bible from his materialist world view in such a manner that he would realize that he needed to change the very world view that has produced the interpretive conclusions? And yet, most Evangelicals would probably report that something very similar to this has happened either to them or someone they know personally. We were all enemies of God prior to our conversion. But, can we reasonably claim that our antagonistic world view somehow issued in an understanding of the Word of God that led us to jettison this antagonism and cast ourselves upon God's mercy? Such an event, by virtually universal testimony, was the act of God intervening in our lives, not a result of the spiral of understanding. But, this supernatural event came from outside our presuppositional framework and is not accounted for in the scenario of understanding.

Another problem arises also. If all aspects of our preunderstanding are mutable, subject to scrutiny and change, then there are no immutable, universal, or absolute presuppositions that provide the foundation upon which to verify a truth claim. How can we explain the fact that Born Again Christians seemed to have recognized the supernatural intervention as in fact supernatural and true? And, once God has altered one's antagonistic world view, or at least a sufficient part of it, to remove the enmity between us, does not this then become part of one's presuppositional framework? And now that this is part of our presuppositional framework, is it likewise subject to change and modification? If someone responds that this new aspect of our preunderstanding can grow and develop, that seems reasonable as far as it goes. But, would contemporary Evangelical theorists be willing to entertain the possibility that this new aspect of our preunderstanding can be jettisoned altogether? Of course someone will say something like this, "There is no reason to think that the text would lead the interpreter to make such a fundamental change." The problem with this response is that it comes dangerously close to objective truth and objective knowledge. If there is no objectivity, then what assurance can any theorist give that the text will not do precisely this in just the right circumstances? After all, contemporary theories do not make a distinction between universal presuppositions and

mutable aspects of our preunderstanding, and they do not entertain the possibility of transcendental presuppositions or of objectivity.[434]

This problem of presuppositional circularity is the basis upon which contemporary theorists declare that objectivity in interpretation is not possible. Our analysis will focus on the proposals by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard because they provide the most extensive effort among Evangelicals to explain the hermeneutical spiral. KBH are cognizant of this implication of subjectivity and relativism from the current theory and flatly deny any charge that their view "simply jettisons all inductive assessment of the facts or data of the text and its situation."[435] KBH seem to indicate that the appropriateness of the charge of subjectivity is obviated by the validity of their presuppositions. The self-referential problem in this assertion almost goes without comment. Who determines what presuppositions are valid? Would not one's presuppositions necessarily be employed in evaluating the validity of one's presuppositions. They seem to be saying that if their presuppositions are valid, then their interpretation is not subjective. The question is, Valid for whom? Who decides what is valid? They assert, "Recognizing the role of our preunderstanding does not doom us to a closed circle—that we find in a text what we want to find in a text—though that looms as an ever-present danger."[436] How, then, does an interpreter insure that he does not succumb to the ever-present danger of circular subjectivity? According to KBH, the hermeneutical process is a spiral:

> The honest, active interpreter remains open to change, even to a significant transformation of preunderstanding. This is the hermeneutical *spiral*. Since we accept the Bible's authority, we remain open to correction by its message. There are ways to verify interpretations or, at least, to validate some interpretive options as more likely than others. It is not a matter of simply throwing the dice. There is a wide variety of methods available to help us find what the original texts most likely meant to their initial readers. Every time we alter our preunderstanding as the result of our interaction with the text we demonstrate that the process has objective constraints, otherwise, no change would occur; we would remain forever entombed in our prior commitments.[437]

A number of inconsistencies seem to be present in this explanation, however. First of all, KBH acknowledge a prior commitment to the Bible's authority. Yet they assert that unless they are willing to allow for the possibility of change in their preunderstanding, an aspect of which is their commitment to the Bible's authority, they would remain forever "entombed" in their prior commitments. Do they mean to imply, then, that they are willing to entertain the possibility that they will change their commitment to the Bible's authority? According to their own criteria, as honest, active interpreters, they must remain open to this significant transformation of their preunderstanding.

In other words, KBH seem on the one hand to be committed to the authority of the Bible as a doctrinal non-negotiable. This seems clear from such assertions as: “

Secular historians may view the Bible only as a collection of ancient religious texts. To treat it as such—which often occurs in academia or among theologically liberal critics—cannot lead to valid conclusions about the religious value or significance of the Bible. The results are clearly ‘sterile.’ However, as authors we believe that the Bible is the divine word of God. Only from that stance can we use our historical and critical methods and arrive at theologically meaningful and pertinent results.”[438]

However, on the other hand, their explanation of the role of presuppositions and preunderstanding indicates that there can be no presuppositional non-negotiables. In other words, for KBH, all presuppositions are subject to change. However, the very fact that KBH assert that the assumption that the Bible is simply a collection of ancient religious texts “cannot lead to valid conclusions about the religious value or significance of the Bible” indicates that an interpreter with these “liberal” presuppositions *cannot* arrive at a conclusion that will invalidate these presuppositions. If “liberal” presuppositions cannot lead to “valid” conclusions, then how can “non-liberal” presuppositions lead to “non-valid” conclusions? But, if their own non-liberal presupposition—biblical authority—cannot lead to non-valid conclusions, then how can their commitment to biblical authority be negotiable? And, if their commitment to biblical authority is non-negotiable, then what does it mean for them to declare that all presuppositions are changeable? It seems as if their own commitment to biblical authority is a presuppositional non-negotiable.

For the moment, let us grant that their commitment to biblical authority is mutable, is capable of being changed or even abandoned. If they were to change their commitment to the Bible’s authority on the basis of their interpretation of the biblical text, then the authority of the biblical text to correct their prior commitment to its authority is no longer authoritative. However, if the Bible is no longer authoritative, then why submit to its corrective instruction?

As interpreters who are committed to the Bible’s authority, they claim to be “open to correction by its message.” How do they come to understand this message? They come to understand the Bible’s message by interpreting the various passages through which this message is communicated. But their interpretation is already filtered through their prior commitments. Consequently, their understanding of the message is an understanding of the message *as they interpret it through the framework of their preunderstanding*. If, then, they are understanding the message of the Bible through the framework of their

preunderstanding, which includes their prior commitments, then ultimately it is their own prior commitments that are the means of correcting their prior commitments.

In an effort to escape what seems to be a vicious circle, KBH appeal to the concept of the Divine image in man to which they refer in a quote from Larkin: "because God made people in his own image they have the capacity to 'transcend preunderstanding, evaluate it, and change it.'"[439] In this reference, Larkin asserts, "The mind of the interpreter, whether regenerate or unregenerate, evidences the fact that humans are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26)."[440] Larkin's timely and important contribution to the field is specifically dedicated to opposing the rampant relativism in contemporary hermeneutic theory by reaffirming traditional hermeneutical principles. Larkin hits the relativist head-on with sound argumentation, tracing the hermeneutical and philosophical roots of the contemporary "crisis of biblical authority."[441]

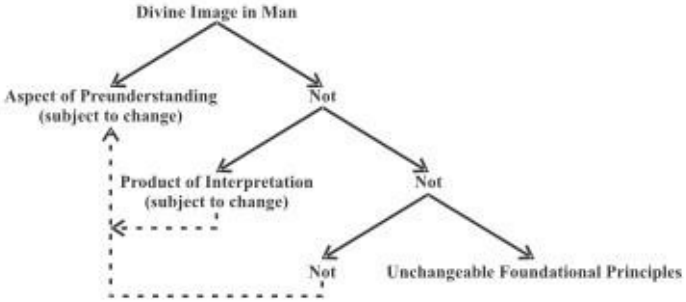
Nevertheless, Larkin's account of the role of presuppositions and preunderstanding needs further consideration in order to support his repudiation of relativism in hermeneutic theory. Note, for example, that viewing man as having been created in the image of God is a "prior commitment" characteristic of someone who already accepts the Bible's authoritative teaching on this matter. Indeed, the concept of the Divine image in man is a concept that derives from the biblical text as evidenced by Larkin's reference to Gen. 1:26. According to the prevailing view, however, in so far as it is derived from the biblical text, it is subject to the preconditional framework of the interpreter. Other interpreters may, and in fact do, hold contrary and even contradictory points of view about what constitutes the Divine image in man, or that such a thing exists. The fact that Larkin makes reference to the biblical passage from which his notion of the Divine image in man comes indicates that Larkin's view derives from his interpretation of the biblical text which has been mediated through his already present preunderstanding.

According to the standards set by KBH, and assuming Larkin to be an honest, active interpreter, Larkin must at least be open to changing his interpretation of the nature of the Divine image because it is the product of his interpretation mediated through his mutable preunderstanding. However, if the notion of the Divine image in man is subject to change, then this would have serious implications for the hedge against circularity as KBH and Larkin are attempting to employ it.

KBH, Larkin, and others employ an appeal to the divine image as if this were a "brute fact" which obtains apart from their interpretations of any text.

Indeed, they employ this interpretive conclusion as if it is an objective interpretation. If this is the case, and it cannot be ruled out *a priori* that this is in fact the case, then it must not be an aspect of one's preunderstanding as this is popularly defined, since preunderstanding is mutable and the concept of the Divine image in man is treated by these theorists as if it were immutable. Either it is a changeable aspect of one's preunderstanding, or it is not. If it is not a changeable aspect of one's preunderstanding, then it is either derived from the text as a product of one's interpretation, in which case it is the result of the application of one's own preunderstanding to the text and is therefore subject to change, or it is not. If it is not, then it is either an unchangeable foundation principle, or it is not. If it is not, then it is a changeable foundational principle; but this is just another name for one's preunderstanding. **Figure 8** illustrates these dichotomies.

Figure 8: Foundation Principles



But, if the image of God in man is an unchangeable foundation principle, then it is not the case that all presuppositions and every facet of one's preunderstanding is changeable. Along with the unchangeable logical principles of contradiction, excluded middle, and identity, there is this additional transcendental presupposition, the image of God in man.

So, it is either the case that all presuppositions are subject to change and significant transformation as part of one's preunderstanding, or some are not. Those presuppositions that are immutable cannot, then, be part of one's preunderstanding as it is popularly defined, since, according to the current wisdom, all preunderstanding is subject to change. The assertions of KBH, Larkin, Osborne, and others indicate that there may be presuppositions, in addition to the transcendental presuppositions of logic discussed above, that in fact are not subject to change. According to these analyses, it may be the case that there are other necessary, unchangeable foundation principles upon which the interpretation of anything is based and which transcend all points of view and all perspectives. At least, this seems to be the way in which KBH, Larkin,

Osborne, and others employ some of their own principles. For KBH it is the commitment to the Bible's authority. For Larkin, it is the Divine image in man. For Osborne it is placing ourselves "in front of the text" so that it can "address and if necessary change a presupposed perspective."[442] For virtually all theorists there is at least one unchangeable, foundational principle—the assumption that interpretation is always through the interpreter's framework of preunderstanding.

Similar observations can be made concerning the proposals of McCartney and Clayton. They assert that the interpreter's most basic presuppositions and his subordinate presuppositions should "be brought into line with that of the biblical writers."[443] But how does one come to know what are the presuppositions of the biblical writers? This would necessarily involve interpreting the biblical text. If it is necessary to interpret the biblical text in order to discover the presuppositions of the biblical writers, how can one know whether what one concludes from his interpretation are the actual presuppositions of the biblical writers, or whether they are merely the *perceived* view of the biblical author being mediated through the interpreter's own presuppositions? McCartney and Clayton acknowledge that "our presuppositions are going to influence how we look at our presuppositions,"[444] but will they not also influence how one looks at the presuppositions of the biblical writers? They admit that the process of recognizing one's presuppositions is "an exceedingly difficult process," but they urge the process of attempting to recognize one's presuppositions in order to "evaluate whether and to what degree they are in harmony with those of the Bible;" further, they insist that this is a lifetime project that "must continually be undertaken."[445] They go on to assert, "In fact, we should say that *the key to interpreting the Bible is to allow it to change and mold our presuppositions* into an interpretive framework compatible with the Bible."[446]

It seems, however, that they have not avoided the self-referential problem, and their description seems to involve them in the same kind of problem. Although McCartney and Clayton acknowledge the presence of this circularity when they admit that one's presuppositions are going to influence how one looks at his presuppositions, and although they claim that, in spite of this circularity, the task is not hopeless, they offer no substantive means of escape. They propose that the interpreter should examine his presuppositions to see whether they are "compatible with the Bible." How does the interpreter come to understand what is and what is not compatible with the Bible? Would not one have to interpret the Bible in order to discover what the Bible says? Ultimately, the interpreter's understanding of what is compatible with the Bible is the result of his interpretation of the Bible, which has already been influenced by his

presuppositions since no interpretation is possible without them. To assert that our presuppositions must be brought into line with that of the biblical writers offers no hope since in order to know what the biblical writers said, we must interpret their texts, and in this view no one interprets any text apart from his presuppositional framework. Once again we are involved in what seems to be a hopeless circle that never allows an objective grasp of the text, but allows the interpreter to know only the interpretation of the text through his always-already present framework of understanding.

Adjudication between those presuppositions that are considered acceptable and those that are considered unacceptable, following the methods that have been proposed by KBH, McCartney and Clayton, Larkin, and Osborne, is supposed to involve a critical examination of one's presuppositions in the effort to arrive at those that are acceptable. Yet apart from the intervention of someone or something outside the spiral, no escape from circularity seems to be forthcoming. Strictly on the basis of the explanations of the role of presuppositions and preunderstanding, no methodology has been proposed that would enable the interpreter to transcend his perspective. No unchangeable presuppositions have been offered that might serve as an immutable standard of judgment. No one seems to be able to propose a "view from nowhere" that would allow for a completely objective perspective. Examining one's presuppositions to discover those that are acceptable is ultimately, according to the current wisdom, simply a function of the always already present framework. How can we legitimately argue that our own framework can examine itself in order to evaluate whether it is acceptable?

Additionally, no Evangelical hermeneutician seems to have articulated a standard by which one can judge between what are acceptable and what are unacceptable presuppositions. This is not to say that Evangelicals do not believe that it is possible to adjudicate between good and bad interpretations. They certainly do offer extensive and effective explanations and examples of hermeneutical principles designed to lead an interpreter to a correct understanding of the text. However, on the level of presuppositions at the starting point of the hermeneutic process, short of the intervention of someone or something outside the spiral, none of the explanations offered allows for the possibility of adjudicating between presuppositions, nor do their methodologies support their own hermeneutical principles on this point. Such a standard cannot derive from the results of their interpretations of the biblical texts regardless of the assumed authority of the text. Even though one believes the Bible to be authoritative, it must still be interpreted, and if all interpretation is mediated through the mutable preunderstanding of the interpreter, which by their own

assertions cannot be objective, no non-mediated result can ever be achieved, and thus no objective standard would seem to be accessible. As the relativist asserts, the results are results for me—not universally true or transcendently applicable.

This conclusion, however, is not considered by everyone to be a defect. In fact, some theorists have proposed that not only is no objective starting point necessary, no such starting point is either possible or even desirable. With reference to this circularity and the idea of a starting point, Peters asserts,

> The most important consequence of the circularity of understanding for hermeneutics is that there is no pure starting point for understanding because every act of understanding takes place within a finite historically conditioned horizon, within an already understood frame of reference. It is no longer a question of how we are to enter the hermeneutical circle, because human consciousness is always already in it. We understand only by constant reference to what we have already understood, namely, our past and anticipated experience. The experiencing and reflecting subject is never a *tabula rasa* upon which the understanding of raw experience inscribes its objective character; rather, all experience and reflection are the result of a confrontation between one's pre-understanding or even prejudice and new or perhaps strange objects. The inevitable presence of pre-understanding or prejudice is not necessarily the distortion of the meaning of an object by an arbitrary subject, rather, it is the very condition for any understanding at all.[447]

On the one hand Peters asserts that there is in fact no "starting point" *per se* since "we are already always in it." On the other hand he disclaims any adverse effects on meaning. If, however, all interpretation is only mediated through one's preunderstanding, to say that there is no "distortion of the meaning" is nonsensical, since whatever meaning one obtains can never be evaluated with reference to an unmediated meaning against which the interpreted meaning can be judged as a distortion of *the* meaning. The only way any given interpretation can be disqualified as a "distortion of the meaning" is if someone possesses "the meaning" against which any other particular meaning is able to be judged. If all meanings are mediated meanings, then no meaning is "the" meaning. To assume that any particular meaning can be a distortion of "the" meaning not only assumes that "the" meaning exists, but that it is somehow accessible. This is what is meant by the "objective" meaning, which is precisely what Peters rejects.

Many Evangelicals have also concluded that objectivity is not possible. Cotterell and Turner have contributed to the field by producing a volume that incorporates the latest advances in the field of linguistics. In their analysis of the role of the reader in interpretation, they assert, "Any confidence in the 'objectivity' of our findings must be further called into question by the frank recognition that many if not all scholars would be prepared to admit they are *ultimately* studying Paul (or Calvin or whomever) *in order to understand themselves and their God*."[448] They acknowledge that this notion implies the

danger of misunderstanding and distortion, but they assert that this does not create a hopelessness in the interpreter's quest for the "discourse meaning." The influence of the interpreter, and the lack of objectivity should, they claim, "generate the appropriate caution, both in respect of method and in the degree of certainty we attach to our 'conclusions.' We need fully to recognize that *our* reading of the letter to Philemon (or whatever), however certain we may feel it is what Paul meant, *is actually only a hypothesis*—our *hypothesis—about the discourse meaning*. It is the result of seeing certain aspects of the text and of providing what *we understand* to be the meaning that provides coherence to the evidence."[449]

The problem here is that if any interpretation of anything whatever is only a hypothesis, then no one possesses a non-hypothetical interpretation. If no non-hypothetical interpretation exists, then what is being used to measure everyone's interpretations by which the authors discover that all interpretations are only hypothetical? How can it be known that all interpretations are only hypothetical if a non-hypothetical interpretation from which to judge does not exist? Additionally, how can the reader, according to this scenario, obtain anything but a hypothetical interpretation of the analysis of Cotterell and Turner. In fact, Cotterell and Turner present their analysis as if they expect the reader to have an objective interpretation of what they are asserting. They seem to have committed the fallacy of the lost distinction. They allow for no non-hypothetical interpretation, yet they globally assert that all interpretations are only hypothetical. Is this claim only hypothetical, or is it objectively true? Do these authors posses the non-hypothetical interpretation on the basis of which they can confidently assert that all interpretations are only hypothetical? If no one possess the measuring stick, then against what are they measuring? Cotterell and Turner do not consider these kinds of problems.

Silva also discusses the question of the possibility of objectivity when he asserts, "In effect, this is what historical exegesis has had as its goal; total objectivity on the part of the interpreter so as to prevent injecting into the text any meaning other than the strictly historical one. But such objectivity does not exist. And if it did exist it would be of little use, because then we would simply be involved in a bare repetition of the text that takes no account of its abiding value."[450] Silva attributes this hermeneutical methodology to the influence of Immanuel Kant of whose work Silva says it was "undoubtedly a major turning point between modern thought and everything that preceded it."[451] Its effect was "so broad and so fundamental in character that no intellectual discipline could escape its impact—not even biblical interpretation, though it took a while for

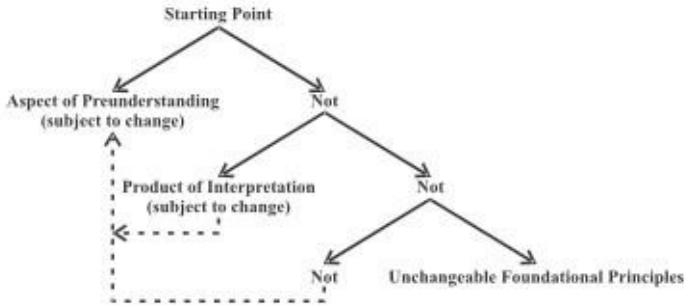
exegetes to figure out what was happening."[452]

According to Silva, this influence has resulted in a distinctive character attributable to contemporary hermeneutics, namely, "its emphasis on the *subjectivity* and *relativity* of interpretation."[453] In light of the influence of subjectivity and relativity in the hard sciences through such historical figures as Kant and Kuhn, Silva concludes, "For one thing, these developments tell us that we probably have overestimated the differences between the sciences and the humanities. In both of these broad disciplines, the researcher is faced with a set of data that can be interpreted *only in the light of previous commitments*; in both cases, therefore, an interpreter comes—consciously or unconsciously—with a theory that seeks to account for as many facts as possible. Given the finite nature of every human interpreter, no explanation accounts for the data exhaustively."[454]

If every interpreter comes with his own theory which ultimately cannot account for the data exhaustively, then it seems to follow that Silva's conclusion is a result of his own theory, which he has brought to the data of hermeneutics, and his own explanation does not account for the data exhaustively. In other words, since no explanation, including Silva's own explanation, accounts for the data exhaustively, it may be the case that there is some other starting point which might be objectively based which has not been accounted for by the explanations of contemporary theorists. In fact, this proposal cannot be rejected on the basis of the notion of preunderstanding which has been advocated by all the theorists who have been surveyed and referred to so far. It follows then, that some objective starting point may possibly exist for which the explanations of other theorists simply have not accounted, because, according to Silva, no explanation exhaustively accounts for all the data. By modifying the illustration in **Figure 8** , this argument may be diagramed as depicted in **Figure 9**.

Either the starting point is an aspect of one's mutable preunderstanding or it is not. If it is, then the hermeneutical circle seems to be vicious, and there is no means to adjudicate between acceptable and unacceptable presuppositions. If it is not, then one's starting point is either a product of one's interpretation, or it is not. If it is, then we are back in the vicious hermeneutical circle. If it is not, then one's starting point is either an unchangeable foundation principle or it is not. If it is not, then the only options are that it is either a part of one's preunderstanding, or it is a result of one's interpretation. If, however, one's starting point is an unchangeable, foundation principle, then it must transcend the mutable aspects of one's preunderstanding, in which case it would seem to provide an objective starting point for interpretation.

Figure 9: Objective Starting Point of Interpretation



Summary and Conclusion

From the previous analysis, several implications seem to follow. First of all, hermeneutic theorists are generally agreed that the fundamental ingredient in a viable hermeneutical theory is the nature and role of presuppositions or preunderstanding. Although a variety of terms are used to identify this web of preconditions, the prevailing view is that there are necessary and inevitable preconditions that make interpretation possible, and to assume that interpretation can be done without these preconditions—what some theorists refer to as scientific objectivity—is naive and impossible. In fact, to think that one can approach any interpretive task without presuppositions is itself a presupposition.

This being the case, it becomes clear that the most basic issue in the question of objectivity in interpretation is the nature and role of what are held to be the necessary preconditions of interpretation. These preconditions have been identified as presuppositions, preunderstanding, prejudice, worldview, and many other descriptive terms that all attempt to capture the broad span of the nature of understanding. Hermeneuticians almost universally assert that no interpreter approaches a text, or indeed life itself, with a *tabula rasa*, a "blank slate." Whether these preconditions are understood to be the fore-structure of *Dasein*, or an appropriate level of preunderstanding, whether they are existential or theological, whether they are an acquiescence to consciousness or an acknowledgment of an authoritative body of Scripture, they are ever present and provide the framework in which interpretation and understanding take place.

A second implication can be drawn from the first that is just as universal as the acknowledgment of the inevitability and necessity of these preconditions. This equally universal assumption is that, notwithstanding the diversity of opinion about what constitutes presuppositions and preunderstanding, these preconditions of interpretation are understood to be rational in nature. The identification of presuppositions as "conceptions" or "preconceived ideas" or "prior beliefs" or that which "mediates understanding," mirror the descriptive

expressions of Existentialism and Phenomenology in terms of consciousness and the rational structures of *Dasein.* Little doubt seems to remain that the modern Evangelical understanding of the nature of presuppositions has been significantly influenced by the Phenomenology that has descended from Heidegger through Gadamer and Bultmann and Modern rationalist and idealist scholarship. Indeed, it would seem that the philosophical background of hermeneutic theory today gives evidence of an almost universal acquiescence to the Cartesian/Kantian starting point and the linguistic turn in modern epistemology. Hermeneutic methodology seems to be universally predicated on the basis of the rational and the cognitive rather than on the real, and the necessary preconditions of interpretation are likewise enumerated in terms of the rational and the cognitive. There is virtually no theorist that entertains the possibility that extra-mental reality in any way constitutes an objective basis for rational and cognitive exercises. Of course, this seems to be an obvious and necessary conclusion. Since interpretation and understanding are acts of the mind, or acts of reason, then it would seem to be necessarily the case that the preconditions of interpretation would be rational in nature. It seems obvious that what is not rational, or cognitive, would not be "in the mind."

A third implication is a virtually universally held assumption that remains emphatically unalterable no matter what the text or life experience seems to say. This assumption is that, despite the virtually unanimous claim that every interpreter begins with a preunderstanding, that every interpreter comes to the text with prejudices or presuppositions, these preconditions of understanding are nevertheless mutable and can be modified or altered by honest interaction with the text or with the world. No theorist seems to entertain the possibility that an encounter with any text or any life experience will ever be able to alter the basic assumption that presuppositions can change. So, for all the claims that the preconditions of interpretation can be molded and even altered, the fact remains that there are at least three presuppositions that no one seems willing to modify: 1) the presupposition that all interpretation necessarily involves presuppositions; 2) the presupposition that these presuppositions necessarily mediate understanding; and 3) the presupposition that all presuppositions are mutable, changeable, alterable, and capable of being rejected by the continued interaction of the interpreter with the text or with the world.

Additionally, it would seem that the adamant rejection of classical foundationalism, as we considered in chapter 3, has simply been replaced by a fixed and immutable phenomenological foundationalism. This foundationalism is composed of the notion that presuppositions, or preunderstanding, or prejudices, or horizon of expectation, or historical situatedness, or theory

ladenness, or linguistic determinism, or whatever other term may be used, are the necessary and inevitable foundation of interpretation. However, this precondition for interpretation is no less a foundation than the classical foundation which virtually all modern theorists reject. Additionally, it is presented as being just as universally and absolutely true as the classical foundations were supposed to have been. Although these preconditions are subject to change, alteration, and even elimination, the fact of a preconditionedness, and particularly a preconditionedness that is decidedly rational, or mental, or phenomenological is beyond question, self-evident, and undeniable. There can be no preconditionlessness in interpretation, no presuppositionless interpretation. This view is no less a foundation for interpretation in biblical hermeneutics than in philosophical hermeneutics. This foundation has almost all the earmarks of classical foundationalism. The one thing it does not seem to have is a grounding in anything outside the mind of the interpreter.

None of these theorists assert that presuppositions or preunderstanding is inevitable "for me." None of these interpreters claim that "I" cannot come to a text without a framework of understanding. No one claims that "my" presuppositions are changeable, though perhaps yours are not. Rather, all these theorists claim that *everyone* comes to a text or to the world with an always, already present framework of understanding. All these theorists affirm that *no one* comes to a text or to the world with a *tabula rasa*. All these theorists claim that *everyone's* presuppositions are changeable (except of course the presupposition that everyone's presuppositions are changeable). Everyone declares that *no one* can have absolute objectivity. As before, this survey shows that scholars in the field of hermeneutics, Evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike, working from contrary and often contradictory perspectives and interpreting the same hermeneutic data, arrive at the same conclusion. The universal assertions about the preconditions of interpretation seem to be just as much an immutable, undeniable, unavoidable foundation as the foundationalism that everyone takes pains to reject. Once again this would seem to be an instance of the very objectivity in interpretation that all these theorists deny.

6 PRESUPPOSITIONS AND OBJECTIVITY RECONSIDERED

Introduction

The possibility of objectivity or an objective starting point for hermeneutics brings this study back to the central question. Contemporary thought has expended a great amount of energy attempting to dispense with the traditional notion of objectivity. For the purposes of clarity, let us restate the logic of our investigation that was introduced in chapter 2.

First, we acknowledge that there are conflicting interpretations of the Bible, and, as Christians, we want to know which interpretation is the correct one. But, many contemporary thinkers declare that there is no such thing as a *correct* interpretation because everyone comes to the text with his own always-already-present presuppositions forms a framework of understanding through which he interprets the text. Because it is impossible, according to these thinkers, to jettison one's always-already-present framework, this necessarily obviates the possibility of objectivity in interpretation.

This argument may be schematized as follows:

1. Everyone comes to the text with his own always-already-present framework.

2. No particular always-already-present framework is universally valid.

3. But, universal validity is precisely what is implied in the notion of objectivity.

4. Therefore, no interpreter can be objective in interpretation.

5. But, if no interpreter can be objective, then no interpretation is universally valid.

6. But, if no interpretation is universally valid, then the concept of a *correct* interpretation is at best relative or at worst empty.

7. Since there is no such thing as a correct interpretation, there is no means of adjudicating between interpretations.

8. In fact, the very idea of adjudicating between interpretations is at best

relative and at worst empty.

Secondly, Evangelical thinkers adamantly maintain that there is a *correct* interpretation of the Bible, or at least one that is more correct than its competitors, and that this interpretation is, at least theoretically, attainable. However, Evangelical thinkers, along with theorists who do not espouse any particular religious commitment, reject the notion of objectivity, or what some call "total objectivity," and likewise assert that everyone comes to the text with his or her own always-already-present framework.

Thirdly, if contemporary thinkers are correct in claiming that our always-already-present frameworks are unavoidable, and if they are correct that these always-already-present frameworks obviate objectivity, then how can Evangelical thinkers maintain the notion of a correct or more correct interpretation while holding to the unavoidability of this framework and what seems to be a necessary rejection of objectivity? This is the principle concern of this book, namely, how is it possible to maintain the fact of the always-already-present framework of every interpreter and at the same time maintain the possibility of objectivity in interpretation?

In our investigation so far, we have confirmed either in whole or in part several of the propositions listed under the First consideration above, but we have also disconfirmed several others. Let us reconsider the eight propositions in light of the investigation so far:

1. Everyone comes to the text with his own always-already-present framework.

Everyone we consulted, whether working in the field of biblical studies, hermeneutics both secular and Evangelical, natural science, historical studies, philosophy, or linguistics acknowledges the fact of the always-already-present framework of understanding that makes knowledge possible. Everyone declared that there is no such thing as presuppositionless interpretation. This seems to have been confirmed by our investigation.

2. No particular always-already-present framework is universally valid.

Again, our research shows that almost no one holds that a particular always-already-present framework is universally valid. Everyone encounters his or her world from an individual or culturally determined point of view, and no

one can disqualify another's perspective since a particular evaluation will necessarily be exercised from one's own always-already-present framework. As Marilyn Piety puts it, "The idea has been advanced that human behavior, or more specifically, choice, can only be understood as rational within a particular conceptual framework. Proponents of this view contend that any possible system of justification must be understood as relative to a particular framework or system of values and hence that it is not possible to make rational choices *between* frameworks."[455] The incommensurability of paradigms is held to be universally true and an undeniable part of the always-already-present framework for all interpreters. This ubiquitous belief is imposed on any would-be theorist as firmly as any religious dogma. This fact, coupled with the equally ubiquitous though unacknowledged presence of the basic laws of thought (non-contradiction, identity, excluded middle, etc.) serve to undermine the proposition that no particular framework is universally valid. In fact, the assumption that no particular framework is universally valid is held to be universally valid, and it is declared so in contradiction to any attempts to deny that this is so.

3. But, universal validity is precisely what is implied in the notion of objectivity.

Our brief survey of contemporary notions of objectivity confirms the fact that objectivity is almost always talked about in terms either of some kind of neutrality or of some universally applicable perspective. Although some theorists have attempted to redefine objectivity in terms of inter-subjectivity, or objectivity relative to a given culture or language community, or some other restricted domain such as one's own framework, these attempts are intelligible only against the more traditional notion of objectivity as neutrality and universal validity. This neutrality is usually discussed in terms of a supposed presuppositionlessness or lack of prejudice, or bias, or particularizing perspective. This very neutrality is assumed to be the basis for universal validity. Almost all theorists acknowledge that this is the notion of objectivity against which they propose their own points of view and contrary to which they propose the perspectival nature of all knowledge, understanding, and interpretation.

4. Therefore, no interpreter can have objectivity in interpretation.

Once again we have seen that this is almost universally held to be absolutely true for everyone. Almost all theorists hold that objectivity is either 1) a chimera, 2) impossible to obtain, or 3) even if possible, certainly undesirable.[456] The assumption that all frameworks are unique to each person, or at least unique to each culture or language community, make neutral objectivity

literally unthinkable. However, we have also seen that all these theorists, approaching the data from sometimes mutually exclusive perspectives, have arrived at this same conclusion, and this very fact militates against the rejection of objectivity. The impossibility or undesirability of objectivity is presented as if it were an objective and universally valid understanding.

5. But, if no interpreter can be objective, then no interpretation is universally valid.

We have also discovered that even among Evangelicals there is an unwillingness to assert that anyone's interpretation can be universally valid. Yet in the very act of declaring that no interpretation is universally valid, all these theorists, Evangelical and non-evangelical alike, assert their interpretation of the hermeneutical and philosophical data to be universally valid. They instruct their readers that once the reader has considered all factors, he must come to the same interpretive conclusion, namely, that no interpretation is universally valid. Apparently, the only universally valid interpretation is that no interpretation is universally valid.

6. But, if no interpretation is universally valid, then the concept of a *correct* interpretation is at best relative or at worst empty.

Traditionally, orthodox Christians have maintained that there is a *correct* interpretation of the Bible, and that the *correct* interpretation is obtainable, at least in theory, if the proper hermeneutical methodology is employed. Generally speaking, contemporary Evangelicals preserve this ideal in their writings. Theorists propounding a secular or philosophical hermeneutics declare exactly the contradictory, namely, that there is no such thing as a *correct* interpretation. However, they consistently present their conclusion as if it is *the correct* interpretation.

7. Since there is no such thing as a *correct* interpretation, there is no means of adjudicating between interpretations.

If there is no *correct* interpretation, then on what basis do theorists declare a contradictory analysis to be false? If there is no *correct* interpretation of the data, then it is not correct to conclude that there is no such thing as a *correct* interpretation. Concluding that there is no correct interpretation of the data is only their own interpretation of the data, which, by their own lights, cannot be *the* correct interpretation of the data. All those theorists who declare that there is no correct interpretation use their arguments to adjudicate between their interpretation of the data and contradictory interpretations of the data. They

believe their interpretation is right and any contradictory interpretation is wrong. They hold to their ~A as over against anyone else's A. Their own claims that their analysis must be the true analysis is a counter-example to their own theories.

8. In fact, the very idea of adjudicating between interpretations is at best relative and at worst empty.

Once again, a brief survey of the claims is sufficient to expose the self-defeating nature of this proposition. If the very idea of adjudicating between interpretations is either relative or empty, then why do these theorists produce so many thousands of pages of argumentation to promote their interpretation as over against its contradictory?

It would seem to be the case that there is in fact a real possibility of objectivity. Indeed, it would seem to be the case that the critics have actually confirmed this possibility by their noncontradictory assertions in which they adamantly affirm their interpretation of the phenomena to be the only possible interpretation, universally valid, absolutely true, and unassailably correct. They have in fact demonstrated the very objectivity that they declare cannot be possible. But, if objectivity is a real possibility, then, how can we deal with the problems of objectivity as we saw these in science, history, language, and hermeneutics?

The Problem of Objectivity Reconsidered

In his chapter on contemporary approaches to interpretation, Moisés Silva makes the following remark: "Throughout the centuries people have assumed without a second thought that our perception of data corresponds exactly with objective reality. If we see a black horse, it *must* be black—and it certainly must be a horse! After all, how could the work of science proceed without such assurance?"[457] However, as we will see, the problems that have been associated with a correspondence view of truth assume a representationalist approach to the question of knowledge and objectivity that is in the Cartesian/Kantian tradition.[458] It is this very operating assumption that is at the root of the problem for the question of objectivity.

Silva is certainly not unaware of these problems. In his brief analysis of this tradition he acknowledges its Kantian roots, and he offers a helpful description of this perspective when he points out that not even science can escape the impact of Kant: "Observers never see things as they are in themselves,[459] since the mind is no mere receptacle molded by physical sensations, but rather an

active organ that brings order to the chaotic stream of data it confronts.[460] One might as well admit that the world *as we know it* is a world created by our own ordering of sensations."[461] Silva is not advocating this perspective, but simply explaining its implications. This seems to be the inevitable conclusion to which one must arrive once one sets out on a path based on Kantian principles. As Gilson puts it, "The whole question here is whether it is possible to overcome Kantian agnosticism 'starting from its own principles.' To this we must answer: no, for Kantian agnosticism is inscribed within the principles from which it flows, which is precisely why they are its principles."[462]

As we have seen, the notion of objectivity is a topic of dispute in a number of disciplines. In chapter 2 we looked at various contemporary notions of the nature of objectivity. David Bell, for example, identified an ontological concept of objectivity—something is objective if it exists, and is the way it is, independently of any knowledge, perception, conception or consciousness there may be of it—and an epistemological concept of objectivity—objectivity construed as a property of the contents of mental acts and states.[463] Allan Megill, identifies four principal senses of the terms "objective" and "objectivity": Absolute objectivity, Disciplinary objectivity, Dialectical objectivity and Procedural objectivity.[464]

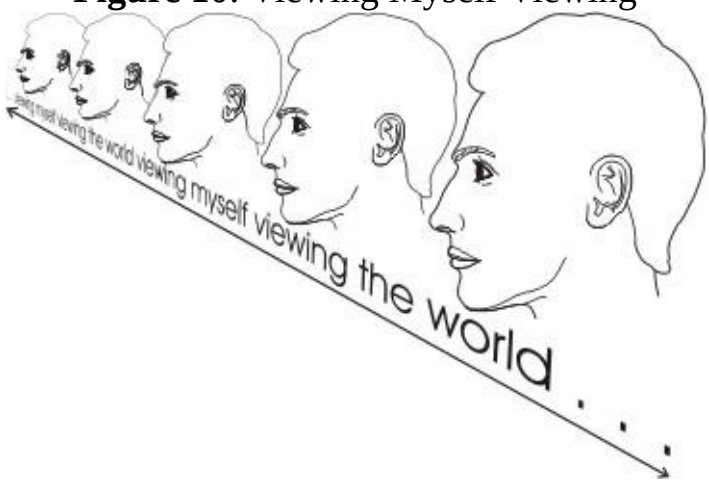
As we observed, Megill dedicates the bulk of his criticism toward the notion of an absolute objectivity. In his analysis, Megill makes reference to Thomas Nagel's claims set forth in his book titled *The View From Nowhere*.[465] Nagel proposed that the notion of objectivity is one of degrees such that some assertions are more objective than others. He asserted, for example, that the "standpoint of morality is more objective than that of private life, but less objective than the standpoint of physics."[466]

The problem that Nagel addresses is identified by Megill as an unavoidable limit of absolute objectivity. Megill asserts that the extreme of absolute objectivity "is a view that we find impossible to situate, for it would need to view itself viewing, and so on *ad infinitum*."[467] In Nagel's own words,

> Objectivity and skepticism are closely related: both develop from the idea that there is a real world in which we are contained, and that appearances result from our interaction with the rest of it. We cannot accept those appearances uncritically, but must try to understand what our own constitution contributes to them. To do this we try to develop an idea of the world with ourselves in it, an account of both ourselves and the world that includes an explanation of why it initially appears to us as it does. But this idea, since it is we who develop it, is likewise the product of interaction between us and the world, though the interaction is more complicated and more self-conscious than the original one. If the initial appearances cannot be relied upon because they depend on our constitution in ways that we do not fully understand, this more complex idea should be open to the same doubts, for

whatever we use to understand certain interactions between ourselves and the world is not itself the object of that understanding. However often we may try to step outside of ourselves, something will have to stay behind the lens, something in us will determine the resulting picture, and this will give grounds for doubt that we are really getting any closer to reality.[468]

Figure 10: Viewing Myself Viewing



As Megill characterized it, this is a case of me viewing the world viewing me viewing the world viewing me viewing the world, etc., etc., etc. (see **Figure 10**). However, both Nagel's and Megill's problem with absolute objectivity assumes a representationalist epistemology.[469] The very definition that Megill provides for absolute objectivity— representing things as they really are—is the very nature of a representationalist epistemology, and Nagel's own use of metaphors such as "picture" and "lens" indicates a similar assumption. As Nagel correctly notes, a claim to objectivity is not a claim of the absolute comprehensiveness of all reality: "An objective standpoint is created by leaving a more subjective, individual, or even just human perspective behind; but there are things about the world and life and ourselves that cannot be adequately understood from a maximally objective standpoint, however much it may extend our understanding beyond the point from which we started."[470]

Nagel's evaluation of the relative objectivity, as it were, of one's standpoint tacitly assumes an absolute standard of objectivity by which the degrees can be measured. Unless this standard is known, it cannot function as a measure; but, if this standard *is* known, this implies an objectivity that does not admit of degrees. In other words, for Nagel to make this observation he must assume the very absolute objectivity that he claims is impossible.

Nagel describes the "objective standpoint" as "created by leaving a more subjective, individual, or even just human perspective behind," but he warns that "there are things about the world and life and ourselves that cannot be

adequately understood from a maximally objective standpoint, however much it may extend our understanding beyond the point from which we started."[471] He goes on to warn that "the attempt to give a complete account of the world in objective terms detached from these perspectives inevitably leads to false reductions or to outright denial that certain patently real phenomena exist at all."[472] But how could Nagel know this? How could he know that a particular account of the world that purports to be completely objective would yield false reductions and denials of real phenomena unless he had such a view against which to judge the competing view. This seems to be a self-refuting claim that assumes the capacity to make a distinction between a claim and the actual state of affairs which Nagel says cannot possibly be known.

If no one has a completely objective account of the world, then how can Nagel presume to judge what one would look like? If someone claimed to have a completely objective perspective, which Nagel claims is not possible, then Nagel's judgement of the success or failure of his opponent's claim would not be a valid judgement since Nagel's criticism, by his own admission, would not be a completely objective account that could account for his opponent's claim to complete objectivity. By disallowing complete objectivity, Nagel has forfeited the only standard of measuring claims of complete objectivity.

Megill goes on to observe, "In much twentieth-century philosophical discussion, objectivity is presented as less a matter of 'representing things as they really are' than as a matter of arriving at criteria for judging claims to have represented things as they really are."[473] Once again this assumes a standard of measure, and that standard of measure has, in modern conceptions of objectivity, been understood in terms of one's point of view or intellectual framework. Typical of this notion is the statement made by Nagel that, "Since it is impossible to leave one's own point of view behind entirely without ceasing to exist, the metaphor of getting outside ourselves must have another meaning."[474] Apparently Nagel has been able to leave his own point of view behind entirely in order to be able to judge absolutely that no one can do such a thing. For Nagel, the other meaning is a balance between what he sees as the limits of objectivity owing to our finitude, and our capacity for self-transformation. In other words, there must be some means by which we are able to rework our intellectual frameworks.

Megill asserts that the notion of absolute objectivity is paradoxical "since knowledge that is objective in this sense escapes by definition the constraints of subjectivity and partiality; yet if such a view is to be all embracing it must include the particular views that also make up reality as we know it. . . . taken to

its extreme, absolute objectivity offers a 'view from nowhere': it is a view that we find impossible to situate, for it would need to view itself viewing, and so on *ad infinitum*."[475] But this would be the case only if representationalism were true. The fact that Megill and Nagel use a "viewer" metaphor and other modes of expression that depict knowing as a picturing indicates that they are conceptualizing the act of knowing in a representationalist sense.

The act of knowing is not necessarily representational in that sense, however, and a second intentional reflection is sufficient to account for the knowing of the knower.[476] Both Megill and Nagel, in assuming a representationalist epistemology have confused the distinction between first intention and second intention,[477] and have assumed that reflexive thinking would necessarily involve an infinite series of events. However, any subsequent act of second intention would simply be another instance of second intention, and would not be different from the initial instance of second intention. Consequently, there is no *ad infinitum* problem. Moreover, the problem they discuss is only relevant to a representationalist epistemology. As L. M. Régis points out, "When doubt is identified with error, and when what is doubtful *to me* is considered equal to what is doubtful *in itself*, no criterion of truth and error remains but *my mind*, which thus becomes *the* rule of truth, and the *cogito* remains the only logical position from which to construct a philosophy."[478] Régis is critiquing Descartes, but the principle is applicable beyond this specific case. When one's own doubt about the possibility of objectivity is identified with the possibility of objectivity *in itself*, then the standard of measure for objectivity becomes one's own mind, and this is thoroughly Cartesian.

Reference has already been made to Bernstein's notion of objectivism, but reference must be made to the fact that Bernstein also understands objectivity in terms of a representationalist epistemology. As he asserts, "In modern times objectivism has been closely linked with an acceptance of a basic metaphysical or epistemological distinction between the subject and the object. What is 'out there' (objective) is presumed to be independent of us (subjects), and knowledge is achieved when a subject correctly mirrors or represents objective reality."[479] Although Bernstein does point out that the mirror notion of objectivism is not the only variety, the only other versions to which he makes reference are other versions of a representationalist approach.

The weakness of the mirror or representationalist approach is that there can never be a means of discovering whether one's mirror is an accurate representation of the world "out there" since the "out there" is always out there, and what is in the mind is always only a mirror or copy or representation of it. In

order to be able to know that what is in the mind is faithful in its representing what exists in extra-mental reality, a notion of objectivity must somehow propose how the mind is able to bring the "out there" "in here" by some means other than as a copy or representation, so that what is in the mind *is*, in some way, what is out there.

Similar views on the possibility of objectivity can be found in the writings of Evangelicals. In his massive work on the New Testament, N. T. Wright asserts, "There is no such thing as the 'neutral' or 'objective' observer;[480] equally there is no such thing as the *detached* observer."[481] According to Wright, an observer always looks at things from his own perspective or point of view. As he says,

> First, the observer is looking from one point of view, and one only; and there is no such thing as a god's-eye view (by which would be meant a *Deist* god's-eye view) available to human beings, a point of view which is no human's point of view. Second, and consequent upon this, all humans inevitably and naturally interpret the information received from their senses through a grid of expectations, memories, stories, psychological states, and so on. The point of view is not merely peculiar in terms of location (I am standing on this side of the room, not that side, so my viewpoint is different from yours); it is also peculiar in terms of the lenses of my worldview (as various writers have shown, a tacit and pre-theoretical point of view is itself a necessary condition for any perception and knowledge to occur at all).[482]

Wright goes on in his work to address the nature of world views and their relation to interpretation, but the above quote is sufficient to illustrate that the same kinds of reasoning about perspectivalism are articulated among Christian writers who assume a representationalist epistemology.

Objectivity and Representationalism

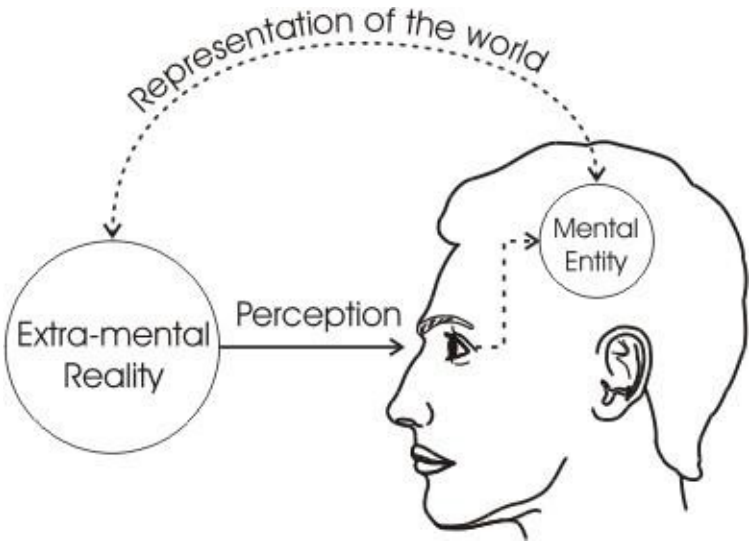
It would seem that the underlying problem with the notion of objectivity stems from a representationalist epistemology. Epistemology has traditionally been the study of knowledge, addressing the questions, "What is knowledge?" and "How do we know?" There have been a variety of proposals throughout the history of philosophy, but since the speculations of Descartes, there has been a prevailing assumption about one very basic notion. When a person is confronted by the world outside the mind, the mind encounters the world through the senses and forms a representation of the outside world. As J. Alberto Coffa puts it, "A long tradition, canonized in the *Logique de Port Royal*, had declared ideas or representations the most important subject of logic, since 'we can have knowledge of what is outside us only through the mediation of ideas in us.'"[483] The term "ideas" can have a variety of significations in representationalism. It

can be equivalent to what we usually think of as an idea. It can refer to some kind of copy or some kind of entity that the mind forms in response to the sense experience. Whatever name is given this entity, the notion that the mind must form some representation that is the object of knowledge seems to be a necessary consequence of two very basic facts. The world is composed of material objects that have extension and take up space. The mind, on the other hand, in distinction from the brain, is immaterial. Consequently, it is obviously impossible to get a material object into one's mind. The mind must somehow form a representation, some kind of mental entity, to stand for or to represent to the mind the reality that exists outside the mind.

According to this scenario then, the goal of epistemology is to understand and describe how the mind is able accurately to represent the world, and how it is possible for a perceiver to know that he has accurately represented the world. As Richard Rorty puts it, a representationalist epistemology views knowledge as "a matter of getting reality right."[484] In other words, a representationalist epistemology attempts to explain how the mind makes a representation of the world, and how the knower can be certain that this representation is an accurate representation.

Of course the problems with representationalist epistemologies have been discussed throughout the history of philosophy, and in chapter 3 we have looked at some recent criticisms. Briefly the problem arises from the fact that in a representationalist epistemology the mind will always and only have a representation of reality, never reality itself. Reality will always be outside the mind, and the representation will always be inside the mind. Consequently, there seems to be no way for the mind to get reality and its representation together in order to compare them to see whether the mind's representation accurately represents the real world (see **Figure 11**).

Figure 11: Representationalism



Objectivity and Foundationalism Reconsidered

The critiques of Representationalism are almost always accompanied by or followed by a critique and consequent rejection of foundationalism.[485] In his introduction to the book, *Antifoundationalism Old and New*, Tom Rockmore seeks to justify yet another volume on antifoundationalism. This justification is necessary, according to Rockmore, because, "If everyone, or nearly everyone, has switched to antifoundationalism, if most of the recalcitrants have now been converted to this new religion, is there still something that needs to be said?"[486] In an effort to place the debate in its historical context, and to set the stage for the clarifications that the various articles in his book will attempt to make, Rockmore gives rough definitions of both foundationalism and antifoundationalism. Of foundationalism he says, "Roughly speaking, we can understand foundationalism as the epistemological doctrine that there are or can be secure foundations for knowledge." He continues, "Conversely, antifoundationalism is, roughly speaking, the view that there are and can be no secure foundations for knowledge, which in term implies the denial that a grounded system is possible as well as the denial of the possibility of philosophy if philosophy in general is held to depend on an epistemological ground."[487] It certainly follows that if the mind contains only a representation of reality, and not reality itself, there is no "objective" ground or foundation for knowledge. Although some form of foundationalism has been the dominate view throughout the history of philosophy, antifoundationalism has gained supporters to the point that, as has been noted, it has become the prevailing view.

As Moreland and Craig observe, "The main objection to classical foundationalism is that there simply are no incorrigible (or infallible, certain,

indubitable) beliefs. Critics of strong foundationalism cite ways that alleged incorrigible beliefs could turn out to be corrigible or fallible and use these counterexamples to argue against the existence of incorrigible beliefs."[488] Typical of the modern approach, antifoundationalists generally either ignore or misrepresent an entire tradition of epistemology and metaphysics in their characterization of foundationalism. For example, Rockmore identifies "three main approaches to knowledge in the philosophical tradition . . . intuitionism, foundationalism, and antifoundationalism."[489] Even in his further elaboration of "three ideal-typical forms of foundationalism" Rockmore passes over this long standing tradition.[490] This is not surprising since the tendency to misrepresent or ignore classical or Thomist foundationalism, or inappropriately to lump it into the Cartesian category, are all too common.

With respect to the question of the viability of classical foundationalism, an observation made by Etienne Gilson is enlightening. In his book on the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas he said, "problems raised by philosophers are part and parcel of the answers which they give to them."[491] This is certainly true in the case of the criticisms Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff have raised against the foundationalism that they attribute to St. Thomas and modern philosophy. The very formulation of their question assumes some critical philosophical positions which they then impose upon their analysis of the foundationalism of Thomas. Consequently, when they provide their criticisms and offer their solutions, their system naturally appears to satisfy the needs which they have already covertly imported into the framing of the problem. In other words, they have asked the question in such a way as to anticipate the answer supplied by their epistemology. The criticisms of classical foundationalism by Plantinga and Wolterstorff are characteristic of the misrepresentation of this tradition.

Classical Foundationalism According to Plantinga and Wolterstorff

In his little book titled, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, Nicholas Wolterstorff devotes a chapter to an explanation of what he understands to be classical foundationalism. After a brief introduction and three definitional statements, Wolterstorff provides a conclusion in which he defines foundationalism: "In sum, the foundationalist sees the house of genuine science as firmly based on a foundation of certitudes which can be known noninferentially. He urges that we accept or reject a given theory wholly on the basis of our warranted belief that the theory belongs or does not belong to genuine science. Only if we thus govern our acceptance of theories can we move

towards eliminating prejudice, bias, and unjustified conjecture from the enterprise of theorizing."[492]

Alvin Plantinga concurs with Wolterstorff's estimation of the nature of foundationalism and asserts, "This picture [classical foundationalism] has had a long and distinguished career in the history of philosophy, including among its adherents Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and, to leap to the present, Professor Roderick Chisholm."[493] Plantinga asserts that a foundationalist is one for whom "some propositions are *properly* or *rightly* basic . . . and some are not. Those that are not, are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, ultimately, to what is properly basic."[494] However, not any proposition qualifies as properly or rightly basic. Propositions that are properly basic "are not accepted on the basis of other propositions. I *know* the propositions in the foundations of my noetic structure, but not by virtue of knowing other propositions; for these are the ones I start with."[495]

Finally, Plantinga presents what he believes to be the foundationalism of Thomas Aquinas. He asserts,

> According to Aquinas, therefore, self-evident propositions and those evident to the senses belong in the foundations. And when he speaks of propositions of the latter sort, he means such propositions as
> (1) there's a tree over there,
> (2) there is an ashtray on my desk,
> (3) that tree's leaves have turned yellow, and
> (4) this fender has rusted through.[496]

David Wisdo provides a helpful definition of Classical Foundationalism as discussed by the Reformed Epistemologists. "According to the classical foundationalist [as understood by Plantinga, et. al.], a person is within his or her epistemic rights to hold a belief only if the belief is properly basic, that is, self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses, or if the belief can be supported in some fashion by an appeal to beliefs that are basic."[497]

With reference to belief in God, Plantinga asserts, "Aquinas and the evidentialist objector concur, then, in holding that belief in God is rationally acceptable only if there is evidence for it— only if, that is, it is probable with respect to some body of propositions that constitute evidence. . . . The existence of God, furthermore, is not among the propositions that are properly basic; hence a person is rational in accepting theistic belief only if he has evidence for it."[498] Since Plantinga equates self-evidence and proper basicality in Aquinas, this means that Plantinga thinks that Aquinas believes that the knowledge of the

existence of God is not self-evident.

Misrepresentation of Aquinas by Plantinga and Wolterstorff

Misrepresentation of Faith and Knowledge in Aquinas

In his evaluation of Aquinas' view of the knowledge of God, Plantinga juxtaposes knowledge and faith. He says, "So natural knowledge of God [according to Aquinas] is possible. But the vast majority of those who believe in God, he thinks, do not have knowledge of God's existence but must instead take it on faith."[499] In support of his reading of Aquinas he quotes a portion from Thomas' *Summa Theologica*: "For the rational truth about God would have appeared to only a few, and even so after a long time and mixed with many errors, whereas on knowing this depends our whole welfare, which is in God (ST, Ia, I,1)."[500]

However, what Plantinga neglects to mention is that in this very article Aquinas identifies that which is necessary for man's salvation as "a knowledge revealed by God besides philosophical science built up by human reason."[501] Contrary to Plantinga's reading, Aquinas does not hold that faith is not knowledge in some sense. Even the portion Plantinga quotes is quoted out of context, which results in a misrepresentation. The larger context is provided below.

> Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be *made known* [*instrui*] to him by divine revelation. Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. Whereas man's whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that besides philosophical science [*philosophicas disciplinas*] built up by reason, there should be a sacred science [*sacram doctrinam*] learned through revelation.[502]

Plantinga sets up a distinction between "taking on faith" and "knowledge" such that the first is believed on the basis of the veracity of God, while the latter is only known through demonstration. But, as Thomas Russman points out, "This way of distinguishing between faith and knowledge is clearly *not* Aquinas' view, as is manifest from the very texts Plantinga cites in support of it."[503] For Aquinas, faith is indeed a source of knowledge. In fact, it is such knowledge that, since God is the source of the truth that we believe, "there could be no more reliable source of information."[504]

Misrepresentation of the Notion of Self-evidence in Aquinas

Along with Plantinga's misunderstanding of Aquinas' notion of the relation of faith and knowledge is the misrepresentation of Aquinas' notion of what it means for a proposition to be self-evident, and concomitantly, Plantinga's misrepresentation of Aquinas' position on the self-evidential status of belief in God. Plantinga asserts, "The existence of God, furthermore, is not among the propositions that are properly basic; hence a person is rational in accepting theistic belief only if he has evidence for it."[505] However, Aquinas asserts that there is a sense in which the existence of God is self-evident: "For assuredly that God exists is, absolutely speaking, self-evident, since what God is is His own being."[506]

What can account for this discrepancy between what Plantinga reports about Aquinas and what Aquinas actually says? Since Plantinga's epistemology is essentially a representationalism, he is naturally predisposed to define the notion of "self-evidence" in terms of the purely rational. Plantinga's examples of what he believes Aquinas would consider self-evident propositions are presented on pages 55 and 56 of his article, "Reason and Belief in God." As St. Thomas points out in another place, "Those propositions are said to be self-evident that are known immediately upon the knowledge of their terms."[507] Consequently, Henri DuLac observes,

> Mr. Plantinga seems to regard "self-evident" propositions as simply "easily known." It would be quite inaccurate to regard that as St. Thomas's view. St. Thomas is clear that a proposition *per se notum* is one in which the predicate is contained in the definition of the subject. If one takes the propositions (13) to (23) that Plantinga has on pages 55 and 56, it seems to me that St. Thomas would recognize only 19 (The whole is greater than the part) and 20 (Man is an animal) as *per se nota*.[508]

In fact, Plantinga flatly states that what constitutes these propositions as self-evident is that "one simply sees it to be true upon grasping or understanding it."[509] As close as this sounds to what Aquinas describes in the earlier quote, there is a crucial distinction. For a proposition to be self-evident for Thomas it is not simply a case that the proposition is immediately understood. For example, the proposition "That door is brown," is immediately understood when one simply sees the door. However, the concept "brown" is not contained in the concept "door." Consequently, for Aquinas, this would not be a self-evident proposition.

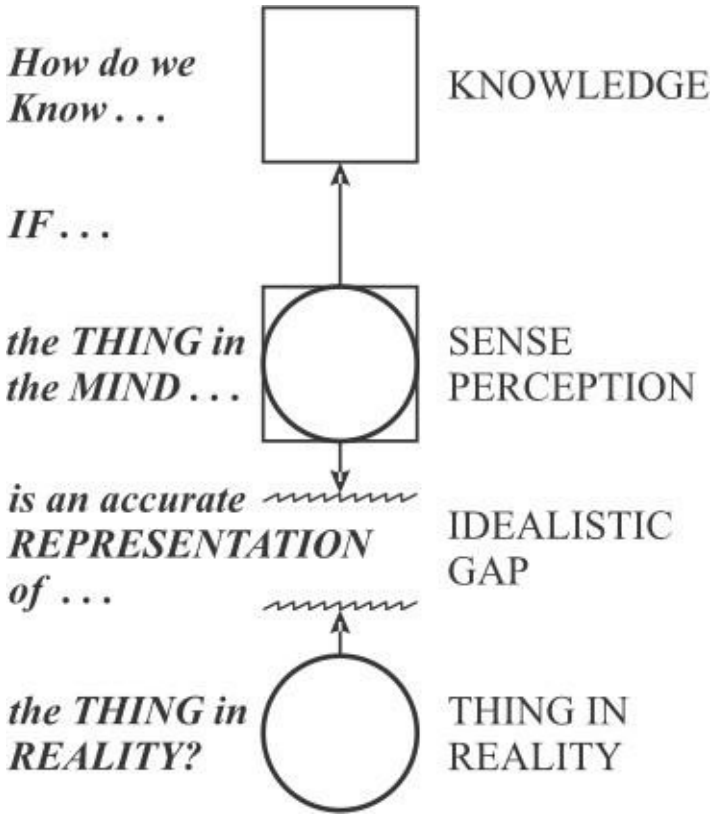
But this should not lead to a similar error in understanding as that committed by Plantinga. That is to say, the understanding of self-evident

propositions for Aquinas is not the same as the analytic *a priori* of Analytic Philosophy. Although for the analytic philosopher analytic *a priori* propositions are necessary propositions, they are not derived from experience, nor do they say anything about the real world. Without engaging in a long explanation of the notions involved, suffice it to say that for Aquinas, analytic propositions can be necessary, they can be derived from experience, and they can say something about the real world. This is precisely why Aquinas makes a distinction between propositions that are self-evident in themselves, and also to us, and those propositions that are self-evident in themselves and not to us. How can Aquinas make such a distinction since the idea of anything being self-evident seems to be a term describing a relation of knowledge between the knower and what is known? In other words, the term "self-evident" is specifically applied to things that are or are not *evident*. But, to be evident is to be known, and the act of knowing is an act of a knower, not of the known.

On the contrary, however, to define the idea of being "evident" strictly in terms of the rational capacity of a knower is a decidedly modern approach. For Aquinas, knowledge is not primarily a rational exercise. Rather, it is a metaphysical event. For St. Thomas, knowledge is a function of the metaphysics of the knower and the known. It is the nature of both the knower and the known that forms the basis for the act of knowledge. Aquinas' definition of knowledge would be paradigmatically different from Plantinga's definition. For Aquinas the definition of knowledge is when the knower and the known become one. Not so for Plantinga.

In support of these observations is the tacit acceptance by Plantinga of what he identifies as the "ancient and honorable tradition [that] knowledge is *justified true belief*."[510] This definition of knowledge is decidedly modern and is predicated on the Cartesian assumption of the bifurcation of mind and matter. The characteristic formulation of the question of knowledge in the modern era is, "How do you know if the thing in the mind is an accurate representation of the thing in reality?" The diagram in **Figure 12**: Epistemic Justification illustrates this approach.

Figure 12: Epistemic Justification



In his article titled "'Reformed' Epistemology," Thomas A. Russman entertains the possibility that Plantinga and Wolterstorff "are influenced . . . by modern skepticism."[511] He makes the following observations.

> At first it may seem unlikely that Plantinga and Wolterstorff are influenced in this way by modern skepticism. Both seem to believe that our sensory perceptions are to be relied upon. But why do they believe this? Perhaps, like Descartes and Leibniz, they believe this only because of a prior belief in God, a God who cannot deceive and who therefore underwrites the harmony between subject and object that we call knowledge. Descartes and Leibniz claimed to arrive at knowledge of God's existence by "proof" — while Plantinga and Wolterstorff claim to arrive at it by direct intuition; but all of them claim that the source of such knowledge is ultimately innate.[512]

Unfortunately for modern epistemologists, the notion that knowledge is justified, true belief, this ancient and honorable tradition, has come under devastating attack from one among their ranks. In 1963 a professor of philosophy named Edmund L. Gettier published a short article in the journal *Analysis* entitled, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" In this article Gettier posed two scenarios as counter examples to this definition of knowledge that shook contemporary epistemology to its very core. Gettier's scenarios are rather long, so I will present a comparable scenario that is shorter in order to illustrate the problem.

Suppose you are driving in your car, and you see a cow in a field. When you arrive at the place where the cow is, you discover that it was in fact not a cow, but was simply a life-size, cut-out picture of a cow. However, immediately behind this cut-out is a real cow, in the same field. The question is, did you know there was a cow in the field? (1) It was true that a cow was in the field. (2) You believed there was a cow in the field. (3) You were justified in believing there was a cow in the field. But, in fact you did not *know* there was a cow in the field even though it was justified true belief.

Since Gettier articulated these counter examples, contemporary epistemologists have endeavored, unsuccessfully, to overcome this problem. Consequently, the skepticism about knowledge proposed by Gettier's counter examples has yet to be dissipated. Jonathan Dancy asserts that there are three possible routes to take to respond to Gettier:

> 1 find some means to show that the counter-examples [of Gettier] do not work;
> 2 accept the counter-examples and search for a supplement to the tripartite analysis [justified, true belief] which excludes them;
> 3 accept the counter-examples and alter the tripartite analysis to suit rather than adding anything to it.[513]

In his article on positive epistemic status, Plantinga recognizes the problem that Gettier's counter-examples pose. He says, "Knowledge, so we thought for untold generations, is justified true belief; and even in this enlightened post-Gettier era, we still think justification and knowledge intimately related."[514] In a footnote to this statement Plantinga declares that "Edmund Gettier showed us the error of our ways,"[515] that is, the error of defining knowledge as justified true belief. But Plantinga does not therefore reject the notion of knowledge as justified, true belief. Rather, Plantinga takes Dancy's second route and attempts to find some other ingredient that is necessary for knowledge. Plantinga indicates this when he says, "What is it that distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief? What is this elusive quality or quantity enough of which, together with truth and belief, is sufficient for knowledge? Call that quantity, whatever it is, 'warrant'."[516] Knowledge, for the Reformed epistemologist, is still justified true belief. Only for Plantinga, justification has been converted to warrant—warranted, true belief. For Plantingas, then, warrant is what justifies belief. In light of Plantinga's acceptance of this basic notion of knowledge, and in light of Russman's observations about the apparent influence of skepticism on Plantinga and Wolterstorff, it seems very likely that Russman's evaluation is an accurate appraisal. As Russman goes on to point out,

> Now, if *this* is the kind of thinking that motivates Plantinga and Wolterstorff, it clarifies a great deal. Their realism about sense perception is of a distinctly modern sort. It takes modern skepticism seriously and then claims to find a way around it by invoking the divine veracity. The latter is known by direct intuition, not dependent upon the reliability of the senses—thus avoiding circularity. Such preoccupations would explain their strong preference for innate ideas as the basis for belief in God and the strong dissatisfaction with the evidence of the senses as a basis. Nothing else we have discovered appears to explain adequately the strength of these views as held by Plantinga and Wolterstorff.[517]

The upshot of this is, Plantinga and Wolterstorff are operating on the basis of a representationalist epistemology. This approach necessarily involves the bifurcation of what is known from extra-mental reality. In a revealing comment, Plantinga states, "upon being appeared to in the familiar way, I find myself holding the belief that there is a large tree before me;"[518]
Why then has Plantinga misunderstood Aquinas' notion of self-evident propositions? Henry B. Veatch makes some pertinent observations on this very point. After briefly tracing the shift in the notion of the nature of self-evident propositions from the Thomistic to the Cartesian and ultimately Kantian notion of Analytic truths, Veatch explains,

> And so returning, then, to Al Plantinga and his Calvinist-Analyst cohorts, as well as to that conception of theirs of self-evident truths, that we found to be so different from Aquinas' conception, may we not now see that Plantinga's conception of self-evident truths simply reflects that long and dubious heritage which present-day Analytic Philosophy has arrogated to itself from Descartes and from Kant? Self-evident truths, in short, are nowadays conceived, for the most part quite uncritically, as we would think, as being purely *a priori* truths, and not based on experience at all; and, likewise, they are conceived as being truths that are little more than purely verbal and, for that reason, as not in any way informative as regards things in the world at all.[519]

Contrary to the claims of Plantinga and Wolterstorff, Thomas Aquinas simply is not an advocate of the foundationalism which these Reformed epistemologists describe and criticize. As Henry Veatch points out, ". . . St. Thomas never interprets the Foundationalist Principle as being the sole criterion of the rationality of our beliefs, be this either in matters of religious belief or in philosophy." As St. Thomas himself says, "As stated above (1, 4;2, 1), the believer's intellect assents to that which he believes, not because he sees it either in itself, or by resolving it to first self-evident principles [*per se visa*], but because his will commands his intellect to assent."[520] The so called Classical Foundationalism which Plantinga and Wolterstorff reject is ultimately the rationalism of Descartes, not the scholasticism of St. Thomas. Additionally, Thomas does not believe that, even for scientific knowledge, that non-basic propositions must necessarily derive from, be inferred from, or be deduced from

basic propositions. Once again Cartesian rationalism has been attributed to Thomistic scholasticism.

Objectivity and Relativism

Antifoundationalism seems ultimately to introduce relativism. If there are no certain foundations for knowledge, if there are no indubitable truths, then relativism seems to follow necessarily. Harold I. Brown made the connection between relativism and antifoundationalism when he said, "the argument [the charge that relativism is incoherent] has no force against any consistent relativism, even the extreme relativism of Protagoras. Its apparent cogency derives from a tacit acceptance of the absolutist assumption that we are justified in making a knowledge claim only if it is based on an unquestionable foundation."[521] In other words, because there are no indubitable foundations, relativism is irrefutable. The fact that Brown has a Cartesian or deductivist foundationalism in mind rather than the foundationalism of St. Thomas is revealed in his characterization that, in foundationalism, "knowledge requires an indubitable foundation and that knowledge is developed by building on that foundation."[522] Although we have not discussed the Thomistic brand of foundationalism in detail, we have pointed out that it does not hold to this deductivist relationship between knowledge and foundations.

A major aspect of the current debate about objectivity concerns the opposition between objectivity and relativism, and it seems that relativism is intimately associated with antifoundationalism. In a discussion on the role of the reader in interpretation, Silva points out, "For proponents of 'reader-response theory,' however—at least in its more extreme forms—there is no such thing as an objective text. Insofar as every reader brings an interpretive framework to the text, to that extent every reader generates a new meaning and thus creates a new text."[523] This brief description highlights an aspect of the "framework" approach to interpretation that at once reveals its tendency toward relativism, and, at the same time, manifests the inescapable necessity of an objective reference point.

The claim that each reader generates a "new" meaning is intelligible only relative to some other "meaning" against which the "new" meaning is understood to be "new." If this claim is simply a claim that each reader's "new" meaning is different from another interpreter's "older" meaning, the claim is trivial. However, as Silva points out, the extreme reader-response position makes this claim as a counter example to the claim of an "objective" meaning. But if there is no objective meaning, then it would not be possible to measure the new meaning in order to discover its newness, i.e., lack of or opposition to an

objective meaning. The only way to measure the supposedly new meaning as new is if the old, objective, meaning were known and employed as a standard of measure to measure the relative newness of each new meaning.

If the old, objective meaning is known, then it is not the case that there is "no such thing as an objective text." In fact, the objective text must exist and be susceptible of being known in order for the claim to "newness" to have any meaning. In other words, framework relativism is completely unintelligible apart from some absolute standard of measure. The point is that as soon as an absolute standard of measure is admitted, framework relativism is refuted.

This kind of criticism of relativism is not new. Harvey Siegel observes that relativism is almost as old a philosophy itself. As he points out, "Epistemological relativism has been defended by a variety of thinkers stretching back at least as far as Protagoras. For just as long, however, others have thought the doctrine to be incoherent because self-refuting. This is perhaps the most fundamental challenge faced by the relativist."[524]

Siegel asserts that epistemological relativism undermines the very notion of rightness:

> Put in terms of *ER* [Epistemological Relativism], the *UVNR* [Undermines the Very Notion of Rightness] argument can be cast as follows. Assume *ER* to be a rationally justifiable position. Then there are good reasons for holding *ER*. But good reasons cannot be biased or non-neutral or arbitrary or idiosyncratic . . . Therefore, if *ER* is rationally justifiable, there must be some non-relative, neutral (with respect to the presuppositions of relativists and non-relativists) framework or ground from which we can make that judgment. Thus *ER*, which denies the possibility of such a framework, is incorrect. In short, if relativism is rationally justifiable, it must have a non-relativistic ground, which possibility it denies. Thus *ER*, if true, is not rationally justifiable, since if *ER* is true there can be no neutral ground from which to assess the rational justifiability of any claim, including *ER* itself. Moreover, if *ER* is (true and) rationally justifiable, then it is false, for the rational defense of *ER* requires the sort of non-relativistic ground which *ER* itself denies. Thus *ER* is either not rationally justifiable, or false. The assertion and defense of *ER* is thus self-refuting, and so incoherent.[525]

Siegel's argument applies not only to the initial assertions of relativism, but to the efforts to defend relativism against this kind of attack. Relativists counter this approach by claiming that the absolutist assumes his absolutism and therefore begs the question. But it is not accurate to say that the absolutist *assumes* absolutism. Rather an absolute standard of measure is simply undeniable. As soon as the relativist undertakes to establish his position as true, he assumes an absolute standard. It is the undeniability of an absolute that defeats the relativist, not a question-begging assumption on the part of the absolutist.

Jack W. Meiland is a theorist who claims that relativism is not self-

refuting.[526] In his article entitled, "Concepts of Relative Truth," Meiland acknowledges that, on the basis of the absoluteness of truth, the relativist thesis succumbs to the self-referential criticism.[527] Meiland argues, however, that the concept of relative truth has been misinterpreted by the absolutist. He claims that the absolutist employs "a *two*-term relation between statements . . . on the one hand and facts . . . on the other," whereas the relativist employs "a *three*-term relation between statements, the world, and a third term which is either persons, world views, or historical and cultural situations."[528]

Siegel presents a lengthy analysis of Meiland's claims and shows how Meiland's three-term relation cannot admit a distinction between the world and the third term. What can distinguish the "world" from "the world as perceived by the relativist"? If the relativist admits an absolute "world," then he has admitted what he says is impossible. If, however, there is no "absolute" world, but only a "world as perceived by the relativist," then there is only a two-term, not a three-term, relation; and, as Siegel points out, "Meiland has not shown that his conception of relative truth avoids reliance on the absolute conception, and so he has not shown that his analysis avoids the self-refutation problem it is designed to avoid."[529]

Ultimately, Siegel demonstrates that any attempt of the relativist to assert his position as true *vis-à-vis* the absolutist employs a self-referential problem. As he summarizes,

> unless the relativist can say why a relative truth which is true-for-her is superior to or more worthy of belief than a relative truth which is true-for-someone-else—which she can't, since, in embracing relativism, she has given up the very notion of worthiness of belief—then adoption of one relative truth over another on the grounds that the adopted truth is true for the person doing the adopting is arbitrary. *p*'s truth-for-Jones is not in any way superior to not-*p*'s truth-for-Smith—even for Jones. Thus the relativist can adopt beliefs (and act) only arbitrarily. Either arbitrariness or impotence—these are the sole options for the relativist.[530]

Harvey Siegel has demonstrated that relativism does not offer a viable alternative to absolutism, nor does it offer a substantive objection to the possibility of objectivity. Seemingly, there must be at least some absolute, objective truths for any claim to be true. And, of course, those who assert that objectivity is not possible are claiming that it is objectively true that objectivity is not possible.

Objectivity and Historicism

Gadamer's Historicist Thesis

As we observed in chapter 2, the relationship between objectivity and

historicism arises from the nature of historicism. Grondin's description of historicism, namely, that all truths are dependent on the historical context of the one asserting the truth, is pointing to the notion that historical phenomena can be understood only in terms of one's own historical situatedness, or in terms of one's own place within the flow of historical development. But if any phenomenon can be understood only in terms of its own historical situatedness, this would imply that the historical situatedness of the interpreter binds him to his own place within the flow of historical development. Therefore the interpreter cannot lay claim to an a-historical, transcendent perspective. If the interpreter cannot lay claim to an a-historical, transcendent perspective, then the claim that no historical phenomenon can be understood apart from its own historical situatedness cannot itself be an a-historical, transcendent claim about historical knowledge. The historicist assertion turns out to be just another instance of self-defeating relativism. The self-referential nature of the claim of historicism indicates its self-destructive nature.

Gadamer strongly objects to arguments such as these which appeal to a self-referential problem in historicism:

> However clearly one demonstrates the inner contradictions of all relativist views, it is as Heidegger has said: all these victorious arguments have something of the attempt to bowl one over. However cogent they may seem, they still miss the main point. In making use of them one is proved right, and yet they do not express any superior insight of value. That the thesis of skepticism or relativism refutes itself to the extent that it claims to be true is an irrefutable argument. But what does it achieve? The reflective argument that proves successful here rebounds against the arguer, for it renders the truth value of reflection suspect. It is not the reality of skepticism or of truth-dissolving relativism but the truth claim of all formal argument that is affected.[531]

What Gadamer is saying is that, notwithstanding the inevitable relativism, historicism is absolutely and indubitably inescapable, and that this is a-historically true for all people at all times in all cultures. Gadamer appears to have access to an a-historical, transcendent perspective on historicism that he disallows for everyone else. What follows from this brand of historicism is ably articulated by Georgia Warnke: "

The claim is that we are always involved in interpretations and that we can have no access to anything like 'the truth' about justice, the self, reality or the 'moral law.' Our notions of these 'truths' are rather conditioned by the cultures to which we belong and the historical circumstances in which we find ourselves. Hence, we must face the fact of our finitude and the utterly contingent character of our efforts to understand."[532]

Nevertheless, since the claims of historicism are indeed self-refuting, and

since, as Gadamer acknowledges, “the thesis of skepticism or relativism refutes itself to the extent that it claims to be true is an irrefutable argument,” then the implications of historicism do not follow, and absolute truth, including absolute concepts of justice, the self, reality and moral law, does exist and is accessible by the finite mind. In fact, the existence of absolute truth is asserted by those who advocate the absolute truth of historicism.

Gail Soffer has demonstrated the same self-referential problem with Gadamer’s historicism. As she asserts, “. . . [Gadamer’s] philosophy remains mired in the epistemological paradox, at once asserting and denying the possibility of knowledge of the unconditional. If the historicity thesis is true, then it is impossible for us to have knowledge of unconditional truths, and so of the historicity thesis.”[533]

Additionally, Soffer evaluates the “meaning” of the historicity thesis and concludes that “although it is clear that the thesis asserts [that] all knowledge is historically conditioned, the language of ‘conditioning’ is highly ambiguous, and some interpretations of ‘conditioning’ are wholly compatible with a traditional conception of objectivity.”[534] Soffer points out that contemporary concepts of mathematics could not have been formulated by more ancient cultures, but this does not obviate the objectivity of the current formulations. She asserts,

> However, although historically conditioned, this knowledge remains “objective’ in the following two senses: (1) once a given theorem becomes accessible at a local time and place, it can be reproduced with essentially the same meaning across a wide variety of present and future historical contexts (reproducibility of meaning); and (2) its validity is henceforth a matter of trans-historical, intersubjective consensus: if mathematicians assign any truth-value at all to a given theorem, it is the same one (reproducibility of validity-assignment).[535]

Gadamer’s strong sense of historical conditioning is an effort to reject the positivistic approach to the human sciences, and yet this very rejection is supposed to follow from the historicity thesis. This is clearly circular, and begs the question. Gadamer spends the first lengthy part of this treatise in *Truth and Method* tracing the historical background that has led up to the monumental achievement of the realization of historicism. But, if there is no a-historical knowledge, why does Gadamer pretend that his report on these historical developments approach the truth about what really happened? Isn’t Gadamer’s own study of history simply his own historically bound view from his own historical situatedness? Yet he presents it as if this was *the* true and accurate account of the history. Gadamer’s own rejection of positivistic approaches is asserted as if it were *the* historically *un*conditioned, objective truth about the human sciences. This is clearly self-referentially incoherent.

The Facts about Brute Facts

Another aspect of historicity is the oft touted claim, "There are no brute facts." *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* asserts that the notion of "brute fact" has two related uses.

> The first and more common one signifies the terminus of a series of explanations which is not itself further explicable. Thus, for example, it is often said that while the behaviour of matter can be explained by reference to laws of nature the existence and character of those laws is itself a 'brute fact'. The second and more technical use indicates an underlying situation partly constitutive of the truth of a claim. The expression was first used in this sense by Anscombe to characterize the status of facts relative to higher-level descriptions. A set of facts *S* is 'brute' relative to a description *D* when the truth of *D* is constituted by the holding of those facts in a certain context and under normal conditions.[536]

It is the first and more popular use that is significant here. A "brute fact" would be a fact that would be understood to be the same for every perceiver, regardless of his or her presuppositions or world view. Brian Neal Baird is a typical proponent of the rejection of "brute facts." As he explains, "There are no 'brute' facts. That is, there are no completely objective pieces of information in the world which are free from interpretation."[537]

One cannot be constrained from asking the obvious question, Is it a brute fact that there are not brute facts? Ultimately, the notion that there are no facts that have meaning apart from a specific world view is simply another instance of self-defeating relativism. For Baird to assert this is either only his interpretation from his own world view, in which case it is not universally or absolutely true, or it is universally and absolutely true and thus self-referentially problematic. Baird declares that it is just a brute fact that there are no brute facts.

Cornelius Van Til adamantly advocated the idea that there are no such "brute" facts. According to Van Til,

> Two main concepts emerge as a result of man attempting to be as God. The first is that man is viewed as the ultimate reference point for interpreting all of life. He interprets and gives meaning to all facts. In order for man to consider himself autonomous, there must be no controlling plan for the universe, therefore he invents the idea of chance. By his own logic, he determines what is possible or impossible in this world of chance. The second concept is that facts are treated as "brute" facts. They are uncreated, unrelated, and controlled only by chance. They have no meanings or prior interpretations attached to them.[538]

Van Til is asserting that "facts," by themselves, offer no meaning, but must be interpreted within some "meaning" system, and that meaning system must be God's revelation. "The issue between believers and non-believers in Christian

theism," according to Van Til, "cannot be settled by a direct appeal to 'facts' or 'laws' whose nature and significance is already agreed upon by both parties to the debate."[539] This is because, according to Van Til, "fact" and "laws" have intelligibility only within the Christian world view, and "the existence of the God of Christian theism and the conception of his counsel as controlling all things in the universe is the only presupposition which can account for the uniformity of nature which the scientist needs."[540]

Van Til admits that this "presuppositional approach" indicates that "all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, *circular reasoning*."[541] But not only is Van Til's reasoning circular, it is self-defeating. Either the meaning of the proposition is univocal for all world views or it is not. If it is not univocal for all world views, then it is not a universally true statement. It may then be a statement that only has meaning within the world view of the one espousing the claim. The seemingly inevitable and undeniable conclusion is that if it is not universally true that there are no brute facts, then it is true that there are some brute facts (Aristotle's Square of Opposition).

Additionally, to require that a world view be tested by the criteria that are only meaningful within an opposing world view is illicit. Moreover, Van Til asserts that the Christian world view is the only world view that accounts for "the uniformity of nature which the scientist needs."[542] However, whose definition of "uniformity" is Van Til employing in order to judge the claims of the non-Christian world view? The non-Christian scientist may not subscribe to the same principle of uniformity that Van Til sees as necessary for scientists. Van Til is employing the concept of uniformity as a "brute fact"—as if it had a univocal meaning in every world view. But this is precisely what he says cannot be the case. From the non-Christian world view, according to Van Til, the concept of uniformity would have no meaning. If it has no meaning for the non-Christian, then the non-Christian scientist does not see any reasons to think that he or she needs it, and for the non-Christian philosopher there is no logical or moral necessity to the charge that his world view does not account for Van Til's notion of uniformity.

In fact, it seems that Van Til knows that the concept of uniformity is the same for all world views. That is why he can successfully and rightly require the non-Christian to give an account of it. This is so, however, only because in fact there are some brute facts which are meaningful in terms of the nature of reality. In arguing his position, Van Til offers an example: "We cannot *prove* the existence of beams underneath a floor if by proof we mean that they must be ascertainable in the way that we can see the chairs and tables of the room. But

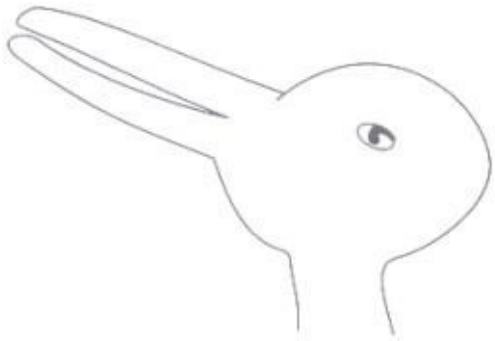
the very idea of a floor as the support of tables and chairs requires the idea of beams that are underneath."[543] But upon the basis of whose "idea" of a floor does he require the idea of beams? His own? Only his own? Does he not expect other Christians and non-Christians to agree with this analogy and understand it? Is there some universally meaningful notion of "support of tables and chairs" that "requires the idea of beams that are underneath"? This is precisely the definition of "brute" facts which Van Til claims are unavailable. Not to labor the point, but it is certainly possible to "prove" or "disprove" the existence of beams simply by pealing back part or all of the floor. Beams under the floor can potentially be viewed just like chairs and tables are viewed. If Van Til is asserting that the beams cannot be proven to exist like chairs are known to exist since we don't have to "peal back" anything to see the chairs, this is certainly an unjustified restriction on the notion of proof. Van Til has simply defined his argument into existence.[544]

Van Til himself acknowledges and employs the universally applicable laws of reason. In reviewing the arguments of Charles Hodge, Van Til asserts, "First he shows that reason is necessary as a tool for the reception of revelation. About this point there can be little cause for dispute."[545]

Later, in evaluating the claim that the only way Christians can explain evil is to interpret it in light of the story of the fall, Van Til asserts, "The Christian finds, further, that logic agrees with the story. Human logic agrees with the story, because it derives its meaning from the story."[546] So, whether one accepts the story or not, Van Til believes that human reason is the same for all humans because human reason for all humans derives from the same source.

Therefore, according to Van Til's own reasoning, the existence and nature of human reason is a brute fact that is not subject to the world views of those who do not believe. Seemingly, however, Van Til would not admit that this is the case. Unbelievers are, according to Van Til's position, simply rejecting the facts, or misinterpreting the facts. Nevertheless, the facts are the facts, regardless of whether one believes or not. If this is not what Van Til is arguing, then his argument turns out to be relevant only to his own world view.[547] He cannot legitimately require opposing world views to meet the criteria that have meaning only in his own world view. The claim that there are no brute facts is simply another instance of relativism that succumbs to the critique of self-destruction and self-refutation as do all other forms of absolute relativism. And if relativism is refuted in all its forms, the objectivity remains a possibility.

Figure 13: Duck-Rabbit



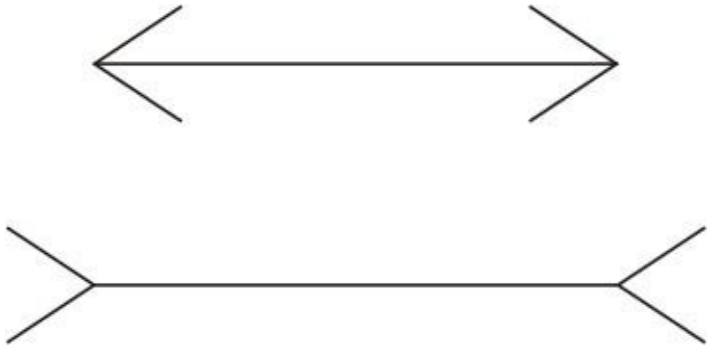
Objectivity and Theory-Ladenness

One does not need to be a rocket surgeon to identify the same self-referential problem in the claims to perspectivism and relativism in natural science due to the theory-ladenness of observation. The simple fact that observation is theory-laden is insufficient to disqualify the possibility that observation can be objective. In fact, it must have been someone's observation of observation that led them to conclude that observation is theory-laden. But, if observation is theory-laden, then the observation that observation is theory-laden is itself theory-laden and not necessarily true of all observation. The assertion that all observation is theory-laden just happens to be the result of the theory-laden observation of the person who made this claim. To claim that all observation is theory-laden and therefore not objective is simply self-defeating.

George Couvalis describes the ever popular duck-rabbit drawing that is used to illustrate how one's point of view dictates what one sees (**Figure 13**).[548] The observer can view the drawing and see a duck or a rabbit, and this is supposed to illustrate that what one sees depends upon one's point of view, or one sees what one wishes or expects to see. But, as Couvalis points out, "No matter what we expect to see or want to see, we cannot get the duck-rabbit drawing to look like the Parthenon, the Sydney Opera House or a teacup. We cannot even make it look like a real duck as opposed to a drawing of a duck."[549]

Another illustration that Couvalis critiques that is supposed to demonstrate that things are not as they appear is the famous Müller-Lyer illusion. This illusion is used to illustrate how our knowledge and preconceptions shape our perceptions (**Figure 14**).[550]

Figure 14: The Müller-Lyer Illusion



Because the lines appear to be different lengths, theorists conclude that our perceptions are affected by our knowledge and preconceptions, but things are not as they appear. The fact that our perception, in this instance, has misled us to conclude that the lines are different lengths is proven by the simple act of measuring the lines. However, when someone undertakes to measure the lines, are they not employing the very same instruments of perception that led to the mistaken conclusion in the first place? In other words, the very same eyes that mistakenly perceived the lines as different lengths are the very same eyes that are now supposed to give us the true picture in the process of measurement. But, if our knowledge and preconditions unavoidably impact our perceptions, would they not also impact our perceptions of the measuring tools?

The Müller-Lyer illusion is just that. The results of this illustration are not as they appear. Rather than providing an illustration of how our perception is impacted by our knowledge and preconceptions, the illustration serves to demonstrate that our false perceptions can be corrected by using the very same apparatus of perception that is supposed to be suspect. As Couvalis again points out, "whether we believe (hold to the theory that) the two lines are equal or unequal when we observe the Müller-Lyer diagram, they continue to look unequal. This means that our beliefs cannot be causing them to look unequal."[551] In other words, regardless what we know or what we preconceive, the lines still look unequal in length even after we measure them and *know* that they are not uneven. If our beliefs affected our perceptions, once we measure the lines and come to believe that they are not unequal, why do they continue to *look* unequal?

These examples are designed to illustrate the theory-ladenness of observation. As Moreland points out, "antirealists have criticized the correspondence theory of truth and/or the notion of a theory-independent external world to which we have access. Sometimes this latter point is supported by the claim that all observations are theory laden, there is no direct, theory-independent access to the external world, and thus the realist notion of such a world is either unintelligible or irrelevant."[552] But, the charge of theory-

ladenness is presented as absolutely true and not itself theory-laden.

The notion of theory-ladenness as ultimately constitutive of the scientific enterpriseby forming a presuppositional framework for normal science, as Thomas Kuhn has been interpreted as asserting, has been criticized by Harvey Siegel. As Siegel points out, even the Kuhnian tradition proposes the fact that "the research program defined by a presuppositional framework occasionally turns up anomalies, and that an anomaly sometimes turns out to be a 'genuine counter instance' which forces the research community to alter (at least) part of its presuppositional framework."[553] But, as Siegel goes on to point out, the fact that anomalies provide genuine counter instances seriously undermines the strength of the theory-ladenness argument as an argument against objectivity. Siegel's criticism, using Harold Brown's formulation as characteristic of this approach, is long, but important.

> Following Kuhn, Brown argues that the research program defined by a presuppositional framework occasionally turns up anomalies, and that an anomaly sometimes turns out to be a "genuine counter-instance" which forces the research community to alter (at least) part of its presuppositional framework. The fact that "the search for truth" can make researchers realize that one of their presuppositions is false raises a difficulty for Brown. For he holds both that
>
> (1) Presuppositions organize and structure scientific research, and
> (2) Research may force the abandonment (as false) of presuppositions. Presuppositions are fallible.
>
> The difficulty is: are these two claims compatible? It seems, prima facie, that they are not. For, as we have seen, presuppositions structure scientific research in the important sense that they provide criteria of adequacy by which we evaluate proposed solutions recognized as such by the research program delineated by a presuppositional framework. Thus, presuppositions determine how we evaluate evidence for or against hypotheses being investigated. But if presuppositions determine not only what counts as evidence, but also the evaluation of the evidence, it is difficult to see how evidence could cast negative light on a presupposition - for if it can, in what sense can the presupposition be said to determine the evaluation of evidence? If (1) and (2) are not outright incompatible, (2) must at least greatly limit the force of (1), since the scientist can call into question and evaluate (according to presupposition-neutral criteria of evaluation of presuppositions?) the presuppositions that organize and structure, and so determine, the scientists' research program. Indeed, it is not clear what, on Brown's view, a genuine counter-instance to a presupposition can be, since what counts as an instance is determined by the very presupposition countered.
>
> The general question raised here, then, is this: given the overarching role of presuppositions in structuring scientific research, how is it possible for such research to offer evidence which forces the abandonment (as false) of these very presuppositions? Does that possibility not necessitate the existence of framework-neutral criteria of evaluation of presuppositions by which frameworks can be evaluated? It is not clear how it can be held that evidence can force the abandonment of presuppositions without weakening the power of the presuppositions to determine the evaluation of that evidence.[554]

Siegel's point is that the theory-ladenness perspective does not prove that

there is no theory neutral access to the world. In fact, the very notion that anomalies can be true counter examples counts on the very theory of neutrality that is supposedly called into question. Once again, the relativism that is supposedly supported by the claim that observation is conducted within self-contained theoretical frameworks and therefore prevents direct access to data proves itself either to be a theory laden framework and therefore does not have direct access to the data, or it counts on the very theory neutral access that it seeks to deny.[555]

The Root of the Problem

All such claims against objectivity have a common thread. They all assert that the perspective, preconceptions, world view, preunderstanding, presuppositions, or what ever other designations are used, necessarily predispose the observer or the interpreter to perceive in a manner that is molded, directed, or impacted by these preexisting conditions. The unavoidable impact of these preexisting conditions that necessarily predispose observation or interpretation according to one's point of view is due to the fact that no one has direct access to the world. Our contact with the world is always in terms of how the world is represented to a knowing mind. In other words, the root problem in all attacks on objectivity is a representationalist epistemology.

A representationalist epistemology asserts that the knower is able to contact the world only by means of some re-presentation of the world to the mind. It is painfully obvious, so it is believed, that since the world is composed of corporeal bodies extended in space, and since the mind is incorporeal, that it is absurd to hold that the material world is able to enter the immaterial mind of a knower. Consequently, what the mind must do is to form some kind of representation of the world. This representation may be a concept, an idea, a picture, or a word. Regardless of what it is called, there is something in the mind that is supposed to re-present the world to the mind. The world is always outside the mind, and what is in the mind is a representation of that world.

Of course the thorn in the flesh of this view has been the problem of justifying the claim to knowledge on the basis of a representational epistemology. If what is in the mind is a representation of the world, and if the world is always outside the mind, how can we know that our representation is accurate? Additionally, the Achilles' Heel of this approach is the self-referential problem that plagues all versions of relativism. Whether the relativism is based on the claim that there is no direct access to the world, that these are no certain foundations—whether our own historical situatedness prevents a trans-historical perspective, or whether all observation is theory-laden—these proposals assumes

the very objectivity and direct access to the data that is emphatically denied.

Summary and Conclusion

In the contemporary literature, the question of objectivity is primarily discussed in terms of a notion of the nature of science. One reason objectivity is discussed in terms of natural science is that modern thought holds scientific knowledge as the standard by which all other disciplines are judged. As Thomas Nagel describes,

> Philosophy is also infected by a broader tendency of contemporary intellectual life: scientism. Scientism is actually a special kind of idealism, for it puts one type of human understanding in charge of the universe and what can be said about it. At its most myopic it assumes that everything there is must be understandable by the employment of scientific theories like those we have developed to date—physics and evolutionary biology are the current paradigms—as if the present age were not just another in the series.[556]

At the outset of the Enlightenment, the notion of science as a neutral, disinterested approach was considered the best if not the only approach to certainty. The advances in knowledge that were being achieved in the natural sciences led many philosophers to develop systems patterned after the scientific method. Descartes attempted to develop a science of knowledge based on the method of geometry. Kant attempted to develop a science of knowledge based on the method of Newtonian physics. Comte attempted to develop a science of humanity based on a method composed of the combination of the methods from all natural sciences. The whole movement of Logical Positivism is an effort to apply the methodology of natural science to philosophy.

Since Descartes and Newton, modern natural science has understood the constitution of extra-mental reality to be bodies extended in space. Consequently, when philosophers attempted to discover how it is possible for the mind to know reality directly, it was obvious that, since the mind is incorporeal and extra-mental reality is corporeal, that it would be necessary to construct some scenario by which a philosopher could assert that the mind accurately represents the extra-mental world. Of course, the extra-mental world could never come to exist in the mind precisely because of the bifurcation between the corporeal and the incorporeal—body and mind. So, what was in the mind had to be construed as some kind of non-physical, incorporeal representation of the physical. However, as soon as one entertained this bifurcation, it became impossible ever to test whether what was in the mind accurately represented what was in extra-mental reality. Since the extra-mental was always *extra*-mental, and the representation of it was always *in* the mind, there was no means

of bringing the two together for the purposes of comparison. Every encounter with the extra-mental always resulted in another representation that was likewise without epistemic justification.

Consequently, the notion of objectivity became a notion of somehow providing the necessary epistemic justification for the mental representations. Even the popular definitions of "objectivity" are constructed in terms of the epistemic. For example, in his article on "objectivity" in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, Harold I. Brown asserts, "The root idea involved in the concept of objectivity is that an objective evaluation of the truth value of a proposition is independent of the preferences or whims of those who carry out that evaluation."[557] The objectivity of a proposition, as this is understood in modern philosophy, has been some form of representationalism. This notion has also derived from the Enlightenment view of the nature of natural science in that the natural science of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assumed the mind/body distinction articulated by Descartes.

What seems to have emerged from the preceding analysis is that, so long as the question of objectivity is approached along the lines of representationalist epistemology, no hope of an objectivity for understanding seems possible. Notwithstanding the failure of the representationalist approach to discover the foundations of knowledge, theorists continue to talk about foundations. They refer to these foundations in terms of presuppositions or prejudices or preunderstanding. The problem of the hermeneutical circle involves the very question of the relationship between the interpreter's preunderstanding and the meaning of the text.

The preceding analysis seems also to have indicated the real possibility of a set of objective, transcendental presuppositions that allows for an entrance into the hermeneutical spiral. The possibility of these transcendental presuppositions was indicated by the laws of logic and was evidenced in what seems to be the objective interpretation of the nature and role of presuppositions by both Evangelicals and non-evangelicals. Since, as has been seen, the possibility of objectivity is not obviated either by the claims of relativists, whether on the basis of historicism, or theory-ladenness, or rejection of brute facts, and later we will consider the same kind of relativist claims in philosophy of language, the possible existence of transcendental, undeniable, self-evident presuppositions offers a real possibility of providing a foundation for objectivity in interpretation. Admittedly, this foundation must be decidedly different from the classical foundationalism as it has traditionally been understood, and it must be able to argue for a direct access to the world outside the mind.

The final task of this study, then, is to investigate the possibility of a kind of

foundation for objectivity that does not succumb to the modern criticisms, but, on the basis of transcendental presuppositions, may offer the possibility of objectivity for interpretation. This task will begin with a consideration of meaning and reality in chapter 7. From there the study will proceed through a consideration of knowledge, language, and interpretation in chapters 8, 9, and 10. This study will conclude by revisiting the arguments against objectivity and answering each assertion in the eight-fold argument presented in chapter 2.

PART II: MODERATE REALISM AND THE OBJECTIVITY OF MEANING

7 WHAT IS THAT WHICH IS?

Introduction

There is no doubt that there exists a multitude of conflicting theories about meaning. Each theory of meaning is a part of the total philosophical system, or world view, of the individual proposing the theory. But, as Richard Rorty insightfully observed, "Uncovering the presuppositions of those who think they have none is one of the principal means by which philosophers find new issues to debate."[558] Since it has become axiomatic that no one can be presuppositionless in his thinking about anything, including meaning, one is compelled to ponder the implications of such a claim. Does this not imply an infinite regress of presuppositions? If thinking about meaning, or anything else, cannot be done apart from our presuppositions, doesn't it follow that thinking about our presuppositions necessarily involves still other presuppositions, and thinking about these involves still others, *ad infinitum*? But, an infinite regress of presuppositions precludes the possibility of any thinking at all. There must be some or one presupposition for which there is no presupposition, but is, so to speak, properly basic or foundational.

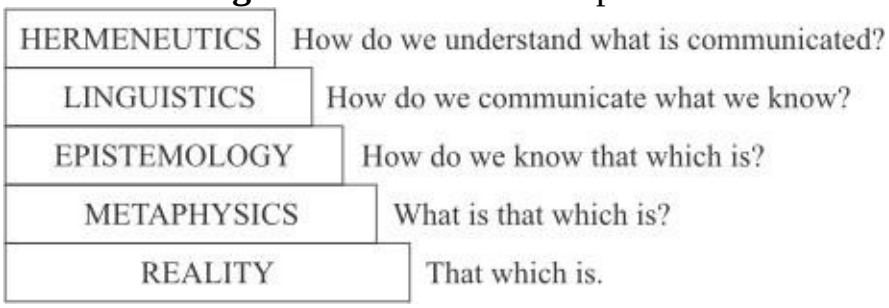
We have already discussed some of these foundational presuppositions, such as the law of noncontradiction, the law of identity, and the law of excluded middle. Such presuppositions we classified as transcendental presuppositions because they transcend all world views and all perspectives, are unavoidable, and are necessarily the same for everyone. If presuppositions are the foundations upon which subsequent assertions are based, the notion of a primary or properly basic presupposition that admits of no prior presuppositions would be, in a sense, the first cause and foundation of all thought. Of course there is a discipline that has attempted to address this very question. Aristotle identified this discipline as first philosophy, or the study of being *qua* being.[559] Today we identify this discipline as metaphysics. Metaphysics is the study of the nature of reality.

What each theorists holds to be true about the nature of meaning is intimately connected to his epistemology, and as we have seen, the prevailing epistemological position is some form of representationalism. But, representationalism itself assumes a certain position on the nature of the reality. So, the way in which a theorist addresses the questions of epistemology are ultimately based on his metaphysics. Since one's view on the nature of meaning is a foundational element in hermeneutics, the relation of one's view of meaning

to epistemology and metaphysics indicates that, ultimately, hermeneutics itself is based on one's view of the nature of reality. **Figure 15** illustrates this relationship.

Each area, or discipline, is characterized by the predominate question that is addressed in that discipline. Simply put, reality is that which is. Notice that the characterization of reality is not, "what is." To characterize reality as "what" implies that reality is basically some identity, or essence. When we ask, "What is it?" we are inquiring about something's identity or essence. But, there are many identities in reality. That is to say, reality consists of many essences, or "whats." But all essences have at least one thing in common, namely, that they exist. Therefore, reality at its most basic level is not a particular essence, or a group of essences. Reality is that which exists, or, as we have phrased it, "That which is." Essentially, the discipline of metaphysics asks the question, "What is that which is?" In Metaphysics, we are inquiring into the nature of existence.

Figure 15: Order of Disciplines



Epistemology is the discipline that addresses the question, "How do we know that which is?" Linguistics is the discipline that addresses the question, "How do we communicate what we know?" and Hermeneutics addresses the question, "How do we understand that which is communicated?"

The diagram in **Figure 16** illustrates the perspective of this section. The remainder of this study will be an attempt to expound the basic thesis presented in this diagram and relate it to the question of objectivity of meaning. Additionally, this diagram corresponds to the diagram in **Figure 15** .The section of this chapter titled, "What is that which is?," beginning on page 140, will explain a Moderate Realist view of the nature of extra-mental, created reality dealing with the "Created thing" referenced in **Figure 16**. This material will attempt to answer the question, "What is that which is?" and will involve defining such terms as "form" and "matter" which appear in **Figure 16**.

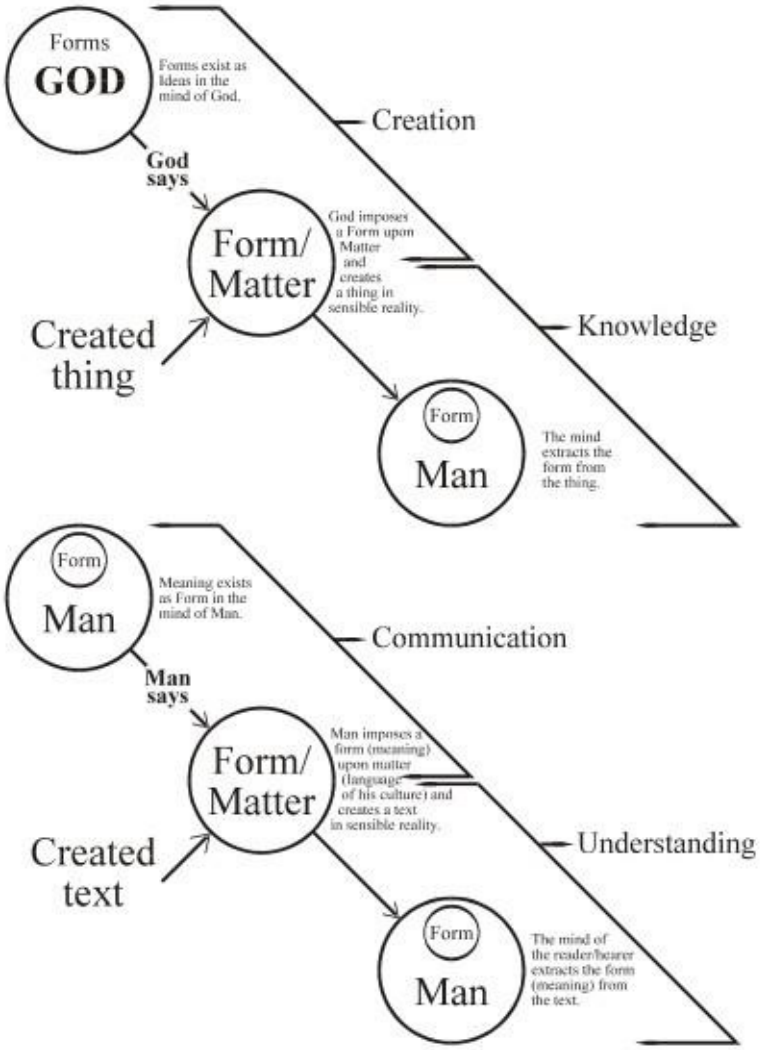
It may be helpful at this point to present a summary of the flow of reasoning presented in **Figure 16**. At this point, many terms will be introduced

the explanations of which will be provided in the discussions in the following sections or chapters. **Figure 16** illustrates not only a Moderate Realist view of the metaphysical foundation of knowledge, but an analogical relationship between creation and knowledge on the one hand, and communication and understanding on the other.

The diagram begins at the top with a representation of the existence of the forms in the mind of God. These forms exist as Divine ideas in the Divine intellect. These ideas are the forms of things existing apart from the things themselves. As Etienne Gilson explains, "the form of a thing can exist apart from the thing in two distinct ways; either because it is the exemplar of that of which it is said to be the form, or because it is the principle which enables us to know the things. In either case, we must assume ideas to exist in God."[560]

According to the Moderate Realist view, all things exist in God's mind before their existence in the finite world of things. God created the matter out of nothing and imposed upon it a form, thereby creating a thing in reality. This creative event is characterized in the Scripture by the phrase, "and God said." The resultant real object is composed of form and matter.

Figure 16: Metaphysical Foundation of Meaning



As we will attempt to expound later, when a man knows an object in reality, the form of the thing comes to exist in the mind of the knower. Man imitates God in that, while God is all things by virtue of His Divine Intelligence in which all forms exist as Divine Ideas,[561] so man becomes all things by obtaining the forms of things that come to exist in the mind of man as ideas. Consequently, it is not necessary for a man to go back into the mind of God in order to know reality. Rather, man knows reality by means of the form of the thing as it is in itself. Forms are given by the real thing. They are not supplied by the mind.

The second half of the diagram in **Figure 16** illustrates the events of communication and understanding. Analogous to the existence of the forms as Divine Ideas in the mind of God, so the forms, or meanings, exist in the mind of man as ideas. A man takes the matter, his language, imposes upon it a form, meaning, and creates a text in reality. In this act, man imitates God's creative act.

A second man is able to extract the form of the text by which he understands the meaning of the text, for the form is the meaning. In this act man knows the meaning of the text in a way analogous to the way he knows a thing in reality. Consequently, it is not necessary for the second man to attempt to go behind the text into the mind of an author in order to discover the meaning of a text. The meaning of the text is located in the text as its form, which is analogous to the way the form of the thing in reality is located in the thing in reality.[562] As God is the primary efficient cause of the being of things, so a human author is the secondary efficient cause of the meaning of texts. God is not the Originator of *all* specific meanings, although He certainly is the Originator of some specific meanings, such as His Word. However, God, as the primary efficient cause, has created the universe in which specific meanings are possible. Human beings, as secondary *efficient* causes, are the originators of some specific meanings, such as the sentences they speak, but not the creators of meaning *qua* meaning. In short, God made all specific meaning possible and some specific meanings actual, while humans make some specific meanings actual.

Diagram **Figure 16** also presents the order in which we will conduct our investigation. We begin with the reality of the external world and address the question, "What is that which is?" We will then investigate the knowing process in an effort to answer the next question, "How do we know that which is?" From this point we will move to a consideration of the linguistic question, "How do we communicate what we know," and finally address the question of hermeneutics, "How do we understand what is communicated?" As has been pointed out, this order follows upon the relationship of disciplines as illustrated in the diagram in **Figure 15** .

If the order of disciplines as illustrated in this diagram is accurate, then that which is communicated is what is known, and what is known is the real. Indeed, as Jacques Maritain has put it, "The proper object of understanding is being."[563] As he explains elsewhere,

> In reality ideas, as the consciousness of every man witnesses immediately, are our *instruments* of knowledge. If, therefore, knowledge did not apprehend the things themselves, knowledge would be an operation or activity without end or object, which is absurd. For to form an idea or judgment is to know, just as to make use of a knife is to cut. And, just as it is impossible to cut without cutting something– the end or object of the act of cutting, which is not the knife, but the thing cut by it–so it is impossible to know without knowing something–the end or object of the act of knowing, which is not the idea, but the thing known by it.[564]

The proper object of knowledge, then, is not our ideas, but reality. However, in order for a thing in the real world to be known, it must remain

unchanged in the act of knowing. As Joseph Owens points out, “A thing or essence has to remain unchanged in itself in being known. Otherwise not it but something into which it changed would be known. Cognition, in order to be cognition, has to leave unchanged the essence of what it knows.[565] The proper object of knowledge, then, is that which is, *as it is in itself*. This leads us to the first question in our effort to climb the staircase to an adequate hermeneutic, What is that which is?”

Before we address this question directly, we must acknowledge that the Moderate Realist approach to the objectivity of meaning assumes a foundationalism of some stripe. In other words, it is assumed that reality ultimately forms the foundation upon which one can base the notion of objectivity. The brand of foundationalism assumed herein is the foundationalism of Thomas Aquinas expressed in terms of the first principles of thought and being.

However, our study thus far has chronicled what amounts to a war on foundationalism in general and Classical Foundationalism in particular. Because of the popularity of anti-foundationalist approaches and “foundationalism-bashing,” and the abundance of critiques of what is popularly called Classical Foundationalism, it will be necessary to address some of these critiques and to set forth the notion of foundationalism asserted here. It will not be our purpose to answer the charges against the foundationalism that is the popular target. Rather, we hope to show that the foundationalism of Moderate Realism is not in any way the foundationalism that is under attack today. Indeed, with reference to the foundationalism that has often been called classical, we join the multitude of those who adamantly reject it in all of its forms. However, a grave injustice has been done to what has been called “Ancient Classical Foundationalism” by confusing it with the ill fated foundationalism of modern philosophy under the influence of Descartes. Our argument will not only be that Thomist foundationalism is not the “Classical/Cartesian Foundationalism” under attack, but that the foundationalism of Moderate Realism is not subject to the critiques leveled against “Classical/Cartesian Foundationalism,” but is rather a reasonable account of the basis for knowledge and meaning.

Classical/Moderate Realist Foundationalism

In the previous chapter we demonstrated that the foundationalism that is universally rejected by modern philosophy is not the classical foundationalism of Moderate Realism. Of course, to declare that the popular characterization of Classical/Cartesian Foundationalism is not the foundationalism of Moderate Realism is not the same as to propose what kind of foundationalism is being

advocated. The brand of foundationalism proposed is aptly defined by Norman Geisler: “Foundationalism is the theory of knowledge . . . that affirms the need for certain foundational principles . . . as the basis of all thought. By contrast, Coherentism claims that no such principles are needed but that ideas simply need to cohere like a web in a consistent way, without any ultimate foundational principles.”[566] Capitalizing on the notion that there are foundation principles for all thought, the popular criticism assumes that the relationship between the foundations and subsequent beliefs is the relationship of deductive inference as this is expressed by Descartes.

Descartes argued that once one has arrived at an incorrigible, self-evident belief, all subsequent truth can be discovered by a process of deduction. Francis Parker and Henry Veatch characterized deduction by contrasting it with induction:

> The point of the distinction that is here being made between induction and deduction might be said to be something like this: In the case of induction, as in that of abstraction, the cognitive process moves, so to speak, from the level of the sensible to that of the intelligible. In contrast, in deduction the process moves exclusively on the intelligible level. This is not to say, of course, that the premises which we employ in a deductive argument may not have been founded on experience and so established inductively. Indeed, there is no denying the fact that ultimately all our knowledge is derived from experience and based upon it. No, the only point is that in the actual process itself of any deductive argument the mediation is strictly and exclusively intellectual and in no wise experiential.[567]

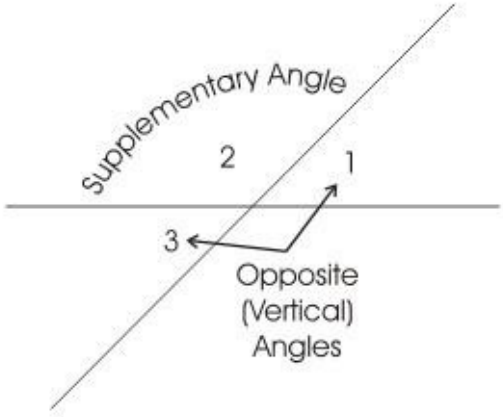
What this implies is that, in deduction, the truth of a conclusion mediated by a universal concept necessarily follows from the truth of the premises. One example that Parker and Veatch use is relation of opposite vertical angles. A person can, by a process of measurement, discover that opposite vertical angles having the same supplementary angle are equal (see the diagram in **Figure 17**). Measuring a number of angles would yield the conclusion that all opposite vertical angles are equal. This would be an inductive exercise—moving from the premises, “these vertical angles are equal,” and “these vertical angles are equal,” and “these vertical angles are equal,” to the conclusion that all vertical angles are equal. The conclusion is mediated through premises that are experiential in nature.

The same conclusion is demonstrated by Parker and Veatch as a deduction:

> The opposite vertical angles formed by intersecting straight lines have the same supplementary angle in common.
>
> But any two angles having the same supplementary angle in common are equal.

Therefore, the opposite vertical angles are equal.[568]

Figure 17: Opposite Angles



Although we may have gained the knowledge of the various terms, "vertical angle," "supplementary angle," etc., from experience, once we have this knowledge, we do not need any additional experience to show the truth of the conclusion. As Parker and Veatch assert, "it follows purely intellectually from the two premises. For the mediation that is here effected is purely and simply through a universal concept; and a universal concept . . . is the product of the intellect and not the senses."[569]

Many of the contemporary critics of foundationalism assume that the relationship between foundational principles and subsequent truths is likewise a deductive relation. That is to say, all subsequent truths are deducible from those self-evident, incorrigible first truths or first principles. This is, of course, the basic foundationalist approach of Descartes. However, even those critics who do not assume that foundationalism necessitates a deductivism nevertheless assume that foundationalism necessarily holds that subsequent truths are inferred from or somehow derived from the foundation. This is not, however, the relation that is proposed in a Moderate Realist foundationalism. Truths do not need to be inferred from or derived from a foundation in order for them to rest on that foundation. Analogously, the structure of a building is based on its foundation, but the structure is not derived from the foundation. For example, orthodox Christianity has historically asserted the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. No one would want to claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is inferred from or derived from the law of contradiction. Nevertheless, the doctrine is based on this law, because the doctrine, in order to be true, cannot assert essential principles that are contradictory. Assertions that are contradictory cannot both be true. The

orthodox doctrine of the Trinity does not make assertions that are contradictory. So, although we do not discover the doctrine of the Trinity by inferring it or in any way deriving it from foundational principles, the doctrine of the Trinity is nevertheless based on the law of contradiction in that it does not make contradictory assertions. A Moderate Realist foundationalism does not assert that truth is necessarily deduced from, inferred from, or in any way derived from foundational principles. Rather, a Moderate Realist foundationalism asserts that all truth is ultimately based on foundations without which they could not be true.

What is the relation between truths and foundations? In *de Veritate*, St. Thomas asserted, "Whatever things we know with scientific knowledge properly so called, we know by reducing them to first principles which are *naturally present* to the understanding. In this way, all scientific knowledge *terminates in the sight of a thing which is present*."[570] The crucial distinction here is that for the Moderate Realist, the relation of subsequent truths to foundational or first principles is not one of *deduction*, but is one of *reduction* (*resolutionem*). The task of reduction is a critical process the goal of which is to identify a truth claim in relation to primary truths. In other words, the truth of any proposition must be reducible to first principles, although it may not be deducible from first principles. We will illustrate this by using a hermeneutical example. This will not only illustrate the relations between subsequent truth-claims and first principles, but will also show the relevance of this discussion to the objectivity of meaning.

Finis Jennings Dake, author of the popular *Dake Annotated Reference Bible*, makes the following assertion about the nature of God.

> God is a Spirit Being, not the sun, moon, stars; nor an image of wood, stone, or metal; and not beast or man. He is not the air, wind, universal mind, love or some impersonal quality. He is a person with a personal spirit body, a personal soul, and a personal spirit, like that of the angels, and like that of man except His body is of spirit substance instead of flesh and bones (Job 13:8; Heb. 1:3)[571]

According to Dake, God is a material being who is circumscribed to a location, a place far from us, namely, Heaven, which is "a real planet like earth."[572] According to Dake, the planet Heaven is the "capital of the universe, for God has His capital city, the New Jerusalem, His capitol building, the Heavenly Temple or Tabernacle, and His throne in the Temple in Heaven."[573] When God appears to people on earth, like Abraham, then God must move from the planet Heaven to the planet earth in order to be present to Abraham. As Dake asserts, "God goes from place to place in a body just like anyone else."[574] Now, such movement necessarily involves a relation of before and after—before the

move and after the move. Now, a relation of before and after is a sufficient condition for a temporal relation. Although temporality may be more than a relation of before and after, it is certainly not less than this. It follows that God, according to Dake, is a temporally as well as a materially located being.

Dake reaches this conclusion because one of his primary hermeneutical principles is,

> one must take the Bible *as literal when it is at all possible*. When a statement is found that cannot possibly be literal, as Jesus being a 'door' or of a woman being clothed with the sun and standing on the moon and on her head a crown of twelve stars, or of land animals coming out of the sea, and other statements which are obviously not literal, then we know the language is figurative. In such cases we must get the literal truth conveyed by the figurative language, and the truth intended to be conveyed will be as literal as if it were expressed in literal language without the use of such figures. *After all, figurative language expresses literal truth* as much as if such figures were not used.[575]

On the basis of his hermeneutical approach, Dake understands the passages that speak of God seeing, and walking, and talking as literal assertions that God has legs, eyes, and a mouth. However, there are other passages which speak of God having wings—Ruth 2:12 for example. But Dake does not conclude thereby that God has literal wings. Why does not Dake take these passages literally? Because, if God is a person, then when the Scripture says that God has wings, this cannot be literal, because persons do not have wings. Persons have arms, and legs, and eyes, and eyelids, but they do not have wings. This is part of Dake's principle. Dake insists that "one must take the Bible *as literal when it is at all possible*."[576] But the other part of this principle is, "When a statement is found that cannot possibly be literal, as Jesus being a 'door' or of a woman being clothed with the sun and standing on the moon and on her head a crown of twelve stars, or of land animals coming out of the sea, and other statements which are obviously not literal, then we know the language is figurative."[577] cannot the statement of Jesus in Jn. 10:9 be taken literally, "I am the door," because Jesus is a person and persons are not doors. This seems quite reasonable.[578]

The reason Dake cannot interpret literally those passages that talk about Jesus being a door is because of the nature of a person and the nature of a door. The Bible does not go into a philosophical, biological, or ontological explanation of the natures of these things. The biblical writers assume that the reader is familiar with doors and persons and can understand the differences and similarities between them. So, the underlying principle for taking such a passage figuratively is not that the text specifically says to take it figuratively, but that the author expected rational people to have knowledge about the natures of these

things. We all know the differences between doors and persons. We could schematize this reasoning in the following manner.

> Jesus is a person.
> A person is not an inanimate object.
> Therefore, Jesus is not an inanimate object.
>
> A door is an inanimate object.
> An inanimate object is not a person.
> Therefore, a door is not a person.
>
> But, the Scripture says that Jesus is a door (Jn. 10:7).
> If we interpret this literally, then there must be an error in Scripture.
> If we interpret this figuratively, there is no error in Scripture.
> Therefore, since the Scripture cannot err, this must be taken figuratively.

The resolution of the question of whether this statement is figurative is the process of analysis whereby the statement and its conclusions are reduced to the principle of being and non-contradiction. It is contradictory to assert that Jesus has, in the same sense, the nature of a door and the nature of a person. The assertion must be resolved in such a manner so as to avoid the contradiction. Although the statement, "I am the door," is not deduced from or inferred from the law of non-contradiction, it can be reduced to this law. It is based on this foundation law even though not deriving from it. Of course we also assume inerrancy of the text. But, once again the resolution is conducted in terms of reducing the relevant claims in such a manner so as not to assert contradictories as equally true. So, assuming inerrancy of the text, it cannot be the case that Jesus' statement can be false. Therefore, Jesus must be using a figure of speech. We resolve the question by reducing it to foundation or first principles.

The same reasoning is true for statements about God. The reason Dake takes some passages literally and some figuratively (for example, Dake does not believe the God literally has wings) is because he comes to the text with a presupposition about God's nature.

> A being that has bodily parts is a being that has a body.
> A person that can see and walk is a being that has bodily parts (eyes and legs).
> Therefore, a person that can see and walk is a being that has a body.
>
> God is a person who sees and walks.
> Persons who see and walk are beings who have bodies.
> Therefore, God is a being Who has a body.
>
> But, the Scripture says that God is spirit (Jn. 4:24) who sees and walks.
> If we say this cannot be interpreted literally, then there must be an error in Scripture.

If we interpret it literally, then there is no error in Scripture.

Therefore, since the Scripture cannot err, God must be a spirit-being Who has a body.

Since various passages use the same kinds of language and the same kinds of expressions in the same kinds of genre when talking about God's eyes and His wings, it cannot be the texts *qua* texts that dictate which is to be taken literally and which is to be taken figuratively. Dake takes references about God's eyes as literal because, since he comes to the text with the presupposed idea that God is a person, and since, according to Dake, persons have literal eyes, these statements must mean that God literally has eyes. The reason Dake takes references to God's wings as figurative is because, since he comes to the text with the presupposition that God is a person, and since persons don't have wings, these statements must not be claiming that God literally has wings, else the Scripture would be wrong. Since the Scripture cannot be wrong, these statements must be figurative.

Dake, like all interpreters of the Bible, comes to the text assuming that God must have a certain kind of nature, the nature of a person, and for Dake persons have bodies, souls, and spirits. Dake's idea of God's nature cannot derive ultimately from the biblical text because, like all interpreters, he employs his prior discriminating principle to select which passages he will take as saying something literal about God's nature and which passages he will take as saying something figurative about God's nature. The texts do not make these decisions for him. Dake makes these decisions on the basis of his idea of what God's nature must be. Dake is simply employing a basic principle of interpretation. Dake argues that the Scripture teaches that God is a person, but there is no Scripture that explains what is the nature of personhood—what it means to be a person. Dake has his notion of what a person is as a presupposition already present in his mind. Since the Scripture teaches that God is a person, and Dake already knows what it means to be a person (namely, a being with a body), God must be a being with a body. The notion that a person is a being with a body is not taught in Scripture. It is assumed by Dake. Dake's already present assumption about what it means to be a person, coupled with the teaching of Scripture that God is a person, leads Dake to conclude that God is the kind of being who has a body and body parts. This is the nature of God. He is a being with a spiritual body, having a soul, a body, and a spirit,[579] circumscribed to a location, and temporal. The paradigm of Dake's notion of the nature of God becomes the basis upon which he then judges individual passages to discover whether they are to be taken literally or figuratively. In a circular manner, then, Dake calls upon these verses to support his assertion that God is a being with a

body.

The question that must be asked then, is whether Dake's idea of the nature of God is accurate. Traditional orthodox Christian theology holds that God must be eternal. Additionally, it seems irrational to think of the ultimate cause of the universe to be anything other than eternal. We could employ the principles of the Kalaam cosmological argument to demonstrate that God is the eternal originating Cause of the universe. Anything that exists in a temporal sequence of *befores* and *afters* must have had a beginning, because an actual infinite series cannot exist. Since an actual infinite series cannot exist, a being whose nature is to exist in an actually infinite series cannot exist either. Therefore, God, the ultimate cause of the universe, cannot be a being who exists in an actually infinite series—He must be eternal. Or we could employ Aquinas' argument of existential causality to demonstrate that there cannot be an infinite regress of sustaining causes. Therefore, God must be the first, eternally existing, uncaused cause. Traditional Christian orthodoxy as well as rational argumentation demonstrates that God must be eternal. Of course, temporality and eternality are mutually exclusive. Indeed, the term "eternal" means "not ternal," or "not temporal." A being cannot be both eternal and temporal in the same sense. It may be logically possible to assert that a being is temporal in one sense and eternal in another sense, but not in the same sense. This assertion would be contradictory, and any assertion that is contradictory cannot be true. In other words, it violates a first principle—a foundational principle.

Now, if we employ two terms, 'temporality' and 'eternality,' to refer to these characterizing attributes we can reduce Dake's assertion about God to its relation to the foundational principle of the law of contradiction.

> As a being with a spirit body, God is circumscribed to a location in space.
> As a being located in space, God moves from planet heaven to planet earth.
> Anything that is located and moves partakes of befores and afters.
> Moving from here to there.
> Before the move and after the move.
> Anything that partakes of befores and afters is temporal.
> Therefore, God is temporal.
>
> God is spirit and omnipresent (orthodox Christian doctrine).
> Anything that is spirit and omnipresent must be eternal (rational demonstration).
> Therefore, God is eternal.
>
> God is temporal and eternal in the same sense.
> The temporal is the eternal.
> But, this is a contradiction.
> Therefore, it must not be the case that God is both temporal and eternal.

> But it is irrational to conclude that the Cause of the universe is temporal
> Therefore, God, the Cause of the universe, must be eternal and not temporal
> Therefore, it must not be the case that God is located in space.
> Therefore, it must not be the case that God has a spirit body.
> Consequently, passages that speak of God having body parts must be figurative.

Since Dake's God is temporal, and the Creator of the universe must be eternal, and since Dake asserts that his god is the Creator of the universe, the resulting assertion is, the Creator of the universe is temporal and eternal, or, in propositional form, The temporal is the eternal. But, this assertion violates the law of non-contradiction, a first or foundational principle. Consequently, it cannot be true that God is both temporal and eternal. Since these are mutually exclusive essential attributes, one must be true, the other must be false. Historically, orthodox Christian theology has employed demonstrations to argue that God must be eternal and that this is the only reasonable and rational way to understand the nature of God. Consequently, by reducing Dake's claim to first truths, we have shown that his conclusion must be false, and his interpretation must be incorrect.

This is, of course, a simplified example and many steps in the process were no doubt oversimplified, but it serves to illustrate the point. The point is, a knowledge claim can be based on a foundation without being derived, inferred, or deduced from it. But, nevertheless, a truth claim can be subjected to resolution by reducing it to first principles. And it is not necessary to accept the specific content of the argument for the illustration to work. The point is that by the reduction of claims to first truths, we have a means of testing conclusions that is grounded in objective principles. The law of contradiction, or non-contradiction, is not a subjectively determined principle, nor is it relative to a particular world view. It transcends all world views and is the same for all perspectives. It would seem to be the case, then, that there is indeed a possibility of objectivity in interpretation because there are in fact some presuppositions that transcend all perspectives, i.e., first truths, and that by reducing conclusions to these first truths, it is possible to adjudicate between opposing interpretations.

Palmer, Gadamer, and others claim that there is no 'right interpretation' as 'right in itself.' Of course this is a self-defeating claim. If there is no right interpretation, then neither Palmer nor Gadamer have any means by which to judge the relative rightness of any interpretation. They make this assertion as if it is the "right interpretation" of all other interpretations or of the state of affairs. As Evangelicals we cannot afford to abandon the possibility of objectivity in interpretation and few Evangelicals who wish to do so.[580] However, our present

descriptions of the interpretive process seem not to go far enough to deflect the appearance of subjectivity and to provide a solid philosophical foundation for our claims to objectivity. It is hoped that the approach outlined herein will suggest the possibility of strengthening the otherwise sound methodologies proposed by contemporary Evangelicals.

The objectivity of interpretation for which we are arguing, then, assumes a reductive foundationalism—a foundationalism that is constituted of foundational principles that are self-evident and undeniable, upon which all truth is based though not necessarily deduced, derived, or inferred from these foundational principles. There are foundational principles that transcend all world views and are ultimately unavoidable. The law of contradiction is such a principle. Any attempt to deny it must employ it. Any system whose essential claims violate this principle cannot be true. Ultimately all truth, including true interpretations, are based upon these first principles. But, first principles are themselves grounded upon the nature of reality. The law of contradiction is traditionally defined in terms of truth claims: A claim cannot be both true and false in the same sense. But, the validity of the law of contradiction is based upon reality itself. The reason a claim cannot be both true and false in the same sense is because a thing cannot both be and not be in the same sense. In other words, it is because of the nature of reality that the law of contradiction exists as it does. So, in our attempt to explain the Moderate Realist approach to the question of objectivity, we will begin at the ground level, reality.

The Foundation of Meaning

The world abounds with many things—entities. All things are not the same. There are many different kinds of things. Some things are very different from each other, such as a rock and a dog. Some things are similar to each other, such as a dog and a cat. Things that are different in kind are differentiated by their species—which simply means “kind.” A dog is a different species of thing from the species of a rock or a cat. But things are not only different by species. There are also different instances of the same species. One dog is not another, yet they are of the same species. Individual dogs are numerically different.

There must be some way of accounting for these differences in things. The fact that there is meaningful communication about different things and the differences in things calls for an explanation. How can we account for the fact that the human mind is able to distinguish between things and reflect that difference by means of language? The capacity to understand and communicate the differences in things must be grounded in the real difference in the things of the world. In order to understand the fact that we communicate what we know,

we must understand how it is possible to know. But to understand how knowledge is possible we must understand the objects of knowledge. But to understand the objects of knowledge, we must understand that which is. To attempt to explicate these claims, we will begin our investigation of that which is by a consideration of substance.

The Reality of Substance

According to Joseph Owens, "The sole absolutely basic essence in any finite thing is called its substance."[581] According to Jacques Maritain, "Substance is a thing or nature whose property is to exist by itself, or in virtue of itself (*per se*) and not in another thing."[582] Both of these definitions assume the reality of substance as that which exists independent of anyone's perception. Simply, the word *substance* indicates that which exists in itself. This concept is not to be confused with the more scientific or physical concept that refers to the constitution of material objects or particles. In Moderate Realism, the term *substance* can be used with reference to spiritual entities as well as physical entities in as much as each entity exists as an independent being.[583]

To explicate the nature of substance is not to attempt to prove the existence of extra-mental reality. As Robert McCall has observed, "The self-evident is indemonstrable. The self-evident does not need to be demonstrated."[584] Something is self-evident *in itself* if, when one understands the terms involved, that thing is immediately known. As St. Thomas described it, "Thus, as soon as you know the nature of a *whole* and the nature of a *part*, you know immediately that every whole is greater than its part. . . . that every whole is greater than its part is, absolutely speaking, self-evident; but it would perforce be unknown to one who could not conceive the nature of a whole."[585]

But, extra-mental reality seems immediately obvious and therefore self-evident. If this is so, it seems highly problematic to attempt to prove the existence of a reality that is external to the mind, for to whom or what would such a proof be directed? Extra-mental reality appears to be self-evidently experienced on a daily basis by all who are alive. What is to be demonstrated, therefore, is not whether there is an extra-mental reality, but that this reality exists outside the mind as what is called substance. "Whatever be its explicit formal definition . . . substance is the thing in its necessary role of independent existence."[586]

Substance as Independent Existence

The most basic principle of reality is what is called substance. The reason

for starting with substance is the proposition that "There must be things which exist in themselves."[587] Anything that exists must either exist in itself or in another. To say that something exists in another is to assert that it could not exist independently. "The sun tan has its few months' being each summer only as a modification of a human skin."[588] A sun tan does not have independent existence, whereas the man in whom the sun tan exists does have independent existence.

The independent existence of substance is not to be confused with an independence or dependence upon extrinsic efficient causality. Every finite being is caused to be by the efficient causality of the Uncaused Cause, namely God. Owens clarifies this distinction when he states, "The dependence or independence that distinguishes essences refers not to the reception of being but to the way in which that being is possessed."[589] A man is not a modification of being. A man *is* a being. A man has his being in an independent way, that is to say, a man does not exist in another thing as a quality exists in another thing. Any being that has its being in this independent way is identified as a *substance*. Conversely, "Whatever has its being in dependence upon a substance . . . is known as an *accident*."[590]

Even so, every being has its being either independently or dependently, as described above. Every being is either a substance or an accident. But every being cannot be an accident, for an accident cannot exist independently; else it would not be an accident, but a substance. Neither can accidents exist dependently upon prior accidents in an infinite regress, for an infinite regress is impossible. An infinite regress of accidents would constitute an independent existence, or substance.[591] But to assert that accidents are substance is contradictory. Therefore, there must be independent existences, or substances. McCall makes a helpful observation of this point: "Either there are things which have independent existence, sustaining self and sustaining dependents, or there is nothing, due to the ever-eluding second alternative [infinite regress] in its march to infinity. The fact that a thing as such, as itself, is sustained not in another but in itself is proof that there is the reality of substance."[592]

Substance and Change

A second aspect of substance is the relation of substance to change. The fact of change has been a topic of philosophical and practical investigation since the beginning of intellectual observation of the world. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus is famous for the saying attributed to him, "All things are in a state of flux."[593] However, the popular interpretation of Heraclitus'

observation is somewhat flawed. It is self-defeating to assert that all things are in a state of flux, for this would include the claim that all things are in a state of flux, the truth of which rests on the assumption that it is unchangeably true. But if the claim that all is in flux is itself not in flux, then it is not the case that all is in flux, and the claim falsifies itself.

In the midst of change, something must remain unchanged. Indeed, the very notion of change includes the idea that some*thing* changes. Yet, that which changes is the same thing through the change. As Margaret Gorman has observed, "If there were not *things* to change, man would say that there were *new* things, not that *things changed*."[594] Gorman identifies three elements of change.

1. The Arrival of Something New
2. a subject to receive the change or to be changed for, if there is nothing that has changed, no *change* has taken place but a new being has come. A ball to be moved must be a ball or it cannot be moved and be described as a ball that has been moved. A child to grow must be a child; the growing does not occur unless there is a subject of growing.
3. the subject's lack of the perfection acquired through the change.[595]

From these principles it is clear that change implies permanence. There must be some aspect of a thing that undergoes change, a subject of change. A consideration of accidental change will provide a helpful illustration of this point. If an accident is a modification of a substance and is not essential to the substance *qua* substance, then it is easy to see that in accidental change, the accidental characteristic changes while the substance remains the same. The man who has obtained the sun tan has undergone an accidental change. It is not essential to the nature of a man that he have tan skin. A pale man is no less a man than a man with a tan. A tan is an accidental characteristic. When the tan fades, the man remains the same man. The substance does not change. The accidental characteristic of skin color changes. The reality of change offers a confirmation of the reality of substance. George Klubertanz provides an enlightening summary of this point: ". . . in the kind of change we are considering here, the subject remains what it was, in the sense that it retains the same nature and individuality. But in itself this subject can, and often must, receive further determinations. . . . Because this subject remains the same 'under' the change, and so 'is under' ('sub-stands') the various determinations that it has, it is called a 'substance.'"[596]

Substance and Predication

According to *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, predication is "The attribution of

a property to a subject."[597] Now, assuming the substance/accident dichotomy as presented above, if there is no substance, then all attributes are accidents, and all predications are accidental predications. However, according to Aristotle, ". . . since the accidental always implies a predication about some subject, if all statements are accidental, there will be nothing primary about which they are made; so the predication must proceed to infinity. But this is impossible for not even more than two accidents can be combined in predication. An accident cannot be an accident of an accident unless both are accidents of the same thing."[598]

If there is no substance, then predication cannot make any assertion about the essence of anything. As Aristotle argues, "In general those who talk like this do away with substance and essence, for they are compelled to assert that all things are accidents, and that there is no such thing as 'being essentially man' or 'animal.'"[599] But, if there is no substance then words cannot have reference to what a thing essentially is. Consequently, words would not have a definite range of meaning, but would be unlimited in reference. As Aristotle concludes, "If . . . it be said that 'man' has an infinite number of meanings, obviously there can be no discourse; for not to have one meaning is to have no meaning, and if words have no meaning there is an end of discourse with others, and even, strictly speaking, with oneself . . ."[600]

McCall provides a helpful summary explanation of the logic of Aristotle's argument: "Without substance there is no limit placed on the number of predications, because there is never anything at which a final point must be reached for the two mutually exclusive alternatives: being so or not so. Tall and not tall; white and not white; sick and not sick: these are contradictories basically because of the impossibility of realizing them in the same subject at the same time and under the same circumstances."[601]

Without substance there is no reason to assert that a thing is white as opposed to non-white because there is nothing about which to make any assertion. Without substance, which is the essence of what something is, there is no reason not to assert that a thing is both white and non-white. Without substance, there is no means by which to limit the number of predications, and discourse becomes meaningless.

Someone may argue, however, that the law of non-contradiction forbids the predication of contradictories. However, as we have pointed out, epistemology must be grounded in metaphysics. The law of non-contradiction obtains with reference to predication because it is grounded in being. The assertion that a thing is both white and non-white in the same sense is a contradiction in

predication because it is a contradiction in being. One cannot assert that something is both white and non-white in the same sense because a thing must **be** either white or non-white in the same sense—a thing cannot both be and not be in the same sense.

However, discourse is in fact meaningful. If anyone wishes to claim that discourse is not meaningful, he has taken up an impossible task. Can anyone meaningfully object to the fact of meaning? White and non-white cannot be predicated of the same thing in the same sense because of the nature of the thing as it is in itself. Predication is limited to the nature of reality by virtue of its substance. The fact of communication provides yet another demonstration of the reality of substance.

To speak of substance, then, is to make reference to what something is as an essence. The substance of man is his man-ness. According to Klubertanz, "*Substance* is that principle of being whose nature it is to be directly ordered to **esse** in itself . . . Essence in the strict sense is substance considered as being of a certain kind of species and being capable of receiving an act of existing."[602]

So substance identifies what a thing is in itself. However, the notion of substance *qua* substance does not provide us with an understanding of its intelligibility. How is it possible to understand what a substance is? In short, how is knowledge of substance possible? To answer this question we must examine the principles that constitute the nature of substance.

The Nature of Substance

In the realm of finite things, substance is composite. As Joseph Owens points out, "[Substance] consists of two components or intrinsic principles, matter and form."[603]

The Constituent Principles of Substance

As we have observed, it is necessary to account for the differences in things. A dog is different from a cat because of those aspects of its essence that make it a dog. There must be some way to account for the fact that the substance of a dog is a different kind of substance than the substance of a cat. A dog is a different form of reality from a cat. Additionally, a second dog is different from the first dog, but it is of the same form of reality. The way in which a dog is different from a cat is different than the way one dog is different from another dog. A single explanation cannot account for these two ways of being different. Dogs cannot differ by their form, for this is the very principle by which they are constituted dogs. Benignus Gerrity has provided a helpful description of this point: "A [dog] is different from a [cat], and from every other kind of being,

precisely because it is a [dog]; but it were absurd to say that it is different from another [dog] precisely because it is a [dog]. Some second principle must be recognized to account for the distinction between two [dogs]. We call these two principles form and matter. The form makes a thing the kind of thing that it is, and the matter makes it the individual that it is."[604]

The two constituent principles of substance, form and matter, are the very principles that account for the two ways in which things differ. In this use, the term "principle" indicates that neither form nor matter are entities or beings in themselves, but are the constituents of being. Things that differ according to kind differ by their respective forms. Things of the same kind that differ as individuals differ by their matter.

Form is also designated substantial form in order to differentiate it from accidental form. Form "is the determining and specifying principle of essence or substance."[605] Simply stated, form is that principle which accounts for the fact that a thing is a certain kind of thing. It is not possible to provide an analytical definition of form, because by an analytical definition one attempts to break down that which is to be analyzed into its more basic constituents. However, form and matter are the most basic constituents of being. Therefore, form and matter must be described rather than analyzed.

The form of a dog is its "dog-ness." Form in this use must not be confused with the more common connotation of shape. Although the shape of a thing is determined by the kind of thing that it is, the principle of form is not to be identified with this single characteristic. "The form, therefore . . . is what determines the nature of a thing."[606] Form is the actualizing principle of being. A dog is a dog because of its form. A dog differs from a cat because of their respective forms.[607]

Matter, also identified as primary or first matter, "is the determinable and limiting principle of substance in material things . . ."[608] This use of the concept 'matter' must not be confused with the typical modern concept of physical matter. Matter in this philosophical usage is a principle of being. It is "the common ground of substantial change, the undetermined element of corporeal being. It is the purest potentiality, void of form . . ."[609] One dog does not differ from another dog on the basis of form, for it is the form which constitutes each a dog. They cannot differ by dogness, for that is the very aspect in which they are alike. Two dogs differ, not by form, but by matter. Whereas the form "makes a thing the kind of thing that it is . . . the matter makes it the individual that it is."[610]

Roughly speaking, form is the whatness of a thing, and matter is the

thatness of a thing. Neither form nor matter is a being in itself. Rather, they are principles of composite beings. Every finite being is composed of form, what it is, and matter, that it is. Things in reality can differ according to what they are–a dog or a cat–and they can differ according to the fact that they are–this dog or that dog. The constituent principles of finite substance, therefore, are form and matter.

The Knowability of Substance

The problem of the knowability of substance is seen in the fact that in order to know something as it is in itself, that thing must somehow enter the mind of the knower. In other words, this is the problem of having direct access to extra-mental reality. To know a substance means that one's knowledge is not mediated by some third thing, such as a copy or idea or representation. As Gerrity presents the problem, "In order that there may actually be knowledge, the thing primarily necessary is that the object be present in the mind of the knower. To know a house I must get the house into my mind."[611] Now, to have an object present in the mind, neither the mind of the knower nor the object known can be altered in the knowing process. The knower cannot materially become a house, for then the knower is no longer a knower, but a house. Nor can the house be altered in the process of knowledge, for then it is not the house that is known, but some other thing. Etienne Gilson presents the problem in the form of the question, ". . . on what conditions can the knowing subject become the object known, without ceasing to be itself?"[612] There must be some principle by which real things can enter into the mind of a knower without altering either in the process. That principle is form. As Jacques Maritain observes, "there exists in everything an intelligible and immaterial element, which Aristotle calls *form*, in virtue of which it possesses a specific nature or essence;"[613]

Maritain uses the term "element" as synonymous with constituent principle. As the most basic constituents of substance of being, form and matter are its elemental parts, or basic principles. To say that an object is intelligible is to say that it is capable of being known by the intellect. But, if extra-mental reality is purely material, then it is completely unknowable, for, as will be explained in the next chapter, it is impossible for the mind to become another material object. As Robert Brennan observes, "A universe made up of matter alone would be simply unintelligible."[614]

It is equally impossible for a real material object to enter one's mind. But there must be some aspect by which a real object can enter the mind of the knower, and that aspect must be immaterial. As Gilson describes it, "The

element of an object which can be assimilated by thought, is precisely its form. To say that the knowing subject becomes the object, is consequently the same thing as to say that the form of the knowing subject enriches itself with the form of the object known."[615]

Consequently, substance is knowable by virtue of the immaterial constituent principle of form. All sensible reality is composed of form and matter. Therefore, all sensible reality is intelligible by virtue of its form.

Summary

The Moderate Realist view of the foundation of meaning sketched in this chapter began with the reality of the extra-mental world and an exposition of the reality of substance. Either things exist independently or dependently. But to assert that things exist only dependently issues in a self-defeating infinite regress. Therefore, some things exist independently, and this is substance. We have also attempted to explain that that-which-is is understood to be substance by a consideration of the reality of change and the fact of predication.

Next, we examined the constituent principles of substance, form and matter. We observed that things are different by kind and by individuality, and that the principles of form and matter account for the differences in things. Form is what a substance is. Matter is that a substance is. We went on to show that the principle of intelligibility in a substance is its form.

In the next section our task will be to consider the Moderate Realist view of knowledge. Now that we have considered the nature of that-which-is, it is necessary to consider how we can know that-which-is.

8 HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WHICH IS?

Introduction

The next step in the exposition of a Moderate Realist theory of meaning is a consideration of the knowing process. We have considered the reality of substance and its constituent principles, form and matter. The knowableness of substance was introduced in the latter part of the previous chapter in terms of form. Our present task is to consider in greater detail how it is possible to know reality. But the task is not simply to offer an exposition of a Moderate Realist epistemology. Rather, it is to propose an explanation for how it is possible to know reality directly. In other words, the present exposition is offered as an alternative to the representationalist epistemology in order to justify the claim to objectivity of knowledge by describing how it is possible to know reality as it is in itself.

According to the principles of Moderate Realism, "The noblest way of possessing a thing is to possess it in an immaterial manner, that is, by possessing its form without its matter. And this is the definition of knowledge."[616] However, this notion is not peculiar to a Moderate Realist perspective. A similar notion was held even as early as Plotinus. By way of summary, Plotinus proposed that in this life, man finds himself separated from that which he desires. This is in a sense the nature of desire. What is desired is what is not possessed, but the individual moves toward the fulfillment or satisfaction of his desires to achieve happiness or contentment. Ultimately the absolute satisfaction of desire involves the acquisition of what is desired—in a sense, becoming one with it. From the perspective of a human being, the most perfect way in which one can join with anything is intellectual. Intellectual union involves the identity of subject and object—the knower and the known become one: "To the extent in which it knows does the knowing subject—for now earnest attention must be given this point—come into unity with the thing known."[617]

As Etienne Gilson puts it, "We start with the fact that the knowing of an object is the actual presence of the object in the thought . . ."[618] It is not sufficient that the mind have merely some kind of representation of the real external object in the mind, for, if the mind can have only a representation of the object, and not the object itself, as we have seen, then it can never discover whether the representation accurately represents the real object. It does not matter how one attempts to approach or investigate external reality. If a representation is all that the mind can obtain, then the mind does not have access to the real object, and a comparison between the real object and the

representation in the mind can never be achieved. Consequently, reality can never be known. In a Moderate Realist scheme, the knowledge of externally real objects is foundational to all knowledge. Abstract knowledge, knowledge of propositions, etc., are built upon the foundation of the direct knowledge of external reality.

Knowledge must involve the presence of the real object in the mind of the knower. This is the problem of knowledge. In dealing with this problem, however, one must realize that it is not accurate to claim that it is the senses that know or the intellect that knows. Rather, as St. Thomas asserts,". . . properly speaking, it is neither the intellect nor the sense that knows, but man that knows through both . . ."[619] Man knows by means of his senses as well as his intellect. As Gilson points out, "there are not two conceivable solutions of the problem of knowledge, one for the intelligence and the other for the senses. Sensible knowledge and intellectual knowledge may be and are in fact two different kinds or two different phases of one and the same operation, but they must inevitably be accounted for by the same explanation."[620]

Sense Cognition

The first step in the knowing process is sensation. The immediate problem is the fact that, as Brennan has observed, "Knowledge is possible only on the condition that subject and object have something in common . . . a certain degree of immateriality is a primary requisite."[621] This is necessary because the mind is immaterial. For the object to enter the mind of the knower, there must be an immaterial aspect of the object, and this is its form. "A being is defined by its form."[622] The form is the "whatness" of substance. Therefore, when the form enters the mind of the knower, it is the substantial form of the thing in reality that is thereby known. It is by way of the senses that the form of the object initially enters the mind of the knower. Sensation is considered under two general divisions, external and internal.

The External Senses

It will not be necessary to spend a great deal of time on this aspect of the knowing process since, as Brennan points out, "From the time of Aristotle, psychologists have been fairly well agreed upon the fivefold division of our external senses into vision, hearing, smell, taste, and body sense or somesthesis."[623]

Sensible Encounter with Objective Reality

The first point to be considered with reference to the external senses is whether in sensation the *mind* forms the impression of what is sensibly perceived by means of some subjective modification, or whether the senses actually attain the objectively real.

As M. Aloysius observes, for St. Thomas, "sense exhibits itself as a passive power which must be initially moved by an external stimulus."[624] To be a passive power indicates that the senses do not generate the forms of sensible cognition. The form of the real object is impressed upon the senses. Aristotle employs the example of an impression of a signet-ring upon wax: "Generally, about all perception, we can say that a sense is what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter, in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold; what produces the impression is a signet of bronze or gold, but not *qua* bronze or gold: in a similar way the sense is affected by what is coloured or flavoured or sounding not insofar as each is what it is, but insofar as it is of such and such a sort and according to its form."[625] That which is embossed on the signet-ring is received in the wax and is separated from the matter of the ring. As Mortimer Adler explains, "The golden A on the signet is *formally* the same as the waxen A, but *materially* different."[626]

It is clear from the illustration that the form impressed upon the wax is not generated by the wax but by the impression of the signet-ring. Similarly, the form impressed upon the senses is not generated by the senses, or by the mind of the knower, but by the object in reality. M. Aloysius asserts, "Now, inasmuch as human knowledge takes its rise from sense-data, this suffices to ground it in objectively existing things."[627]

Sensible Encounter by Intentional Form

It is necessary, then, to examine how this impression is accomplished. As has been stated before, knowledge begins with the impression upon the external senses of the form of an objectively real thing. As the impression of the signet-ring left its form in the wax, but did not leave its matter, so the impression of the objectively real object leaves its form on the external sense without its matter.

This process takes place by actual entrance of the form of the object into the knowing subject. As Klubertanz describes it, "to know another is in some sense to be (and thus to have become) another, to take on the form of another. To be another, to possess another's form—though not a material, physical being and possession—is nevertheless real, for we actually have knowledge of various things."[628]

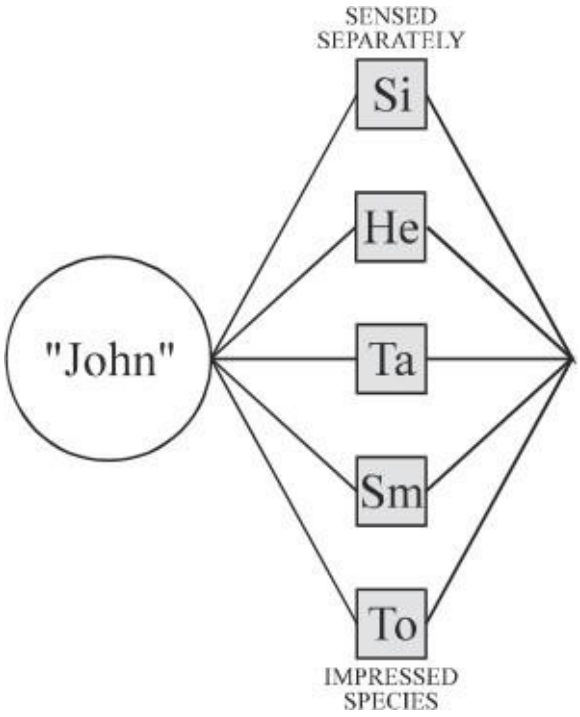
This indicates that the mode of existence of the object in external reality, and the mode of existence of the same object in the knowing subject are different. The same object that exists materially in external reality exists immaterially in the knowing subject. This immaterial existence in the knowing subject is called intentional existence. Klubertanz describes the nature of intentional existence as the "orientation of human knowledge to things known" as a "kind of 'extending out toward or over, including' (*intendere*) the object in itself."[629] Joseph Owens observes that intention "seems to have meant originally an idea, or representation in thought. Later the etymology of the word was used to bring out the notion that cognition 'tends' toward or into its object."[630]

The intentional existence is an immaterial existence of the form of the real object in the knowing subject. The form of a man is impressed upon the sense of sight. But the sense of sight does not become another person. The sense of sight remains a sense of sight while becoming the form of the man sensed. To explain this process St. Thomas introduced the notion of the "species."[631] The species is not a new or different entity that has been introduced into the knowing process. Rather, the introduction of the term "species" is an effort to clarify the explanation of the knowing process by naming a distinct aspect.

The form of the thing in reality, which is the metaphysical principle of substance and determines what a thing is, is impressed upon the senses. The way the form informs matter to constitute a substance in external reality is different from the way the same form informs the knowing subject. The form is combined with matter to constitute a real being. Matter receives form as *its* form by which it is determined to be a certain specific thing in reality. The intellect, however, does not receive a form as *its* form, but, as John F. Peifer describes it, "precisely as it is the form of the other, of the thing."[632] Matter receives its form materially. The knower receives the form of the thing in reality immaterially, or spiritually.

The term "species," then, serves to distinguish between the form as it informs matter and the same form as it informs the knower. Robert Brennan provides a helpful explanation of the notion of the species.

Figure 18: Sense Cognition: Part 1



The word *species* is very technical in meaning. Here it signifies, not a logical principle which determines predicational existence; nor an ontological principle which determines natural existence; but, if I may use the term, *an epistemological principle which determines intentional existence*. In its cognitive meaning, therefore, a species is an intentional form. As an intentional form it is an instrument of knowledge or an intermediary which enables the subject, without ceasing to be what it is by nature, to become the object, without destroying the nature of the object.[633]

The species is not another object, nor is it merely a copy of the object in reality. The species is the sensible and intelligible aspect, namely the form, of the object in reality as it is in its immaterial mode of existence in the knower. But, as Etienne Gilson insists, "it is of capital importance to grasp that the species is not one thing and the object another; the species is the object itself '*per modum speciei*,' that is to say, the object considered in its action and its efficacy exercised upon a subject."[634]

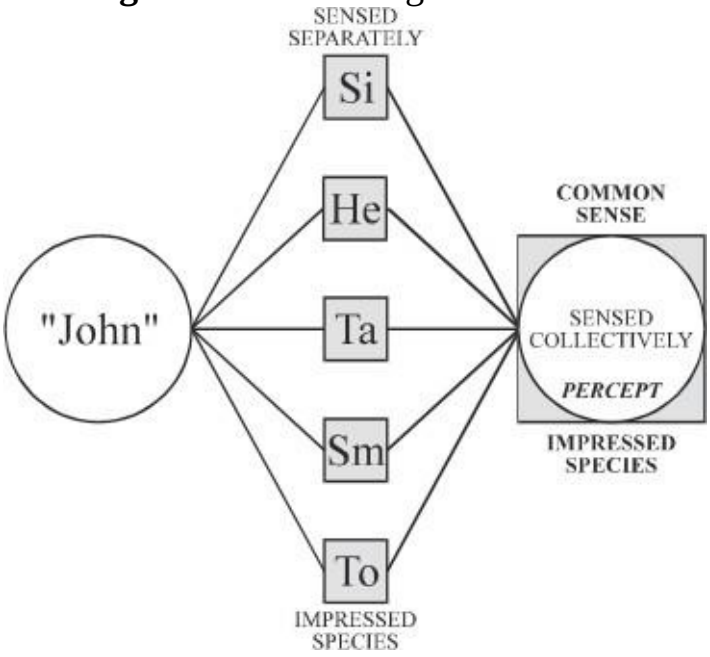
The diagram in **Figure 18** illustrates this first step in the knowing process. The circle represents the thing in reality composed of matter and form. The five small squares represent the five external senses. The five lines represent the impression of the form of the external object upon the appropriate sense. The result is the formation of an impressed species, which is the form of the object as it exists in the appropriate sense.

The Internal Senses

As a result of a sensible encounter with external reality, a sense organ, or sense organs, are impressed upon by the form of the real object. The form of that object comes to exist in the knowing subject as the species, or intentional form. However, it is apparent that there must be something more to the sense experience than the sense impression of the five external senses. For example, it is evident that the sense of sight cannot ascertain the difference between blue and sweet, simply because sweetness is not the proper object of sight. Also, experience indicates that we are aware of our sense experience. As George Klubertanz argues, "the senses are passive powers, and their objects are related to them as agent to patient. Since the sense cannot act upon itself, it cannot know itself. Consequently, the sense power is not reflexive. And so none of the external senses can be the principle of sensory consciousness. Consequently, in any and every act by which we are aware of an external object, we can distinguish at least two elements, one of which is the act of a particular external sense, and the other of which is the knowledge of that act."[635]

These observations lead to the conclusion that there must be some additional power or powers of the mind that are able to account for these experiences. These additional powers are the internal senses.

Figure 19: Sense Cognition: Part 2



The Common Sense

It is a fact of experience that the mind is able to distinguish between red and warm. The sense of sight is able to distinguish between red and blue, but not red

and warm because it does not know warm. There must, therefore, be a unifying power by which the mind is able to unite all of the sensible aspects into a single perception. That power is called the common sense. This term is traditional in scholastic philosophy and is too common to be replaced. However, it must not be confused with the popular idiomatic use in English referring to a body of knowledge that is generally accepted by a group. Gilson describes common sense as that "to which all sense-perceptions must be submitted, as to their common centre, to enable it to judge of them and to distinguish between them."[636]

The function of the common sense, then, is to "perceive different sensible species, distinguish them, compare them, [and to] be aware of them as entities that are distinct from the emotive accompaniments they cause . . ."[637] Additionally, the data that is received by the external senses is "collected into a common image, which is attributed to one and the same external object."[638]

The diagram in **Figure 19** illustrates the next step in the knowing process. The reproduction of the circle inside the square represents the fact that what is perceived is not simply a copy of the thing in reality, but is that thing according to the mode of existence it takes in the mind of the knower. The five lines leading from the individual senses to the common sense represents the collecting aspect of the common sense. The result is the formation of an impressed species that is the sensed object as a whole. It is an impressed species because the proper object of the common sense is the form as it is impressed upon the senses.

Imagination[639]

Because the proper object of the common sense is the external object as it acts upon the external senses, the common sense "functions only while the object is physically present and being sensed by the external senses."[640] However, experience teaches us that we are able to recall at least some of the experiences which we have had in the past. Even though the object may not be present, we are able to recall the sensible species which was originally the result of a previous sense experience. As Klubertanz observes, "it is immediately evident that we have a power of retaining sensory experience. This power is called 'retentive imagination' . . ."[641]

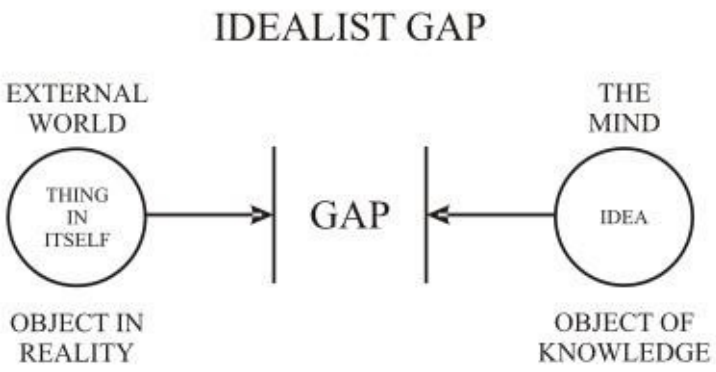
The power of the imagination is composed of two aspects, the reproductive and the creative. The reproductive imagination is that aspect by which the mind is able to represent (re-present, or present again) things in the mind. The creative imagination is that aspect by which the mind is able to combine the re-presentations or portions of re-presentations into images which have never

actually been the objects of the senses. But, as Brennan points out, “In both cases . . . the contents of what is represented on the imaginal power must be drawn from previous experiences, even when chimeras and mountains of gold are fantastically created.”[642]

The operation of the imaginal power is the production of an expressed species or image. Here the term “image” is used in a technical sense and “is not a mere extrinsic picture or portrait, but it is an expressed intentional similitude.”[643] Brennan warns of the problems surrounding the use of this term: “The term “image” is rather inadequate as a description of the product of the imagination, because it is so immediately suggestive of something *seen*. The fact is, of course, that imaginal power is limited only by the limitations of sensitive experience. Accordingly, we have images arising from all the fields of sensation: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and somesthetic.”[644]

The terms “image,” “picture,” and “representation” are not, therefore, to be taken only in the more common understanding of some sort of visual reproduction in the mind’s eye. Rather, these terms are employed in an attempt to bring out the similitude that exists between the expressed species and the object in reality. The visual representation in the mind of a past visual experience is certainly one instance of an image. It is simply the case that the image is more than simply visual, not that it is not visual at all.

Figure 20: The Idealistic Gap



Although this expressed species is identified as a representation or a similitude, it must not be supposed that the realist account of the knowing process has come to the same point for which the representationalist theories were criticized. The insurmountable difficulty of Representationalism, or any “copy theory,” is that the real object is always outside the mind, while the mind attains only a copy of the thing in reality. Consequently, the mind is never able to acquire the real object by which to discover whether or not its copy is an

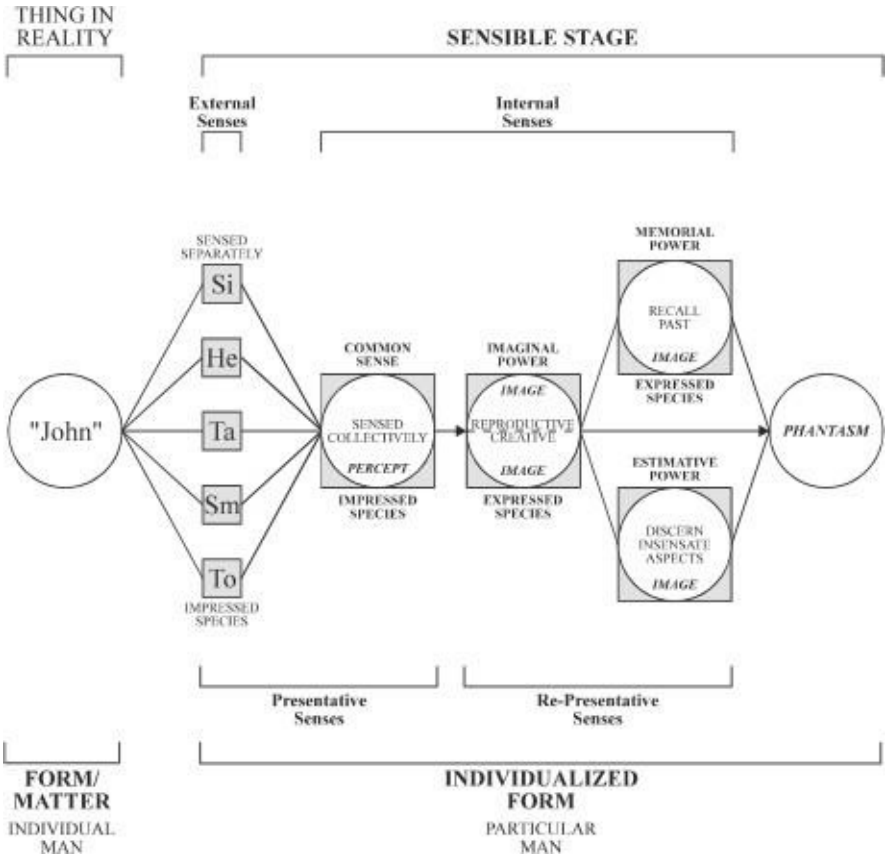
accurate representation of the objectively real object. This “gap” is illustrated in the diagram in **Figure 20** .

In opposition to this, the realist view proposes that the real object actually enters the mind by means of its form from which the imagination is able to make an expressed species. The mind, then, has both the real object, by virtue of its intentional being, and the expressed species in the mind by which a comparison can be made to discover the accuracy of the representation and similitude of the expressed species.

This expressed species is designated by the term “phantasm” as it is considered in relation to the act of the intellect, which will be considered next. The word “phantasm” derives from the Latin word “*phantasma*,” which means “image,” “the representation of a thing in its absence . . .”[645] The diagram in **Figure 21** illustrates the final step in sense cognition which results in the expressed species or the phantasm. The phantasm is designated as an expressed species because the imagination makes its object “appear.”[646] Whereas the external senses and the common sense issue in an impressed species by virtue of the impression of the form of the external object, the imagination, and the other powers of the internal senses, issue in the expressed species by which the image is expressed in the mind of the knower.

It may be objected that there is no readily available empirical evidence for the above delineated scheme. However, the above explanation of sense cognition is an attempt to give a rational explanation for common experience. The empirical evidence is the common experience of sensation. The rational explanation is an attempt to analyze this experience and provide a possible explanation for this common experience. But, rational explanations require rational justification, not empirical justification. The justification for this explanation is that it seems to explain all the data of experience.

Figure 21: Sense Cognition: Part 3



Summary of Sense Cognition

According to the Moderate Realist scheme, then, sense cognition is knowledge of the particular thing as it is in itself[647] according to its sensible qualities. The form of the thing in reality has come to exist in the mind of the knowing subject as an impressed species in the external senses and common sense, and as an expressed species in the imagination. It exists in the mind as an intentional being by virtue of an immaterial mode of existence. The expressed species of the imagination are not one thing while the impressed species of the common sense are another. Rather the expressed species is "numerically the same species which are used by the *sensus communis* [common sense]," for they are "transferred to and retained by the imagination, though used there in a different manner."[648] The phantasm, which is the ultimate term of sensible cognition is that upon which the intellect will operate issuing in intellectual knowledge. As Gerrity notes, "The phantasm is formed not merely to represent a singular thing, but principally to serve as the material out of which the active intellect abstracts the intelligible species."[649]

Intellectual Cognition

The next step in the analysis of this Moderate Realist scheme is the examination of intellectual cognition. The termination of sense cognition is the phantasm by which the particular thing in reality is known as particular. The form of the thing in reality has been received into the mind of the knower apart from its matter but along with all the concrete conditions of matter. By the senses the mind knows the qualities of this particular thing in the here and now. The necessity of this process in the Moderate Realist scheme is explained by Benignus Gerrity.

> The only proper stimulus and object of the operation of the intellect is the actually intelligible. Now . . . matter of itself is not intelligible at all, and . . . the actually intelligible is nothing less than form entirely free from matter and material conditions. But things composed of matter and form are, obviously, not pure forms; and the consequence is that the proper objects of man's intellect, as they exist naturally, are not actually intelligible. . . . The only way out of the difficulty is to show that these things are *made* actually intelligible. Sensation and the formation of the phantasm . . . are the beginning of this process of making them so, but it reaches its completion only in the operation of the intellect.[650]

Experience teaches us that the mind is capable of knowing not only the particular, but also the common or universal aspects of individual things. Our language is replete with words that have general reference. As Mortimer Adler argues, "Unless, by means of our abstract concepts, we can understand triangularity as such or what is common to particular cows, trees, and chairs, the general or common names we use can have no significance, for they do not refer to this particular triangle or to that particular cow, but to triangles in general and cows in general."[651]

The process by which the mind comes to know the common nature, which is in the phantasm that has been produced by the imagination, involves two powers of the soul: "By one power [the soul] makes things actually intelligible, by abstracting their forms from individual matter, and thus rendering them intelligible forms. This power is called the active [or agent] intellect. The other power is the ability to receive these actually intelli[gible] species, and so to know the objects of which they are the forms. This [is] generally called the possible intellect, sometimes . . . the passive intellect."[652]

The Agent Intellect

The intellect "lays hold upon the whatness of things, as universal . . ."[653] It accomplishes this task by an act of illumination and abstraction in which the common nature or essence is illumined and separated from the individuating conditions of matter.

Illumination and Abstraction

Illumination

The first aspect of the action of the agent intellect is described as illumination. L. M. Regis compares the act of illumination by the agent or active intellect to the illuminating function of light: ". . . our intellect is called active because it illumines the phantasm as light illumines color, which, in an objective context, means that just as color is actually a motive cause of our visual power only because it is illumined by light, so the phantasm can move the possible intellect only insofar as it is illumined by the light of the agent intellect."[654]

But it is not the function of illumination to impose upon the phantasm its intelligibility, as Gerrity points out: "The active intellect does not, as the analogy of the light might lead one to believe, confer radical intelligibility on the intelligible species. It cannot do so, for these species are forms, and every form is in its own right intelligible . . ."[655]

Consequently, it is not some intelligible thing other than the form of the thing in reality that the intellect knows. That is to say, the agent intellect has not imposed upon the phantasm some aspect that was not present in it before the act of illumination. It is the "freedom from materiality" that is the "condition for the actualization of this radical intelligibility."[656] Illumination implies an act of making "visible" that which is already present in the thing, not adding something to the thing.

This point is made in order to set the realist position over against the claims of Nominalism at this crucial point in the process of intellection. The nominalist claims that only particulars exist, not universals. Extreme Nominalism, according to the Moderate Realist evaluation, claims that there are no grounds for the universal in extra-mental reality. However, the Moderate Realist position asserts that the common nature or essence is present in each individual, and, rather than imposing upon the individual an aspect of commonality generated by the mind and represented by general terms, as the nominalist claims, the agent intellect simply illumines the essence of the thing and abstracts from the phantasm the common nature that is already and always present in the individual.

Abstraction

The second aspect of the action of the agent intellect is abstraction. St. Thomas elucidates the notion of abstraction.

> Abstraction occurs in two ways: one, by way of combining and separating, as when we understand

> one not to be in another or to be separate from it; two, by way of a single and absolute consideration, as when we understand one without considering the other at all. . . . whatever pertains to the definition of any species of material reality, for instance stone or man or horse, can be considered without individuating conditions which are no part of the definition of the species. And this is what I mean by abstracting the universal from the particular, the idea from sense images, to consider the nature of a species without considering individuating conditions represented by sense images.[657]

Abstraction, then, is the act of the agent intellect by which it separates the common nature that has been illumined in order to form the impressed intelligible species. All those accidental features that are not necessary to the constitution of the individual as this or that kind of substance are stripped away by abstraction, and only the essence of the thing remains. That is to say, the agent intellect abstracts the essence of the thing from all those qualities such as this color, or this weight, which do not make the thing to be what it is. As John Peifer describes it, "The intellect . . . receives intelligible similitudes in a more perfectly immaterial way, as stripped of the individuating conditions of matter. It lays hold upon natures which are common to numberless individuals. The intelligible species which activate the intellect must, therefore, be similitudes totally divested of matter: both without matter and also without the individuating conditions of matter."[658] The act by which this divesting of the individuating conditions of matter is accomplished in order to form the impressed intelligible species is abstraction.

The Impressed Intelligible Species

The result of the action of the agent intellect is the formation of the impressed intelligible species. It is not the function of the agent intellect to know, as John Peifer points out: "The active [agent] intellect does not know; its whole function is to prepare for knowledge by producing the impressed species which determine and actuate the possible intellect for the act of cognition."[659]

The impressed intelligible species is "impressed" because the agent intellect is causing an impression of the abstracted essence. It is "intelligible" because it is the intelligible aspect of the thing, namely, its form. It is a "species" because this is the term which has been introduced in order to identify the form of the thing as it is in the mind in its immaterial or intentional mode of existence. The impressed intelligible species which has been produced by abstraction is none other than the common nature or essence of the thing in reality. But, the notion of common nature must not be confused with the notion of the universal. As Joseph Owens observes, "The universal . . . has a type of community that makes it strictly one in itself, and does not allow it to be one and many at the same time. The universal is found only in the intellect, never in the sensible thing that is

known by its means."[660]

It is important to point out again that what has been produced by the agent intellect in the act of abstraction is not some different thing from the thing in reality, as Joseph Owens makes clear.

> All that the intellect knows . . . is there in reality in the thing. The modes of being, on the other hand, follow respectively from the nature of the intellect and the nature of the thing. The nature of a sensible thing is material; so in its real existence it has a material, and therefore singular and contingent, mode of being. The nature of the intellect is immaterial; so when the same sensible thing exists in the intellect, it has an immaterial mode of being, a mode that is universal, necessary, and immobile. This difference in mode does not at all affect the identity of the object. It is the same thing no matter which of the two modes it may assume.[661]

The Possible Intellect

The possible intellect is the passive power that is actualized by the impression of the intelligible species, the latter being produced by the agent or active intellect. This intelligible species is the common nature or essence of the thing in reality that has been abstracted from the phantasm. It is intelligible because it is free, not only from matter, but also from the individuating conditions of matter. The act of the possible intellect, then, is the act of intellectual knowledge. But, as Robert Brennan points out, "The task of the possible intellect . . . is not only to receive and be fecundated, but also to produce in its own right: and so it gives expression to its representational power by forming a species of its own. This species is the idea or concept."[662]

The Idea

Of paramount importance is the fact that the idea formed in the possible intellect is not the object of knowledge. Rather, it is the means by which the thing is known. John Peifer elucidates this point: "Properly speaking, thinking is not forming concepts, thinking is knowing things. But we know things only as they are in knowledge, only as they are in concepts. Consequently, thinking involves the forming of concepts in which we know things."[663]

The idea which is formed by the action of the agent intellect is none other than the form of the thing in reality "considered as having existence apart from the [thing itself]."[664] Since the idea is the form of the thing in reality, it is not the idea that is the object of knowledge. Rather, the idea is the "instrument," so to speak, by means of which the intellect knows the thing in reality. The object of knowledge is the thing in reality, not the idea in the intellect.

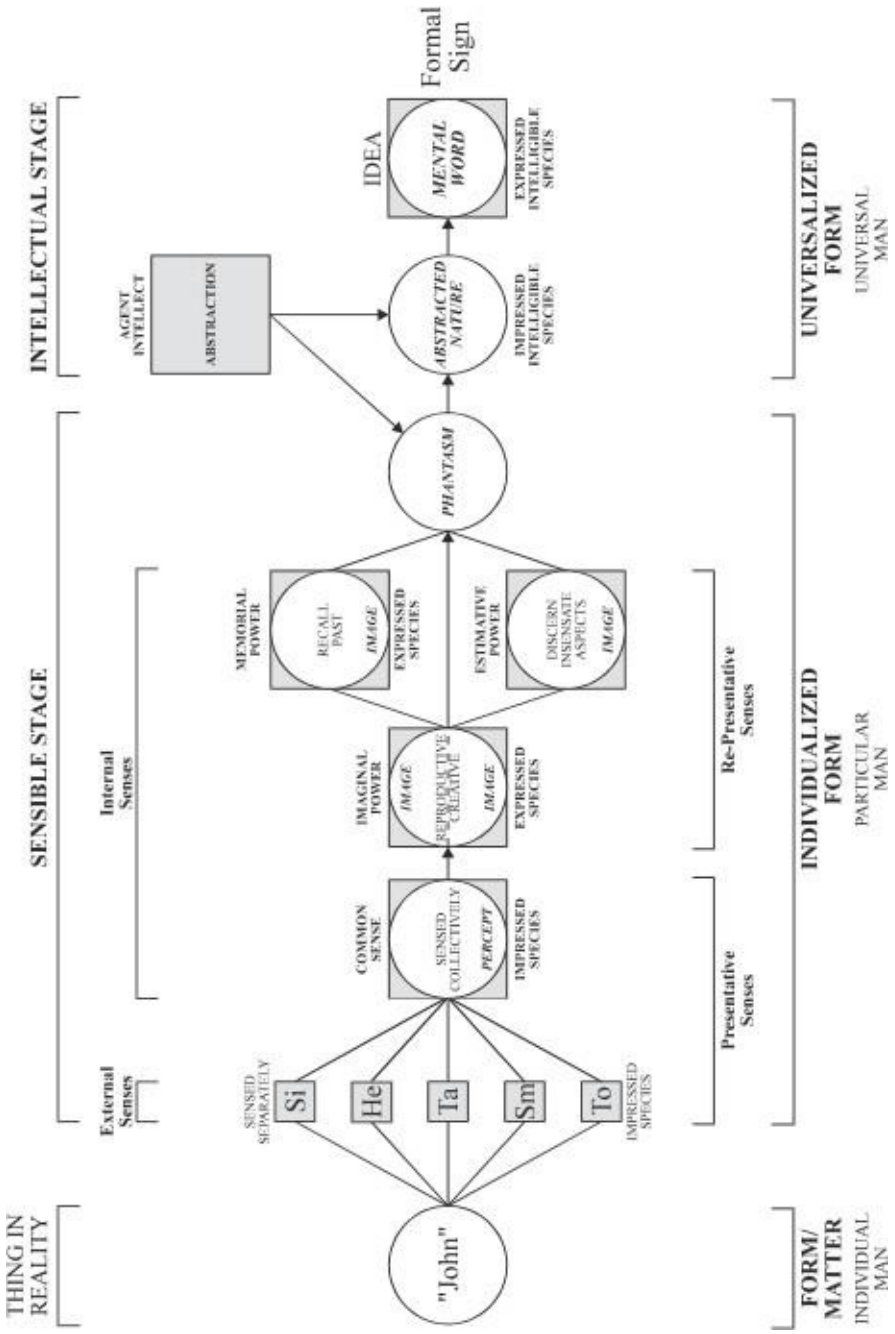
The importance of this distinction is stressed by Mortimer Adler: "To suppose that ideas are directly observable is the fundamental mistake of modern

introspective psychology, from Descartes and Locke down to the end of the nineteenth century and until the first two decades of the present century . . .”[665] By making the idea the object of knowledge, the intellect is barred from ever knowing the thing in reality. As Adler observes elsewhere, “The root of the error lies in neglect or ignorance of the intentional mode of existence that belongs to objects apprehended by the mind. The error can, therefore, be avoided by a precise understanding of the relation between intentionally existing objects and really existing things; to wit, that one and the same entity can have both modes of existence.”[666]

We began this section on the knowing process with a definition of knowledge according to the principles of Moderate Realism: “The noblest way of possessing a thing is to possess it in an immaterial manner, that is, by possessing its form without its matter. And this is the definition of knowledge.”[667]

Having arrived at the formation of the idea, we have reached that point where the knower and the known have become one. The object in reality has come to exist in the intellect as the object of knowledge. The knower and the known are one. By virtue of the existence of the form in the mind of the knower, the mind has taken on the form of the known and has become one with the known by sharing its form.

Figure 22: Knowledge



This whole process of knowledge is graphically illustrated in the diagram in **Figure 22**. As before, the squares represent the powers of the soul, while the circles represent the object known. Although the diagram illustrates the various powers and activities of the mind in the knowing process, it must not be assumed that this indicates that the knowing process takes place in neatly compartmentalized stages. Rather, the knowing process is virtually immediate. When the senses are acted upon by a thing in reality, the mental response

involves an immediate sense impression, intellectual apprehension and judgment. The knowing process is not a succession of acts, but is the act of the soul. As has been asserted before, it is not the senses nor the intellect that knows. Man knows by means of his senses and intellect.

The Thought

To complete this investigation into this Moderate Realist view of the knowing process it will be helpful to consider the three operations of the intellect in terms of rational processes. These acts or operations include apprehension, judgment, and reasoning. It will not be the task here to deal with these in any depth, but only briefly to describe these acts in an effort to complete the discussion.

Apprehension

According to George Klubertanz, apprehension is "the operation by which we lay hold of a thing, making the thing present in and to our intellect, but without affirming or denying."[668] As St. Thomas points out, the human intellect does not attain a complete knowledge of reality all at once, but moves toward understanding by degrees.[669] The first act of the intellect is simple apprehension by which the mind knows what a thing is. Because the intellect has received the intelligible species, which is the form or "whatness" of the thing in reality, the first act of the intellect is to apprehend the whatness of that which is known. However, as Joseph Owens points out, "Human cognition . . . can never attain anything through simple apprehension without simultaneously knowing it as existent either in reality or in the mind."[670]

Judgment[671]

The act by which the intellect affirms or denies is the judgment.[672] This act is that which simultaneously accompanies the act of simple apprehension. The judgment can be viewed as either an affirmation or a negation. As Klubertanz describes it, "In affirmation, we say that a thing is (was, will be, either simply, or according to some mode of necessity, possibility, and so forth), in negation, that a thing is not (was not, and so forth)."[673]

Judgment differs from apprehension in that judgment is the knowledge in terms of the affirmation or denial of the existence of that which has been apprehended. Judgement is not properly a knowledge of "whatness," but of "thatness." Again Klubertanz offers a helpful explanation: "By judgment, we know the being as a whole: we know its essence inasmuch as the judgment

virtually contains an apprehension of the subject (and of a predicate if the judgment contains a second term), and we know the subject as actually existing, when we assert (or deny) that it is."[674]

Reasoning

The operation of reasoning is the third act of the intellect. It is "the operation by which we proceed from known truth to new truth distinct from the previously known truth but implied in it."[675] Reasoning is a complex operation and involves many different types of movement. The more narrow classification of syllogistic reasoning moves from premises to conclusions. Other types of reasoning include the more general aspects of movement from question to answer, the building of definitions, the accumulation of empirical evidence in the investigation of an hypothesis, etc.

Conception

One fruit of the operations of the intellect is the formation of the concept. This is one of the most problematic aspects of the investigation of intellectual knowledge because there is such a diversity of definitions employed by the various philosophers. Joseph Owens states,

> By the very act of knowing the really existent thing, the intellect gives it intentional being. By reflection the intellect then knows it [the really existent thing] through a new act of cognition as an existent in the mind. In this reflection the intellect sees it [the really existent thing] as a concept. . . . The concept is produced as a similitude of the thing in order that the thing itself may be known in and through it. . . . The similitude is the same knowable content considered precisely as in intentional being. The concept, therefore, is the content as it exists in the intellect and not in the thing, in a way that constitutes a distinct object of reflection.[676]

George Klubertanz equates the formation of the concept with the act of apprehension so that the concept is the apprehension of the "whatness" of the thing in reality.[677] Gilson defines the concept as the "representation of the perceived object, as conceived by the intellect, i.e., created within itself, and expressed by a word."[678] John Peifer's definition is similar to these. "The concept, then, is no mere picture or replica of an objective counterpart; it is not a thing which secondarily bears a resemblance to something other than itself. It is the form of the exterior thing existing as known in the intellect."[679]

Robert Brennan equates the concept with the expressed intelligible species, the mental word and the image of an intelligible order.[680] Finally, Mortimer Adler makes the following observations about concepts: "The first is that concepts are (a) acquired dispositions to recognize perceived objects as being of

this or that kind and at the same time (b) to understand what this kind or that kind of object is like, with the result (c) that the individual having formed a concept is able to perceive a number of sensible particulars as being of the same kind and to discriminate between them and other sensible particulars that are different in kind."[681]

Adler goes on to explain that the concept-formation in humans "enables them to perceive a number of sensible particulars as being of the same kind and to discriminate between them and other sensible particulars that are different in kind."[682]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the subtle differences that issued in these various definitions and descriptions. It is sufficient to note the similarities. Each one of these individuals emphasized the fact that the concept has specific reference to the *kind* of thing understood by means of it. Also, each philosopher stressed the fact that the concept is not that which is known, but that *by which* the object is known. In this respect, the term "concept" is simply another word for "idea." The term "idea" is apparently employed when consideration is given to the entity as it exists in the intellect. The term "concept" is apparently employed when consideration is given primarily to the content.

The Problem of Induction

A problem that has plagued modern philosophers when considering the possibility of knowledge, particularly in the natural sciences, is the problem of induction. Induction is the reasoning from particular instances of observation to a true conclusion about all instances of the same kind. The reason for addressing it here is because the problem arises as a result of Empiricism, and is made acute because of the tendency of Empiricism to be nominalistic in its metaphysics. The problem of induction is usually associated with the empirical observations of David Hume by which he reasons to a universal conclusion about the nature of inductive reasoning. One aspect of this problem is, according to Hume, that in order for induction to support conclusions about the future, one must assume the cogency of induction. However, one can demonstrate the cogency of induction only by assuming the cogency of induction.

> It is impossible, therefore, that any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of the past to the future; since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of that resemblance. Let the course of things be allowed hitherto ever so regular; that alone, without some new argument or inference, proves not, that, for the future, it will continue so. In vain do you pretend to have learned the nature of bodies from your past experience. Their secret nature, and consequently, all their effects and influence, may change, without any change in their sensible qualities. This happens sometimes,

> and with regard to some objects: Why may it not happen always, and with regard to all objects? What logic, what process of argument secures you against this supposition?[683]

As Couvalis characterizes it, "One supposed justification for induction is that most generalizations defended by induction in the past have turned out to be true, so it is likely that generalizations defended by induction in the future will be true. If this justification is to be adequate, it must be true that the future is likely to be like the past in relevant respects. But it seems that we could only know that the future is likely to be like the past in relevant respects by using induction. After all, we have not yet experienced the future."[684] In other words, in order to know that the success of induction in the past will carry over into the future one must assume the uniformity of nature. But, the uniformity of nature is based upon the very inductive process that needs justification.

Robert Audi presents the problem of induction in the following manner: "one cannot know a priori that if the premises of a specific piece of inductive reasoning are true, then its conclusion is also true. One can clearly conceive the former being true while the latter is false, whereas one cannot conceive its being true that (1) all human beings are moral and Socrates is one of them, and yet false that (2) Socrates is mortal. Thus, no matter how good the inductive reasoning is, it is always (deductively) invalid."[685] Suppose, for example, the widely verified experience of the cycle of the rising and setting of the sun. For hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years the universal experience of human kind verifies the fact that, phenomenologically speaking, the sun has followed the cycle rising and setting. However, to conclude from this that the sun will rise tomorrow is not a necessary conclusion. Something might happen in nature that would obliterate the sun or might change the course of the earth such that this expected event does not occur. Although is seems physically unlikely, it is not logically contradictory to claim that the sun will not rise tomorrow.

The problem of induction concerns the relationship between the premises and the conclusion of an inductive argument. Either the conclusion of an inductive argument is a tautology or a non sequitur. The term 'tautology' simply means the needless repetition of assertions that adds no substantive content. Parker and Veatch give the example of examining every book on one's bookcase and concluding that all the books on the bookcase were published in the US:

> Your induction would consist of a series of singular propositions followed by a universal conclusion:
>
> This book was published in the U.S.
> This book was published in the U.S.
> This book was published in the U.S.

(And so on for every one of the books in the case)

∴ All the books in the bookcase were published in the U.S.

But surely it would be hard to find a more patent tautology than this. For what is the conclusion here but a mere restatement, in a kind of shorthand form, of what has already been said in the premises?[686]

A tautology may be true, but it does not add anything to what is already known. If, as Parker and Veatch go on to illustrate, one attempts to draw a conclusion without examining every single item about which the argument is made, then the conclusion is a non sequitur, that is, it does not follow. "For suppose that instead of examining all the books in your bookcase you examined only some of them. These you found to be published in the U.S. and then from this you concluded that all the books in your bookcase were published in the U.S. On what possible grounds would such a conclusion follow?"[687] Now, when we realize that this is the kind of argumentation that is used in natural science, we see the import of the criticism. If induction yields only tautology or non sequitur, then how can we claim to have gained knowledge in science by observation, experiment, and further observation? Since no scientist can observe every possible instance of any natural phenomenon, scientific conclusions must be based on the observation, no matter how controlled, of a limited number of particulars. But, observation of a limited number of particulars cannot yield a universal truth about the whole group of particulars.

There have been various attempts to extricate science from this dilemma, but none of these has been definitively successful. This seems to be the case because current attempts to resolve the problem have not considered that the problem of induction is nothing less than the application to this method of a nominalistic assumption. The problem of induction, simply stated, is how one can draw a conclusion about all from a knowledge of only some? Parker and Veatch provide a helpful clarification and summary of the solution to the problem of induction:

For if each individual is so wholly distinct and different from every other as to have nothing in common with any other, then clearly one will have no reason whatever to suppose that what is true of one will be true of another; and naturally, on such a basis any inference from "some" to "all" would be a blatant *non sequitur*. On the other hand, if there are real natures and essences present in individuals, such that whatever pertains to the nature of one will necessarily pertain to any other of a like nature or essence, then the inference from "some" to "all" will no longer give the appearance of being so utterly unwarranted. We might even say that on this basis inductive inference really ceases to be a passage from "some" to "all" in the nominalistic sense altogether; rather it is an inference from observed cases to a nature or essence, i.e., to the actual "what" or "why" that is present in these particular instances and that determines them to be as they are. And clearly, once one recognizes something as pertaining to the nature or essence of the individuals observed, one thereby recognizes

that the same thing will pertain to all other individuals of a like nature or essence.[688]

The problem of induction turns out to be a problem only for the nominalist. If in fact there are natures, and if it is possible for the mind to abstract from the particular that which constitutes the nature of any thing, then any being in the past, present, or future having the same nature will be subject to the predictions of induction concerning that nature.

Summary

The Moderate Realist view of knowledge as presented began with sense cognition which issued in the formation of the phantasm, the form of the thing in reality, separated from its matter but not from its concrete material conditions. The agent intellect illuminates the intelligible aspect of the phantasm that is the common nature or essence of the thing. It abstracts this essence from the phantasm forming an intelligible species that is impressed upon the possible intellect. The possible intellect, in an act of understanding, expresses this intelligible species in the form of an idea or concept. The intellect, by means of the expressed intelligible species, also called the idea or concept, knows the thing in reality. The knowable thing has become the known object of the intellect, and knowledge is the result.

The implication of this explanation for the problem of objectivity cannot be understated. All along the problem of objectivity and relativism have been predicated on a representationalist epistemology that assumed a bifurcation between the subject and the object. Even the criticism of a correspondence view of truth is predicated on representationalism and the denial of any kind of direct knowledge of reality. Because the mind is incorporeal and the world is corporeal, the mind has only a representation or copy of the extra-mental world. Consequently, the whole problem of correspondence is insurmountable. The mind is not able to transcend itself and reach the world.

According to a Moderate Realist approach, the world is able to enter the mind by virtue of the forms that constitute the things in the world as the kinds of things they are. The consequent of this is that direct realism is confirmed. The mind is able to attain a direct access to the world of things by the fact that the world has the kind of constitution that it does, namely, the constitution of form and matter. Once a direct contact with the world is articulated, all the problems of representationalism dissolve, and the possibility of objectivity is affirmed. Knowledge can be objective because the mind attains to reality directly. And if knowledge can be objective, then so can understanding and communication. This is the next step in our analysis of the objectivity of meaning.

9 HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WHAT WE KNOW?

The Communication of Meaning

In his book entitled *Some Questions About Language*, Mortimer J. Adler makes the following observation: “There is one property of language about which universal agreement exists. Whatever else can be said about language, one indisputable fact about it is that its component elements–its words and sentences–possess a property that has been variously called ‘sense,’ ‘significance,’ or ‘meaning.’ Meaningless marks or sounds, however they may be arranged or used, do not constitute a language. A meaningless language is a contradiction in terms.”[689] In his article titled “The Philosophy of Language,” Louis Lachance identifies the subject matter of his inquiry by drawing a distinction between the employment of signs in the animal kingdom and the use of language among humans. He identifies the distinctive difference by pointing out that “Thanks to an association of images, fixed by nature or by repeated experiences,” animals employ signs “without perceiving the relation of meaning.”[690] According to George Klubertanz, “Language is an arbitrary sign or system of signs for expressing and communicating knowledge and other mental states, and emotions.”[691]

The distinctive ingredient in each one of these statements about the nature of language is the aspect of the employment of signs to communicate meaning. It is not that signs simply communicate meaning, but that language involves the awareness of the relation of meaning. That is to say, language is not merely the employment of signs to communicate meaning. In an analogous way we can say that a wolf communicates to the rabbit it desires to devour. Although it is by instinct that the rabbit estimates the danger the wolf presents and makes every effort to save itself, the rabbit is not aware of any relation of meaning even though it makes use of this relation. By contrast, human beings not only make use of the meaning relationship of signs, but are also aware of the relation between signs and what they signify. That is to say, humans are aware of the relation of meaning. As Jacques Maritain asserts, “what defines language is not precisely the use of words, or even of conventional signs; it is the use of any sign whatsoever *as involving the knowledge or awareness of the relation of signification*, and therefore a potential infinity; it is the use of signs *in so far as it manifests that the mind has grasped and brought out the relation of signification*.”[692]

The Elements of Language

An investigation of the nature of language, then, should be concerned with meaning. As Mortimer Adler states, “the first and minimal obligation of a philosophy of language is to explain or account for language as an instrument of communication, through the use of which we are able to converse with one another about matters or items that we are able to consider in common.”[693] But as has already been observed in the quotes above, language is particularly a system of signs by which meaning is communicated. In preparation for an investigation of meaning we will consider the nature of the sign that is the carrier of meaning.

The Sign

A sign “leads the knowing faculty to apprehend something other than itself, in virtue of a real relation between the two.”[694] It is important to emphasize certain aspects of this definition. First of all, a sign leads. As we shall see in our consideration of the formal sign, it is not essential to the nature of a sign that it be something in its own right in order to be a sign. Some signs are also things. Some signs are pure signs and not independent things. Second, a sign leads *a knowing faculty*. “The sign relation is an object of knowledge . . .”[695] A sign is not the efficient cause of behavior. A sign signifies by virtue of a relation of which the knower must be aware. A sign functions noetically. Third, a sign leads a knowing faculty to *something other than itself*. Signs signify something other than themselves. A sign cannot be a sign of itself. Finally, a sign is that which leads a knowing faculty to apprehend something other than itself, *by virtue of a real relation between the sign and that which is signified*. A sign signifies by virtue of a *real* relation, or a relation in *reality*. A sign cannot function if it is only a sign of a relation in the mind, for the relation in the mind is destined ever to be only in the mind of the one in whom the relation exists. If the relation is not capable of becoming extra-mental, it is not communicable.

There are essentially two kinds of signs, the instrumental sign and the formal sign. The instrumental sign can be considered under two further classifications, namely, the natural instrumental sign and the conventional instrumental sign. Because the nature of the formal sign is more abstract, and the natural instrumental sign is the more readily understood, we will conduct our investigation from the less difficult to the more difficult.

Instrumental Sign

An instrumental sign is so designated because it functions as an instrument for signifying the sign relationship. Henry Veatch identifies an instrumental sign as “one which signifies its significatum [that which is signified by the sign] to a

knowing power only by being first apprehended itself. That is to say, one must first apprehend the sign and only then does one apprehend the significatum."[696] In order for an instrumental sign to carry out its signifying function it must be known first before it can lead the knower to what it signifies. The instrumental sign is either natural or conventional.

The Natural Instrumental Sign

A natural instrumental sign is one in which the relation between the sign and that which it signifies is a natural relation. That is, the relation obtains by virtue of the natures of the sign and its significatum. As St. Augustine observed, "Natural signs are those which, apart from any intention or desire of using them as signs, do yet lead to the knowledge of something else, as, for example, smoke when it indicates fire."[697] Smoke naturally signifies fire by virtue of its nature. Generally speaking, fires produce smoke. Consequently, when an observer knows that what he is observing is smoke, this naturally leads the observer to the fire from which the smoke has been produced.

The Conventional Instrumental Sign

A conventional instrumental sign is instrumental because it must first be known as what it is before it can perform its signifying function. A conventional sign is "one whose significance comes not from its own nature but from human convention—e.g., words, signals, guideposts, etc."[698] St. Thomas has observed the distinction between natural and conventional signification: "things that signify naturally are the same among all men; but the signification of letters and vocal sounds . . . is not the same among all men."[699]

Nevertheless, a conventional sign must be known as it is in itself in order to function as a sign. As Adler points out, ". . . they are themselves objects of which we are perceptually aware as well as instruments that function to bring to mind the objects they signify."[700] The conventional signs employed in the Russian language do not function as signs for the individual who cannot read or understand the Russian language. An individual who does not know even of the existence of the Russian language would not realize that certain marks and notations on paper were in fact letters of the Russian alphabet, or words of the Russian language. Even though someone might have seen the letters and have been told that these particular marks were actually letters in the Russian language, they would still not function as signs for that individual. A conventional sign is significant by convention and functions as a sign for those who belong to that language community. A language community employs a

system of marks and notations as instrumental signs. John Lyons gives a commonly employed example to illustrate the nature of the conventional sign: “In English there is a word ‘tree,’ in German there is a word ‘Baum’ and in French there is a word ‘arbre’; and each of these words, we will assume, has the same signification: it may be used to refer to the same class of objects. These three words are quite different in form; and no one is more naturally appropriate to signify trees than are the other two. To make the point rather more precisely none of the forms of ‘tree’ . . . or of ‘Baum’ . . . or of ‘arbre’ . . . whether written or spoken is naturally representative of trees or of their distinctive properties.”[701]

Lyons’ quote brings out the fact that linguistic signs are conventional in nature, and that there is no natural relationship between a linguistic sign and what it signifies. A word may be used to refer to the “same class of objects” because of the common nature of the objects in that class. But, as Lyons points out, no one word is more naturally appropriate to signify a class of objects, or their common nature than is any other word.

Formal Sign

The Nature of the Formal Sign

The formal sign is more difficult to examine because of its nature. Henry Veatch defines the formal sign as, “one whose whole nature and being are simply a representing, or a meaning, or a signifying of something else. Such signs, in other words, are nothing but meanings or *intentions*.”[702] John Oesterle clarifies the distinction between the nature of the instrumental sign and that of the formal sign. His description will help to elucidate the nature of the formal sign: “The instrumental sign represents something else mediately; it must be itself known as an object in order to signify. The formal sign represents something else immediately; it is known, not as an object, but formally as that in which the object is represented to the knowing power.”[703]

Another method of considering the formal sign is to consider it in terms of the metaphysical principles of form and matter. As has been described in the previous chapter, the thing in reality enters the knowing subject by means of its form. The form is the metaphysical principle of determination by virtue of which a thing is what it is. The entrance of the form into the knowing subject informs the mind in a manner analogous to the manner in which it informs matter. In a sense, the mind becomes the thing in reality by virtue of the presence in the mind of the form of that thing. In the intellect, the form is separated from any conditions of matter. The resulting entity that exists in the intellect is called the concept. The concept is nothing else but the existence of the form of the thing as

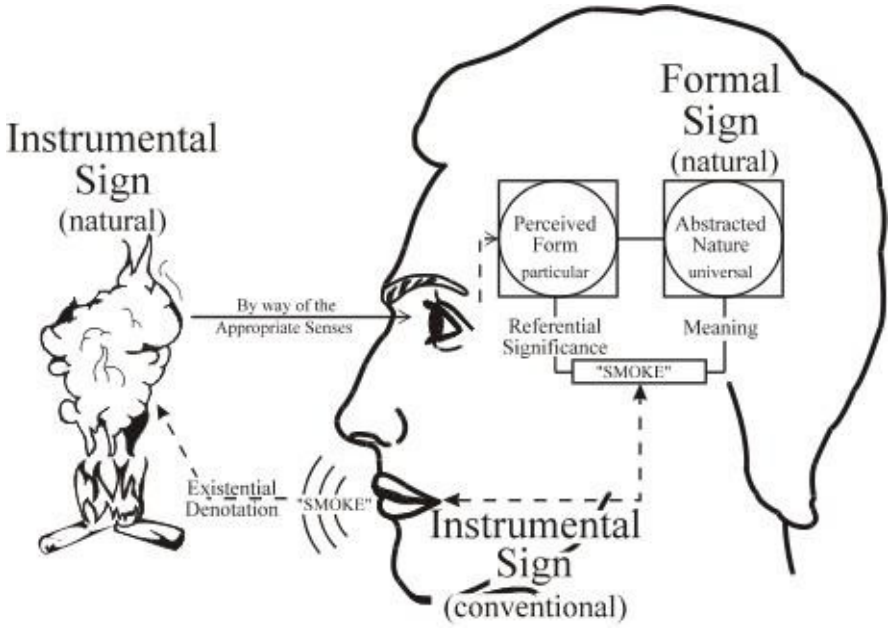
it has been abstracted from the individual. The concept is the formal sign.[704] The concept exists, not as another thing that must itself be perceived, but as the form, the "whatness," of the real thing now existing in the mind. This is the formal sign. The formal sign is "formal" because it is the form of the real thing now existing in the mind. Its only nature is the nature of that of which it is the form, i.e., the real thing. The formal sign of a man, then, is the form of the man now existing in one's intellect. The formal sign, in this case, has no other nature than the nature of the man whose form it is. Consequently, when the formal sign is known, it is in fact the form of the man in reality that is known, not some other object that points to this nature.

The Necessity of the Formal Sign

Oesterle provides an explanation of the need for the formal sign, which, although rather lengthy, will be helpful in understanding the place of the formal sign:

> the insufficiency of the instrumental sign, which, negatively, shows the need of the formal sign, can be indicated. Any instrumental sign, by the nature of the case, involves ambiguity. This is what is meant by "interpretation" for, being that kind of sign–being only instrumental–it must be interpreted since it can signify more than one thing. The instrumental sign depends for its signification, not upon itself, but upon the signification it is expressing. Hence it is the signification it is expressing which must be obtained in communication. But to obtain the signification the instrumental sign is expressing is to go beyond the instrumental sign itself. Since, then, the instrumental sign is only the extrinsic expression of signification, there is nothing to prevent one and the same instrumental sign from expressing different significations. If, then, there were only instrumental signs there would be inescapable ambiguity, and hence no communication would be possible; there would be only an endless regress of ambiguous signs. Communication, then, depends upon formal signs, which is only another way of saying that instrumental signs, even to be signs at all, must depend upon formal signs.[705]

Figure 23: Signs



Oesterle's argument is another way of stating Aristotle's argument from predication (discussed above as a demonstration of the reality of substance). If all predication is accidental, which is the nature of the instrumental sign, then communication becomes impossible because predication falls into an infinite regress. The signification of an instrumental sign is accidental to the nature of the sign. There is nothing that requires a certain instrument to be a sign of this or that particular thing. It is essential that an instrumental sign be a sign of something, but nothing that dictates that it be the sign of one thing over another. Because of this, an instrumental sign can become the sign of many different things within the confines of the conventions of its language community. But, all signs cannot be signs accidentally, else there would be nothing that signifies essentially and necessarily. But there must be something that signifies essentially and necessarily, else signification, as predication, falls into an infinite regress. Hence, the formal sign is necessary for communication because its essence is the form of the thing in reality. Therefore it signifies essentially and necessarily that of which it is the formal sign.

The diagram in **Figure 23** illustrates the different kinds of signs which we have described and the relationships between their functions.

The Word

A word is a sign by convention. Although there is some controversy among linguists over what constitutes a word, it is beyond the scope of this book to attempt to adjudicate between the various proposals. By whatever criteria a linguist determines what constitutes a word, there is one universally

acknowledged fact concerning the word. A word is a carrier of meaning. As Mortimer Adler has observed, “A meaningful notation is a word. Notations can be meaningless, but there are no meaningless words.”[706] Although it may be objected that other notations are meaningful which would not necessarily be considered words, such as musical notations or chemical notations, it is not at all clear that these types of notations are meaningful in the same way a word is meaningful. Musical notations and chemical notations functions as symbols. A musical notation does not *mean* music in the same way the word “music” means music. Even a chemical notation is not necessarily meaningful in the way a word is meaningful. The chemical notation NA does not *mean* sodium in the same way the word “sodium” means sodium. The notation NA *stands* for sodium. The word “sodium” does not stand for sodium, but means sodium. However, to the degree that a notation loses its function as a symbol and becomes functional as a word, to that degree it is a word, and hence a meaningful notation.

Two Classifications of Words

Words, as carriers of meaning, can exist as sounds in the air, as notations or marks on a surface. We will call these external words. But there is another kind of word that exists in the mind which we will call the mental word. In distinguishing between these two classifications of words, we will begin our brief consideration of the word as it is in external reality.

The External Word

An external word is a meaningful sound or notation. An external word is meaningful by convention. A word, then, is a conventional sign. Aristotle recognized that words were meaningful by convention. He stated, “And just as letters are not the same for all men so neither are vocal sounds the same . . .”[707] Aristotle also made a distinction between the written word and the spoken word, a distinction that illuminates the relation of the word to its meaning. He said, “Now words that are in vocal sound are signs of passions in the soul, and words that are written are signs of words in vocal sound.”[708] This statement sets up a relation of proportion between the written word and the spoken word, and between the spoken word and the passion of the soul. The written word is to the spoken word as the spoken word is to the passion of the soul. Each is a sign, and a conventional sign.

However, Aristotle pointed out that “the passions of the soul, of which vocal sounds are the first signs, are the same for all; and things of which passions of the soul are likenesses are also the same.”[709] In his commentary on

this section, St. Thomas explains Aristotle's statement.

> When he speaks of passions in the soul we are apt to think of the affections of the sensitive appetite, such as anger, joy, and other passions . . . But here Aristotle is speaking of vocal sounds that are significant by human institution. Therefore, "passions in the soul" must be understood here as conceptions of the intellect, and names, verbs, and speech, signify these conceptions of the intellect immediately . . . They cannot signify things, as is clear from the mode of signifying, for the name "man" signifies human nature in abstraction from singulars; hence it is impossible that it immediately signify a singular man.[710]

This is a succinct statement of that which has been argued in the section on Metaphysics and Epistemology above. The word is an instrumental sign by convention. However, the conception in the mind is not a conception by convention, but is, by virtue of human nature, the same for all men. Unlike Immanuel Kant's system that is built upon the hope that the categories are the same for all men, the Moderate Realist system asserts the existence of a common human nature that can be accounted for by analytical investigation of reality as it is in itself.

Kant asserted that there was a shared *rational structure*. The Moderate Realist system asserts that there is a common *metaphysical nature*. A metaphysical nature can be accounted for by an explication of the nature of reality. If reality is of that nature, then all men share the same nature because that is the nature of reality. However, a rational structure cannot be accounted for by an explication of the nature of rationality, for such an explication would apply only to the rational structure of the one providing the explication. There would have to be some recourse to universal reality, and some way for Kant to account for the fact that all reality is as he has asserted it to be. However, his own system has eliminated this possibility by making it impossible to know anything as it is in itself, even the rational natures of others.

A word, then, is a conventional sign of a conception in the soul. But the external word is a certain kind of conventional sign. Specifically, an external word is an instrumental, conventional sign. Words are instrumental signs because "they have perceptible existence in themselves apart from signifying . . ."[711] An individual must know the word itself before he can be led to that which the word signifies.

The Mental Word

In a Moderate Realist epistemology there is another kind of word identified as the mental word. Here the aspects of Epistemology and Linguistics merge. As has been previously emphasized, the concept is the means by which the thing in

reality is known. The form of the thing comes to exist in the mind of the knower as an intentional being. The nature is abstracted by the agent intellect from the phantasm and informs the possible intellect. In the possible intellect the concept is formed, which is the nature of the thing in reality. This concept is a formal sign because it directs the mind to a knowledge of the thing in reality. It is not the thing in reality in its extrinsic being. As Margaret Gorman has pointed out, "Knowledge . . . is in the knower according to the manner of the knower, not according to the manner of the known."[712] The concept is the real thing according to its intentional being in the mind of the knower. As Klubertanz sums it up,

> what we mean primarily and ordinarily by the term "intellectual knowledge" is the intellectually known object—the object produced in and by the act of understanding. This immanently produced object is necessary because the really existing object (or the object that can exist) is (a) sometimes absent, and (b) sometimes does not exist in exactly the same way as it is known, as in the universal knowledge we have of singular things. Hence, that which we know about something is a medium which is itself known, and in which the real or existent object is known. Such a medium is a pure or formal sign, whose whole reality lies in its reference to the thing that is known. This formal sign is called the "mental word.". . . It is the mental word which is directly referred to by, and is the meaning of, the external word, (which is spoken, heard, and so forth).[713]

That which is known by the intellect, then, is variously called the expressed species, when considering it according to its metaphysical constitution; the concept, when considering it according to its content; the formal sign, when considering it according to its function of representing to the intellect the thing in reality; and the mental word, when considering it as the mental counterpart to the external word. As St. Thomas describes it, "As used of us, *speaking* signifies not merely understanding but understanding plus the expression from within oneself of some conception; and we cannot understand in any way other than by forming a conception of this sort. Therefore, properly speaking, every act of understanding is, in our case, an act of uttering."[714]

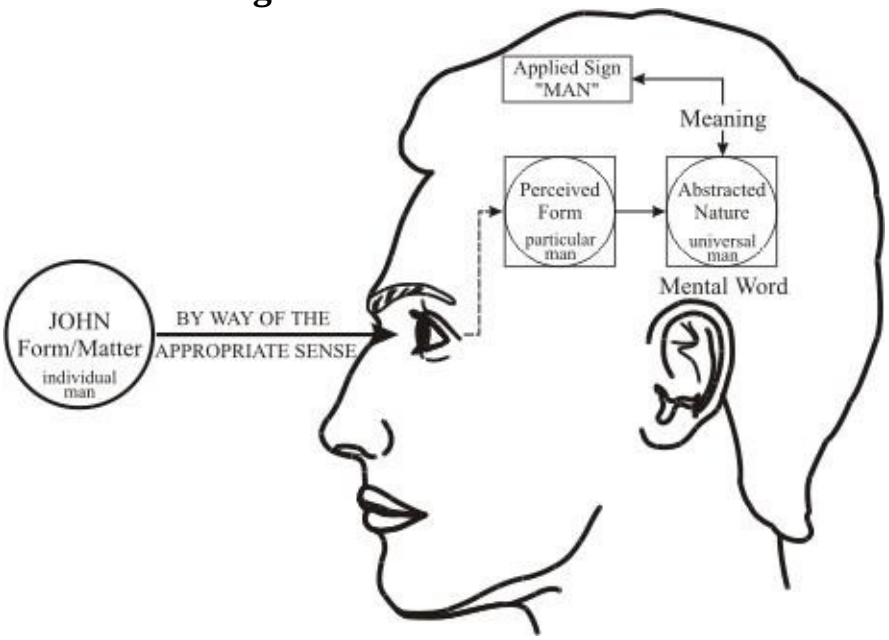
It is this "expression from within oneself" that is identified as the mental word. It will be recalled that from the point of view of Moderate Realist metaphysics, the species formed by the possible intellect in the act of understanding is the *expressed* intelligible species. It is expressed because it is an act of understanding, or an expression in the mind of the concept, the content of which is that thing in reality which is being known. As John Peifer explains, "in understanding we speak within ourselves what we know, and we know what we speak. Speaking what we know, we express a word to ourselves in which we know what we know."[715]

It must not be thought, however, that when the mind expresses the mental word that it necessarily employs a certain linguistic sign. We have all had the experience of not being able to think of a word by which we might express what is on our mind. The mind engages in a process by which it somehow brings up for consideration many different linguistic signs, or words, each of which is in turn rejected because for some reason it does not quite capture, as an external word, the mental word present in the mind. Suddenly, the mind finds that one word for which it was looking that can adequately articulate the thought.

Before that linguistic sign or word was discovered, however, the thought itself was beyond our reach, although it was there in the mind. This is to say, we knew what we wanted to say. We just did not have the right word. We could possibly substitute a description, or perhaps we could identify what we wanted to say by some ostensible indication. But, until that one word was discovered, we were unable adequately to express the thought, even to ourselves. Etienne Gilson provides a helpful comment: "However, the existence of unspoken thought [that is prelinguistic thought] appears to be attested to by interior observation. Thought is anterior to speech with an anteriority at once temporal and causal. The anteriority of time can be more or less long. Quite often it is so short that we could take it to be almost simultaneous. But even then, what I want to say to myself or to others is something which has not yet been said."[716]

Before the linguistic expression is spoken in the mind, the mind has formed a concept, an inward expression of understanding, called the mental word. This mental word is the inward expression of which the linguistic word is the external expression. The diagram in **Figure 24** illustrates this point. The first square represents sensible perception. The second square represents intellectual cognition. The abstracted nature is the concept, the content of which is universal man. This concept is expressed in the mind in an act of understanding as the mental word. The linguistic sign "man" is the external expression of that act of understanding. The linguistic expression could be any equivalent external word from any language which carries the same meaning, such as *anthropos* in Greek, or *ish* in Hebrew. As Aristotle has observed, the passions of the soul are the same for all men even though the linguistic signs are conventional.[717]

Figure 24: The Mental Word



The Nature of Words

The nature of words can be considered from two vantage points. The external word has both a linguistic nature and a metaphysical nature. The metaphysical nature of the mental word has been considered above in the discussion of the nature of the concept, the formal sign, and the mental word. However, the relationship between the mental word and the external word accounts for the metaphysical nature of the external word. We will consider first the linguistic nature of the external word.

Linguistic Nature

It is obvious that, although not all words are name-words, some obviously are. Name-words are words that name things, such as a horse, a man, or a star ship; states of affairs, such as happiness; or real relations such as justice and truth. As Klubertanz describes it, "Some language 'stands for' or 'represents' things (for example, 'book'), but some language does not (for example, 'more,''truth')."[718] Additionally, some words have no lexical meaning in themselves, but only as they relate to other words in the construction of meaningful expressions, such as prepositions and conjunctions. Mortimer Adler provides a helpful description on the distinction between these kinds of words: "The words classified as categorematic have lexical meaning in their own right and without serving to qualify or modify the meaning possessed by other words. In contrast, the words classified as syncategorematic, and sometimes called 'particles' . . . do not have lexical meaning in their own right, but only when they

serve to qualify, modify, or relate other words in significant phrases or sentences."[719]

The function of categorematic or name-words, then, is to designate some thing, state, or relation that actually exists or could exist in reality. Syncategorematic words function syntactically in meaningful phrases or sentences. Syncategorematic words can also represent real relations or logical relations. For example, the syncategorematic word "in" can be used as a preposition in a meaningful sentence to represent the real relation of position. The word "is" can function syncategorematically to communicate the logical relation of identity.

The linguistic nature of words, then, is exhausted in these two categories. As Mortimer Adler asserts, "All the words listed in the dictionary of a language can be exhaustively divided into name-words having designative significance and linguistic operators having syntactical significance."[720]

Metaphysical Nature

This brings us to the metaphysical nature of words. Although it is not possible to deal with the proposal of Ferdinand de Saussure concerning the nature of words, for to do so would involve a whole book unto itself, suffice it to say that his effort to prevent the consideration of the nature of words according to the analogy of body and soul is unconvincing.[721] The relationship of body and soul, which according to Moderate Realism is a metaphysical relationship of form and matter, is well suited to illustrate the metaphysical nature of the word. In fact, St. Thomas employed this very analogy in describing the metaphysical nature of the word: "The name and verb . . . signify by human institution, that is, the signification is added to the natural thing as a form to matter, as the form of a bed is added to wood."[722]

The relationship of form and matter as it relates to the nature of the word becomes clear when we remember that the mental word, which is the concept in the mind, is the intellectual counterpart to the linguistic word. The mental word, then is the form of which the linguistic sign is the matter. This relationship will become more significant when we discuss meaning below.

The Function of Language

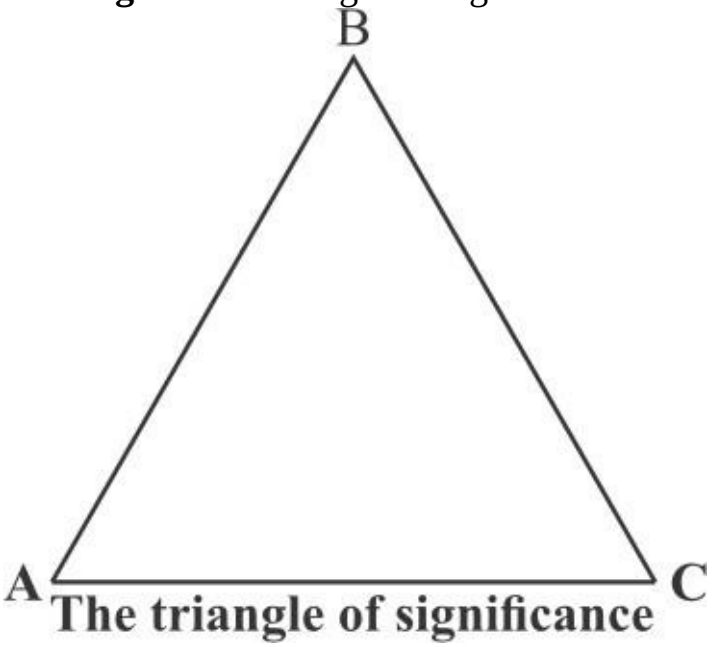
Having looked at the basic elements of language, we move on to consider the function of language. As has been observed above, the function of language is to communicate meaning. Battista Mondin has clearly expressed the Moderate Realist view of language: "Language is by definition that activity with which

man, through vocal or written signs, puts himself in communication with his own peers (or with some other intelligent being, for instance God) to express his own sentiments, desires, or knowledge."[723] According to Mondin's description, this uniquely human activity is accomplished by means of "vocal or written signs."[724] Signs accomplish their instrumental task by virtue of a relation of signification.

Signification

As John Lyons has observed, "The meaning of linguistic expressions is commonly described in terms of the notion of signification: that is to say, words and other expressions are held to be signs which, in some sense signify, or stand for other things."[725] We will consider some of the approaches to the notion of signification.

Figure 25: Triangle of Significance



Behaviorism

A widely known description of signification from a behaviorist viewpoint was proposed by Ogden and Richards. Their description is illustrated as a triadic relation pictured in **Figure 25**.[726] The point of the triangle represented in this diagram by the letter A, is labeled by O&R as "SYMBOL." Point B in this diagram is labeled by O&R as "THOUGHT OR REFERENCE." Between point A and B they identify what they hold to be a causal relation that goes from B to A, if the thought elicits an appropriate linguistic sign, or from A to B if the sign elicits the accompanying thought. According to their diagram, A "Symbolizes"

B. Point C is labeled “REFERENT.” Between B and C they identify “other causal relations” by which they indicate that B “Refers to” C. These relations go from C to B when a referent elicits an appropriate thought. Between A and C they identify “an imputed relation” in which A “Stands for” C. The dotted line between A and C indicates an indirect relation between these two points. Accordingly, “Between the symbol and the referent there is no relevant relation other than the indirect one, which consists in its being used by someone to stand for a referent. Symbol and Referent, that is to say, are not connected directly . . . but only indirectly round the two sides of the triangle.”[727]

O&R’s account of the relation between Symbol and Thought, and between Thought and Referent is set forth in terms of a theory of behavioristic response.[728] John Lyons summarizes the proposition of O&R: “Some object (C) in the external world calls forth a thought (B) in the mind of the speaker and this thought in turn elicits from him a sign (A).”[729] Although it is not within the scope of this book to mount a comprehensive criticism of behaviorism, it will be helpful to note that behaviorism of any kind is a self-defeating theory. If in fact the relation between A and B or between B and C is causal in a behavioristic manner, then it is self-defeating to attempt a logical argumentation in hopes of bringing about a cognitive response to the stimuli which O&R present. If the relation is simply a behavioral response to stimuli, then my behavioral response, which is that there is a logical and cognitive relation between A & B and a natural relation between B and C, is just as legitimately a response to the stimuli as the response which O&R affirm. In other words, there is no way for O&R to present their views as true over against opposing views since all views are merely behaviorist responses to stimuli. Behavioristic accounts are inadequate for explaining logical and cognitive relations. As Mortimer Adler observes, “Limited to accounting for the connections between stimuli and responses . . . behavioristic theory, in any of its forms, cannot explain how meaningless notations become meaningful words that have referential significance.”[730]

The main difficulty that O&R face in their proposal is the relation between thought and referent. John Oesterly identifies this problem: “Because they recognize only instrumental signs, they cannot treat the relation of Thought and Referent semantically; hence the departure from semantics at this point and the quite arbitrary positing of the behavioristic presumption. Behaviorism, purified or unpurified, cannot use signs intelligibly.”[731]

Ogden and Richards have fallen victim to the prevailing philosophical assumption of empiricism in which metaphysics has supposedly been eliminated. Consequently, they cannot explain the relation between thought and thing in

terms of the necessary formal sign in the intellect. Their problem stems from the fact that they consider all signs to be instrumental signs, as is indicated from their observation about the sign situation: “If we stand in the neighbourhood of a cross road and observe a pedestrian confronted by a notice *To Grantchester* displayed on a post, we commonly distinguish three important factors in the situation. There is, we are sure, (1) a Sign which (2) refers to a Place and (3) is being interpreted by a person. *All situations in which Signs are considered are similar to this*.”[732]

As we have attempted to show, not all situations in which signs are considered are in fact similar to this. If the Moderate Realist theory is correct, the formal sign is not something which has its own perceptible being, and the relation between the formal sign and the thing in reality is natural, for the nature of the formal sign is the essence of the thing in reality as it exists in the mind. O&R could not find a link between the thought and the thing as long as they held that the relationship was that of instrumental sign to referent. What could possibly account for the fact that a particular thought was linked to a particular thing in reality? The behaviorist account is unacceptable because it cannot account for different “interpretations” of signs. If the response to a sign is simply a behavioristic response, then there is no way to explain the different interpretations of signs, because an explanation implies a rational, not simply a behavioristic endeavor. If a reason can be given for these differences, then this reason is not simply a behavioristic response to stimuli, but is a rational presentation that involves truth claims. But truth claims are not simply behavioristic responses to stimuli.

Structuralism

In expounding the ramifications of Saussure’s doctrine of the absolute arbitrariness of the sign, Jonathan Culler points out that one of its most significant implications is that language cannot be a nomenclature. For Saussure this means that language cannot be “simply a nomenclature [series of names arbitrarily selected] for a set of universal concepts,”[733] because, “Languages do not simply name existing categories; they articulate their own.”[734] In support of this, Culler observes, “if language were a set of names applied to independently existing concepts, then in the historical evolution of a language the concepts should remain stable.”[735]

First of all, it is not necessary that language be a nomenclature for it to be partially composed of a nomenclature. Language may in fact be partly a nomenclature, and partly some other aspect or aspects, as we have discussed

above. Secondly, it is not necessary that concepts be immutable in order to have names applied to them. Concepts can be independently existing and mutable. Immutability is not an essential aspect of independently existing concepts. At least this has not been demonstrated, but merely asserted. Thirdly, it is simply not the case that in a nomenclature names must be applied to concepts. Rather, names may be applied to things in reality by means of the concept. It is not necessary that the name "tree" name my concept of a tree. Rather, the name "tree" may be applied to the independently existing real tree as known by means of the concept.

However, Culler attacks the idea that language is a nomenclature by giving an example of what he understands to be changing concepts.

> The English word *cattle*, for example, at one point meant property in general, then gradually came to be restricted to four-footed property (a new category), and finally attained its modern sense of domesticated bovines. Or again, a "silly" person was once happy, blessed, and pious. Gradually this particular concept altered; the old concept of "silliness" transformed itself, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century a silly person was innocent, helpless, even deserving of pity. The alteration of the concept continued until, eventually, a silly person was simple, foolish, perhaps even stupid.[736]

In attempting to justify the claim that language is not a nomenclature, Culler employs these examples in an illustration: "If language were a nomenclature we should be obliged to say that there exist a number of distinct concepts and that the signifier *silly* was attached first to one and then to another. But clearly this is not what happened: the concept attached to the signifier *silly* was continually shifting its boundaries, gradually changing its semantic shape, articulating the world in different ways from one period to the next."[737]

But Culler's own account contradicts his point. Culler has employed a very subtle equivocation here. Indeed, what *silly* was employed to signify shifted. But it was not the concept of being happy, blessed, pious that changed, for in fact it was still possible to employ linguistic signs to signify these concepts. The concepts in fact remained the same. It was the referential significance of the word that in fact changed. The word, in Culler's own account, "continually shifted its boundaries, gradually changing its semantic shape, *articulating the world in different ways from one period to the next*." But to articulate the world differently is to acknowledge that it is not necessarily the world that is changing, but perhaps only my articulation of it. It was the semantic range of the word that shifted, not necessarily the concepts themselves. The same concepts were still capable of signification, only by other signifiers that were also shifting.

By the statement, "the concept attached to the signifier *silly* was continually shifting its boundaries, gradually changing its semantic shape . . ." Culler is

either saying that the concept “happy, blessed, and pious” eventually became the concept “simple, foolish, perhaps even stupid,” in which case he is claiming that one concept has become another, or he is saying that the real state of affairs once signified by the signifier “silly” was no longer signified by this signifier, in which case the concept of the real state of affairs never changed. In fact, the very description that Culler claims was not the case is the only reasonable explanation. The concept of the real state of affairs–that some people are happy, blessed, and pious–remained the same throughout the shift of signification of the word *silly*. In fact, it is still possible to employ a sign to signify the state of being happy, blessed, and pious.

Culler equivocates in his use of the word “concept.” In his description of a “silly” person as being “happy, blessed, and pious,” he is employing the term *concept* with reference to a particular state of affairs in reality. When he says, “Gradually this particular concept altered,” he has shifted the meaning of the word “concept” from a concept of the state of affairs in reality to the concept of the signification of a term. In the first instance he is talking about the concept of a “happy” kind of person, previously signified by the term “silly.” In the second instance he is talking about the concept of the signification of the term “silly,” not the concept of the “happy” kind of person. His first use of the term concept is with reference to the state of affairs, while his second use is with reference to the manner of signification. He has employed two levels of the term *concept* without differentiating between them. The first level is the concept as it relates to the kind of person being signified. The second level is the concept of the signification of the term ‘silly.’ What he has said is this; the concept of what kind of person is signified by the term ‘silly’ was the concept of a happy kind of person. Later, the concept of what kind of person is signified by the term ‘silly’ became a stupid kind of person. Now, the concept of what kind of person the term ‘silly’ signified indeed changed. But this is the second-level use of the concept. It is the concept of the signification of a term, not the concept of the real state of affairs.

This claim is perfectly reasonable. The concept of what ‘silly’ signified has indeed changed. The concept that silly once signified happy, has changed. But, this says absolutely nothing about what they call independently existing concepts of reality. Culler’s, and by association Saussure’s, claims do not fit.

Still more problematic in the reasoning of both Culler and Saussure is that this principle is self-defeating. To claim that languages “do not simply name existing categories; they articulate their own,” is to make a claim that ‘in their own languages’ names an existing category of all languages. Culler has identified an aspect of all languages which he categorizes, and then claims that

his category universally applies to all languages as if this were simply an existing category. By this statement, Culler has said that it is a universally existing category of all languages that each language articulates its own categories. But, if this is merely a category of his own which his own language has articulated, then it is not necessarily universally applicable. It may in fact be universally the case that all languages simply name existing categories, at least in part. Culler's claim cannot be employed simply to name an existing category of all languages because he has ruled out this possibility in his claim. Likewise, the concept of not attaching names to universal concepts is itself a universal concept to which Culler and Saussure have attached the name "arbitrary."

Culler identifies this doctrine of absolute arbitrariness as leading to the conclusion that "Language is not a nomenclature and therefore its signifiers are not preexisting concepts but changeable and contingent concepts which vary from one state of a language to another."[738] Here again Culler has constructed a self-defeating claim. How is it possible to distinguish the difference between the concepts from one state of a language to another unless there is some constant, unchanging point of reference from which to make the distinction? The idea of change necessarily involves a continuity by which the change may be identified. One is forced to point out that Culler has employed one unchanging and unconditional concept of all language, that is, changeable and contingent concepts. In Culler's own words, "The fact that the relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary means, then, that since there are no fixed universal concepts or fixed universal signifiers, the signifier itself is arbitrary, and so is the signified."[739] Both Culler and Saussure could be asked, "Is it a fixed universal concept of all languages that there are no fixed universal concepts?"

It is also a curious aspect of both Culler's exposition of Saussure, and Saussure's own claims, that if the relation between signified and signifier is arbitrary, that the concept must suffer the burden of change? Saussure talks at length about the morphological and phonological changes that a sign undergoes. But, when it comes to the concept to which the signifier is related, it is always the concept that changes. An observation of experience seems to indicate exactly the opposite. When a signifier begins to take on some new and additional concept, it is not the original concept that has changed. Rather, it is the field of reference of the signifier. Although the old concept may not have a signifier that exclusively relates to it, nevertheless, that concept can be described and identified as still the same concept.

Granted, there is nothing in the nature of a linguistic symbol necessitating that it relate to a given concept. But simply because the application of a signifier

to a concept is at least somewhat arbitrary, this does not by any means entail contingency on the part of the concept. What could cause such a view? I believe it is Saussure's unwarranted theory of what constitutes a sign, signifier, and signified.

In the chapter entitled "Nature of the Linguistic Sign," Saussure criticizes what he identifies as the "naming-process" view of language. He defines this "naming-process" as "a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names." His criticism of this view is, "It assumes that ready-made ideas exist before words."[740] However, this criticism begs the question. What Saussure has said is that words cannot simply be names of things because "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image."[741] But simply to assert that a sign is the linking of a concept and a sound image is not sufficient to establish this as a fact. This creates a "chicken and egg" problem for Saussure. If the sign links a sound-image and a concept, which has logical priority, the concept or the sound-image? Also, from where has the concept derived?

Later, Saussure flatly states, "There are no pre-existing ideas . . ."[742] By this Saussure means that external reality is not the efficient cause of ideas to which the mind must conform. In his view, ideas are not conformed to reality, rather, reality is arbitrarily divided up by the mind in conformity to what ever way a particular linguistic community has articulated the categories of reality. If reality does not cause the mind to articulate categories according to its pre-existing nature, pre-existing in the sense that reality exists prior to anyone's perception of it, then from where do such categories and concepts arise? Do they arise from the encounter with reality? If so, then the idea is a representation of reality. The idea "horse" is a representation of the actually existing "horse." Now if language does not involve a "naming-process" in which a name is applied to the thing in reality, then the sign must be applied to the idea. Indeed, this is Saussure's assertion. He states, ". . . the choice of a given slice of sound (i.e., sound-image) to *name* a given idea is completely arbitrary."[743] Now if the image is in fact an accurate representation in the mind of the thing in reality, then what has Saussure gained by denying that the sign names the thing in reality?

Saussure makes a distinction between a sign and the two parts that compose it. For Saussure, the sign is composed of the concept (the signified), and the sound-image (the signifier). Now, if the sound-image signifies the concept, then what does the sign stand for? What is a sign? Is not a sign what leads a knowing faculty to something other than itself? The sound-image signifies, or points to the concept. The concept is signified by the sound-image. What does the sign signify? Does the word *arbor* signify anything? Apparently, for Saussure, the

word is a sign of a relationship between its two parts. But if the word is a sign of this relationship, then what is the sound-image? Is it the word? Saussure's account does not seem to fit reality, at least not reality as it is experienced on an everyday basis.

It seems that one reason Saussure does not allow for a sign to name a thing in reality is because the sign names its two parts, the signified and the signifier. The crucial part that has been omitted from Saussure's scheme is reality. Even Ogden and Richards identify this problem when they point out, "Unfortunately this theory of signs, by *neglecting entirely the things for which signs stand*, was from the beginning cut off from any contact with scientific methods of verification."[744]

Indeed, Saussure asserts, "To prove that language is only a system of pure values, it is enough to consider *the two elements* involved in its functioning: *ideas and sounds*."[745] What about reality? From where do ideas come? How are ideas related to reality? Since ideas are subjective, how can I possibly know that my ideas are comparable to the ideas in the mind of another? To simply assert that sounds stand for ideas and that the use of the same sounds to signify similar ideas in another mind begs the question. All I can know for sure is that when another person uses a particular sound, it signifies a certain idea in my own mind. How can I know that the same sound is signifying the same idea in another's mind?

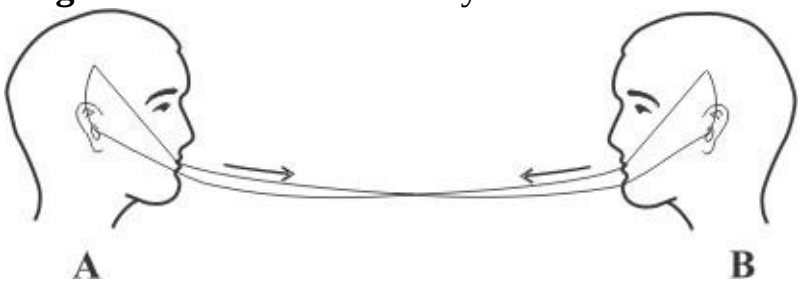
A possible response to this criticism might assert that success in mutual communication is evidenced by the success in survival, and that this gives evidence that there is a possible similarity in subjective ideas. However, it would be difficult to maintain that the mutual survival of animals indicates a similarity in subjective ideas in the minds of animals. Indeed, mutual survival of animals would not even indicated the existence of ideas at all in the minds of animals.

The obvious test would be to relate the sound to some object outside of our minds and indicate that the sound signifies the idea that corresponds to that reality. This implies that the idea derives from reality. However, if the sound triggers the idea that corresponds to the external reality, then the sound is the *sign* of the reality, not of the idea. The sound is not a part of a sign that stands for a sound-idea relationship.

Let me illustrate. Suppose two individuals desire to communicate about a tree. How does speaker 1 know that the sound "tree" corresponds to the same idea in the mind of speaker 2? Well, speaker 1 could point to a tree and articulate the sound "tree." Speaker 2 would indicate agreement that the sound "tree" functions similarly for him. But, of what has the sound become a sign? Speaker

1 could not point to the head of speaker 2 while articulating the sound “tree” and expect speaker 2 to relate that sound to the concept of a tree. In the initial stages of communication between individuals of different languages, or between an adult and an infant, the ostensible indications may be broad and general. However, as more knowledge is gained, more refined distinctions could be made. For example as more abstract concepts are developed in the mind of the infant, or more accurate understanding is gained by those of different languages, the distinction between “tree” and “bark” could be made.[746]

Figure 26: Saussure’s Theory of Communication



Saussure has made a serious error. Although the sound “tree” causes speaker 2 to recall the concept of a tree in his mind, the sound is not a sign merely of the concept, but of the tree in reality by means of the concept. If the sound signifies merely an idea in the mind, as he illustrates in his diagram reproduced in **Figure 26**, then it would not be possible for speaker 1 to point to a tree and articulate the sound “tree,” for this would be using the sound as a sign of the tree in reality, not as a sign of the idea of a tree in the mind of speaker 1. Saussure has confused the function of a sign and the reference of a sign, that is, what the sign signifies. The function of the sign is to represent to the mind that to which it refers. The sound does not represent to the mind a concept, which is itself a representation of the thing in reality. The sound represents to the mind the thing in reality from which the concept derives. The concept derives from reality, not from the sign. The sign is instilled with meaning because the mind, having derived the concept from reality, as we have explained above, applies a linguistic sign to refer to the particular thing in reality by way of the concept. Upon the occasion of employing this sign–for example, the sound “tree” –the mind recalls the concept of “tree” that the sign has represented to the mind. The sign has not represented the concept of “tree” to the mind. Rather, the sign has represented the tree to which the concept corresponds. The function of the sign as it relates to the mind is different from its function as it relates to reality. What the sign refers to is a real tree. The sign’s function is to represent this reality to the mind so that the mind recalls its concept that corresponds to that reality thus represented.

Conceptualism

The Moderate Realist position can be characterized as Conceptualism. However, this term must be qualified by the Moderate Realist metaphysics and epistemology as has been defended above in order to distinguish it from every form of Cartesian/Kantian and Idealist Conceptualism. The concept is the abstracted nature of the thing in reality. There is a natural relation between the concept of a tree and the tree in reality, because the concept is the essence of the tree according to its intentional existence in the mind of the knower.

Signification, then, is conceptual. Concepts cannot be arbitrary, because they are derived from the essences of things and are grounded upon substance. Linguistic signs have meaning because, on the one hand, they signify the concept in the mind, and on the other hand, they refer to the particular thing in reality as sensibly perceived.

In his criticism of conceptualism, John Lyons makes a number of self-defeating claims. He characterizes all conceptualism in the following criticism: "First, even if we grant that there are concepts associated with words, such that . . . when I hear the word 'table,' the concept of a table will come into my mind and, if I think of a table, the word 'table' will be called up for use as required, there is no evidence to show that concepts of this kind play any part in ordinary language-behavior."[747]

In his consideration of conceptualism, Lyons has departed from the field of linguistics and has entered the area of metaphysics. Since a methodology is fitted for the object which it is designed to investigate, and since metaphysics and linguistics are not entirely of the same nature, it is improper to employ a methodology suited for linguistic investigation in metaphysical inquiry. The difference lies in the fact that the concept is not *merely* a mental entity. Indeed it is a mental entity, but it is more than that. The concept is metaphysically connected with the thing in reality. Consequently, an analysis of conceptualism must proceed on the basis of a consideration of being and essence not simply word and meaning.

In his criticism, Lyons attempts to argue against conceptualism in general, but he does not consider the Moderate Realist notion of the concept. In Moderate Realism, it is impossible for the mind to entertain the meaning of the word *table* without the accompanying concept, for the concept is the meaning. Lyons neglects the philosophical term "concept" as used in Moderate Realist metaphysics and epistemology and focuses on the more common association of concept as some sort of mental picture or representation. This is evident from his statement, "Of course, one may be able to form some mental image of a table, if

asked to do so . . .”[748] Granted it may not be the case that in normal language-behavior the mind forms a mental picture in every instance of hearing or employing the term *table*. But it is equally as certain that, for the person who knows the meaning of the word *table*, a concept is immediately associated in the mind with hearing or using the word, for the concept is the meaning of the term.

Lyons makes the claim, “Introspection is notoriously unreliable; but there is no other way of determining whether a succession of concepts accompany the production and understanding of utterances, and introspection does not give any clear support to the view that this is the case.”[749] The obvious question here is, “Unreliable for what?” Is introspection unreliable in reporting what goes on in one’s own mind, as Lyons seems to claim that it is? If this is its unreliability, then how can it be known that introspection is unreliable? In order to judge the reliability or unreliability of a particular report from introspection, an accurate report would have to exist against which all reports might be judged to determine the accuracy or inaccuracy of each. Does Lyons purport to possess this accurate report? Is he not using his own report from his own introspection to make the judgment that the report that conceptualism gives “does not prove that we normally do so . . .”? Simply because Lyons acknowledges the unreliability of his own introspection, or that the reports of others are unreliable because they may not account for what he has learned from his own introspection, does not mean that all reports from everyone’s introspection is unreliable.

Lyons also criticizes conceptualism by claiming, “As the term ‘concept’ is used by many writers on semantics, it is simply not clear what is meant by it; and that is perhaps of itself a sufficient criticism of their use of the term.”[750] But simply because the term is unclear to someone does not mean that the term itself is inadequate or that the notion of conceptualism is wrong. It is understandable that such a philosophical term would be unclear to someone who is not versed in its signification in Moderate Realist philosophy. Even though the term *concept* has a long history of use in this tradition, it still requires a considerable amount of investigation and study in Thomistic and Moderate Realistic metaphysics to grasp the significance of the term. As has been argued, the concept is the form of the thing in reality as it exists in the mind of the knower by virtue of its intentional being.

Lyons’ second major criticism is directed to the claim that the meaning of a word is what it signifies. He asserts,

> As long as we restrict our attention to objects like tables, it might seem reasonable to say that the words which are used to refer to them are signs. At least we can give a fairly clear account of the relationship between word and object in cases like this. Once we extend the notion of signification to

> cover all lexemes, however, we run the risk of trivializing it completely. For to say that what a word means is what it signifies–unless we then go on to recognize different kinds of signification–is to say no more than what a word means is what it means.[751]

The difficulty that Lyons identifies in this notion leads him to conclude, "It would seem to be preferable, therefore, to restrict the notion of signifying, or standing for, to that subclass of lexemes or expressions in language which do stand for things in some clearly interpretable sense of 'signify.'"[752] Earlier Lyons made a distinction between word-forms and lexemes. In an example, he distinguished between the vocabulary-words *find* and *found* as a subclass of what he called lexemes.[753] In this example, the vocabulary words *find* and *found* are lexemes.

Now, according to this definition it is difficult to see how applying the notion of conceptual signification to cover all lexemes runs the risk of "trivializing it completely."[754] Is he saying that lexemes such as *find* or *found* cannot be conceptualized? Lyons had left open the possibility that conceptualism does not run the risk of trivializing the notion of signification if "we then go on to recognize different kinds of signification." But this is precisely what takes place in Moderate Realism. How indeed could these terms be conceptualized in the Moderate Realist system? It must be remembered that "the primary object of our intellect in its present state is not just any being or truth, but the being and truth found in material things . . . and it comes to a knowledge of all else from these."[755] Joseph Owens expounds upon the implication of this basic truth.

> Upon examination the basic contents of human cognition, from which all else in it is derived, appear without exception as sensible things and human activities specified by sensible things. Try to think of anything in other terms. You find you cannot do so. All immaterial things are found represented through notions experienced in the sensible. The concept of an immaterial thing retains the notion of thing while removing the notion of materiality. Subsistent being is represented as existence identified with substance. Here the notions of both substance and existence are taken from the substance and existence of material things, with materiality and all other limitations denied them.[756]

Because the proper object of the intellect is being, and since all else derives from this, it follows that all is understood in terms of this. An abstract concept such as "liberty" is understood in terms of the real relation that exists or should exist between moral beings. Those words that indicate relations between parts of speech in the sentence, such as prepositions, conjunctions, etc., signify real relations in reality. All of these, as Joseph Owens has pointed out, appear as sensible things and human activities specified by sensible things. The lexemes *find* and *found* are conceptualized in terms of human activity specified by

sensible things. Contrary to Lyons' claims, to identify the concept as the meaning of a term, and to propose that what a word means is what it signifies, is by no means trivializing.

Meaning

We must now articulate exactly what is the nature of meaning according to the Moderate Realist perspective. Much of what will be discussed in this section has been mentioned in previous sections. The task here will be to synthesize the principles into a succinct statement of the nature of meaning.

What Is Meaning?

As has been indicated in various ways in the discussions above, the meaning of a word is the concept that it signifies. Two points must be explained in order to clarify this definition. First of all, the term *concept* must be understood in the context of a Moderate Realist Epistemology as defended above. The word is the instrumental sign, whereas the concept is the formal sign. John Oesterle points out this distinction and its importance: "The concept cannot be an instrumental sign since the concept is not an object known in any way (except reflexively). It is a formal sign because it signifies by representing directly and immediately the object. In terms of the other divisions of signs, the concept is a natural sign because of its natural connection with the signified, being its intentional form and likeness."[757]

Although Mortimer Adler uses the term 'idea' to "stand for the cognitive elements in the human mind–its perceptions, memories, images, empirical concepts, and theoretical constructs," he points out that these are "formal, not instrumental, signs."[758] The term 'idea' for Adler has essentially the same meaning as our use of the term "concept." As formal signs, then, "each idea *is* a meaning." As he goes on to explain, "Each is a single meaning, which is its reference to the object perceived, imagined, remembered, or understood. Words as instrumental signs get their meaning by being imposed upon the objects referred to by ideas as formal signs. By being thus associated with ideas, words *express* the meanings that ideas *are*."[759]

Second, it is important to stress that the concepts, or the ideas in the terminology of Adler, are not the objects of knowledge. Consequently, the concepts or ideas as concepts and ideas are not themselves the content of the meaning. That is to say, the meaning of the word 'man' is not the *concept* of man, but the concept *of man*, that is, the content of the concept, or what the concept is of. The meaning of the word 'man' is the universal nature of the man that exists in the mind as a formal sign or concept. As St. Thomas has made

clear, words "signify these conceptions of the intellect immediately . . . They cannot immediately signify things, as is clear from the mode of signifying, for the name 'man' signifies human nature in abstraction from singulars; hence it is impossible that it immediately signify a singular man."[760] It is not the concept as a concept that is signified by the word 'man.' Rather, it is "human nature in abstraction from singulars" that is signified by the word 'man.' The term 'concept' is applied to any nature that is abstracted from particulars by the intellect. So, it is not the concept as concept that is signified, but the concept as it is the abstracted nature of some particular that is signified. In this example, the word 'man' does not mean "concept of man." Rather, the word 'man' means "human nature as abstracted from particular man" and this exists in the mind in the form of a concept. Again Mortimer Adler explains that "it is by imposition on the objects which we apprehend by means of those ideas, not by imposition on the ideas themselves, that meaningless notations acquire their referential significance."[761]

What Is Referential Significance?

Another aspect of the nature of meaning is that meaningless notations do not become meaningful words by being imposed upon things directly. The assertion of St. Thomas, quoted above, makes this clear. The linguistic sign 'man' is not imposed upon a particular man, for then it could not be applied to other particular men. Rather, the word 'man' is imposed upon the object as it is apprehended *by means of* the concept. The word man *refers* to a particular man as he is perceived by means of the images, memories, etc., in the mind. This avoids the problem of words that name things that do not exist in external reality, such as a unicorn. If the thing to which the name-word refers exists only in the mind, then it is not thereby meaningless. Again Mortimer Adler offers a helpful explanation: "Naming is not asserting. The word 'angel' may not name anything that really exists, but it certainly does name something that men can talk about to one another and, in addition, can disagree about when they ask the question that certainly can be asked, 'Do angels in fact really exist?'"[762] To confuse referential significance with the assertion of real existence, as the logical positivists have done in their verification principle,[763] is to confuse another distinct aspect of the nature of meaning, namely, existential denotation.

What Is Existential Denotation?

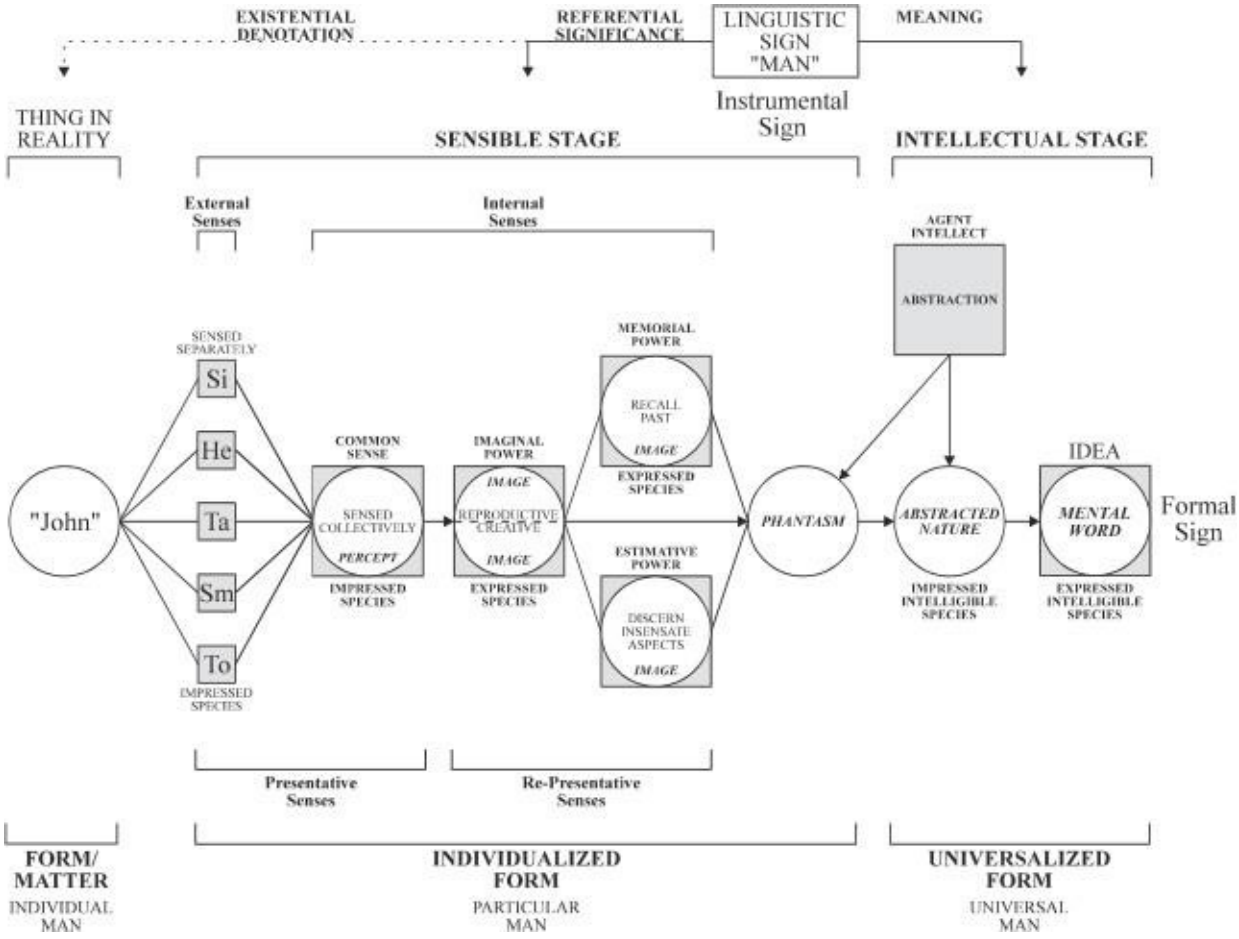
In a Moderate Realist theory of meaning, this aspect of the nature of meaning has to do with the real existence of the thing to which a word refers. A

name-word can have referential significance and not have existential denotation. A name-word can have both. Although a name-word cannot be a name-word without naming something, it is not necessary that it name something that actually exists in extra-mental reality. Of course, it can be pointed out that anything that is thought exists as a being in the mind. Existential denotation is that aspect of a name-word that asserts the existence of the thing in reality external to the mind. It is an aspect of the problem of meaning, not because it is part of the meaning of a word, but because name-words can be used to denote things that do not exist in extra-mental reality as well as things that do exist in extra-mental reality. As Mortimer Adler points out, "existential denotation of a word is no part of its lexical meaning."[764]

Conclusion

With the addition of the linguistic term, in this case the word 'MAN,' the illustration in **Figure 27** is now complete. It depicts a Moderate Realist theory of knowledge and meaning, showing the nature of meaning, its relation to the knowing faculty, and its foundation in the metaphysical constitution of substance in extra-mental reality. The thing in reality, composed of form and matter, is perceived by the knower. The form of the thing becomes the object of knowledge. The thing becomes the object of sensible knowledge in the here-and-now as a particular individual thing. The nature is abstracted from the phantasm and is expressed in the intellect as a mental word. A linguistic expression is applied to the concept, which is the means by which the thing in reality is known, and by which the name becomes a name of that thing. The meaning of the word is the concept in the mind of the knower. The referential significance is that to which the word refers as an idea, memory, image, etc. The existential denotation is the capacity of the word to denote the real existence of things. Categorematic words name, while syncategorematic words function syntactically. This is a Moderate Realist's theory of the nature of meaning.

Figure 27: Knowledge and Meaning


EXISTENTIAL DENOTATION
REFERENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE
LINGUISTIC SIGN "MAN"
MEANING
Instrumental Sign
THING IN REALITY
SENSIBLE STAGE
INTELLECTUAL STAGE
External Senses
Internal Senses
AGENT INTELLECT
ABSTRACTION
SENSED SEPARATELY
Si
He
Ta
Sm
To
IMPRESSED SPECIES
"John"
COMMON SENSE
SENSED COLLECTIVELY
PERCEPT
IMPRESSED SPECIES
IMAGINAL POWER
IMAGE
REPRODUCTIVE CREATIVE
IMAGE
EXPRESSED SPECIES
MEMORIAL POWER
RECALL PAST
IMAGE
EXPRESSED SPECIES
ESTIMATIVE POWER
DISCERN INSENSATE ASPECTS
IMAGE
PHANTASM
ABSTRACTED NATURE
IMPRESSED INTELLIGIBLE SPECIES
IDEA
MENTAL WORD
EXPRESSED INTELLIGIBLE SPECIES
Formal Sign
Presentative Senses
Re-Presentative Senses
FORM/ MATTER
INDIVIDUAL MAN
INDIVIDUALIZED FORM
PARTICULAR MAN
UNIVERSALIZED FORM
UNIVERSAL MAN

10 HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND WHAT IS COMMUNICATED?

The Interpretation of Meaning

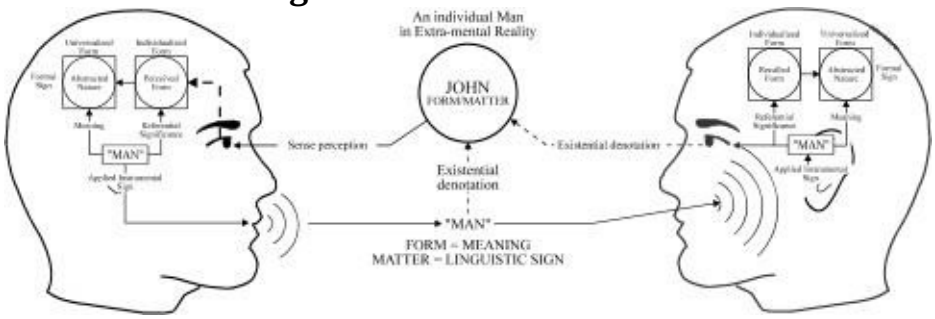
Concerning the question of meaning, Paul Horwich asserts that the problem of meaning "has been both extremely important and extremely difficult. And it is certainly important; for it lies at the centre of the philosophy of language, which itself occupies the centre of philosophy. So there are few deep philosophical issues that do not hinge in one way or another on which account of meaning is adopted."[765] However, there seems to be a more fundamental question here. Regardless of the particular account of meaning a philosopher consciously adopts, the account of meaning which the philosopher employs in communicating his meaning is the much more basic question. Every philosopher must employ an account of meaning that ensures that his meaning will be communicated. If a philosopher adopts and advocates an account of meaning that does not account for the fact that he is communicating meaning, then his consciously adopted account is not the account that should engage his reader. Rather, the account of meaning that is being employed is the account that should be the focus of consideration. As Stanley Jaki observes, "Indeed before any talk about clarity there comes the object or the means that carries the philosopher's message about clarity. For that reason alone objects that serve as the means of the philosophical message should be given the primary consideration. . . . The first step should be the registering of objects, or else the philosopher will be guilty of a sleight of hand, however sophisticated. He will have to bring in through the back door the very objects the use of which his starting point failed to justify."[766]

The fact of meaning cannot be meaningfully denied. Denying meaning assumes the fact of meaningful communication. The final step, therefore, in the staircase ascent involves an analysis of meaningful communication and a correlation of these observations with the conclusions of the above investigation in order to present an account of the nature, causes, and locus of meaning in hermeneutics. This section will not deal in depth with the general principles of hermeneutics or hermeneutical methodology, but will consider the relationship of the Moderate Realist theory of the nature of meaning to the issues of the causes and locus of meaningful communication as they relate to hermeneutics in order to offer a paradigm for more detailed investigation. Hermeneutics is the science of understanding, so we will begin our application by a look at the relationship of meaning and understanding.

Meaning and Understanding

In chapter 8 we demonstrated that the mind employs two powers in the act of understanding. Robert Brennan provides the following synopsis: “two separate powers are required in the soul if it is to understand; *agent intellect*, whose object is the potentially understandable, and *possible intellect*, whose object is the actually understandable.”[767] The agent intellect abstracts the essence from the particular, and in the possible intellect the concept is formed that is the means by which the mind understands the thing in reality. But the formation of a concept in the mind by which the intellect knows the thing in reality is nothing else but forming a meaning, for the concept or idea is meaning. Again Mortimer Adler makes this point clear: “. . . our ideas do not *have* meaning, they do not *acquire* meaning, they do not *change*, *gain*, or *lose* meaning. Each of our ideas *is* a meaning and that is all it is. Mind is the realm in which meanings exist and through which everything else that has a meaning acquires meaning.”[768]

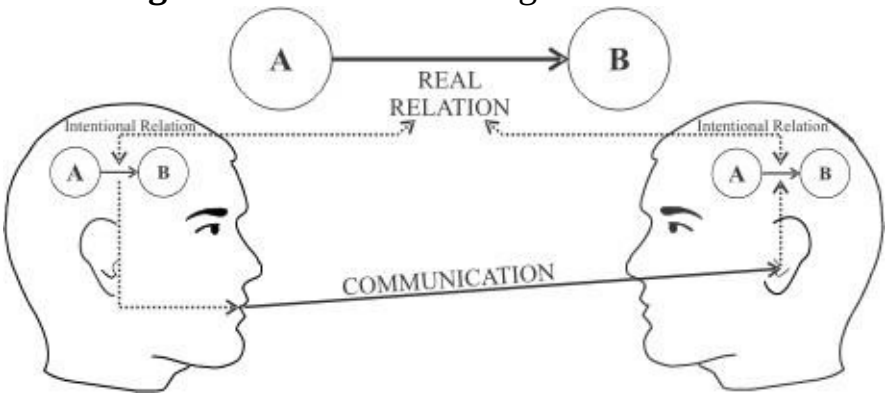
Figure 28: Communication



What, then, is understanding? In the words of Winfried Corduan, “understanding is the discernment of the meaning of a proposition.”[769] The diagram in **Figure 28** illustrates this. Contrary to the scheme offered by Saussure (**Figure 26**), the act of communication involves a grounding in objective reality. The speaker speaks a word in the language common to both speaker and hearer. The hearer, upon hearing the word, recalls the individualized form to which the word refers. The meaning of the word is the nature or essence of the thing to which the word refers. In this diagram, the word employed also has existential denotation in that it denotes the actually existing thing. The word is composed of form and matter. The formal aspect corresponds to the abstracted form existing in the minds of both the speaker and the hearer. The nature of reality and of the mind insures that all minds abstract according to the same principles. The individualized and universalized forms in the minds of each individual are precisely the same because they are determined by the thing in reality, not by the minds of the knowers. Consequently, meaning is grounded in being and is

objectively verifiable.

Figure 29: Communicating Real Relations



The discernment of the meaning of a proposition presupposes the discernment of the meaning of the words in the proposition and their relationship in context. Not only is meaning derived in this manner concerning objects, but also concerning relations, as the illustration in **Figure 29** shows. William May has observed that because material being is composed and complex rather than simple, and because the intellect necessarily obtains knowledge through sensation, "We just do not have an intuitive grasp of a given being in its totality, in all its wealth."[770] Human intellectual knowledge is necessarily partial and progresses by means of judgments. What the mind grasps in part, the judgment synthesizes. Consequently, the intellect is able to know relations in reality by means of the act of judgment. David Hume's problem in discovering causality in sensible experience is that he endeavored to discover it by an analysis of the idea rather than by the function of judgment by which the mind unites or separates distinct ideas.[771]

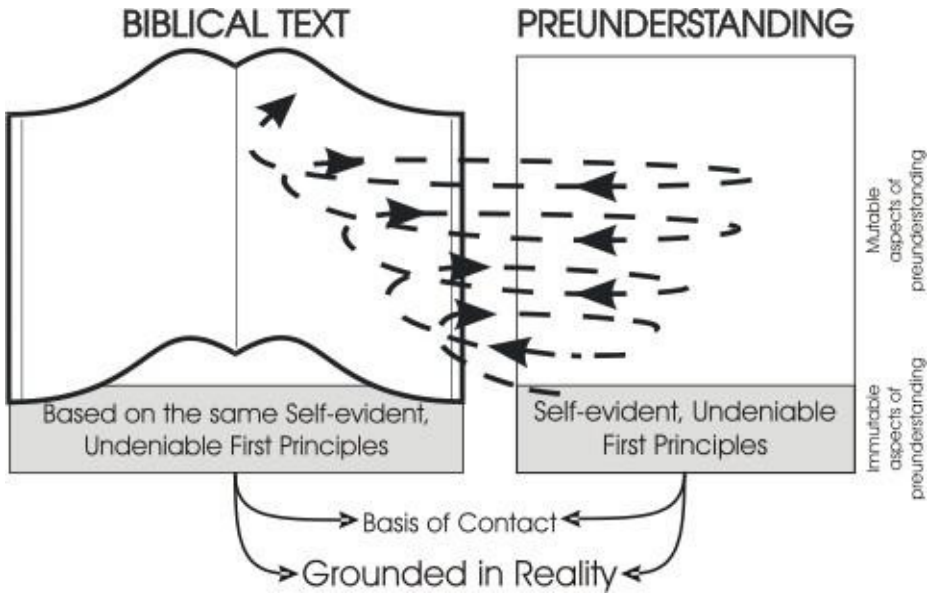
The Moderate Realist view of the nature of meaning, then, relates to understanding because it finds meaning in the concepts of the intellect, which are not themselves the objects of knowledge but are the means by which the intellect attains a knowledge of reality. If understanding is a discerning of meaning, then the Moderate Realist perspective provides meaning grounded in reality.

On the basis of these principles, an alternative view of the hermeneutical spiral that was depicted in the diagram from KBH (see **Figure 4**: Hermeneutical Spiral of KBH) can now be proposed. KBH indicated that the starting point of the hermeneutical spiral is within the Preunderstanding of the interpreter. Having identified all aspects of the interpreter's preunderstanding as subject to change, KBH proposed that the interaction of the text with the preunderstanding of the interpreter serves to alter the interpreter's preunderstanding to bring it ever more closely in line with the text. The objection to this scenario was that it is

nonsensical to suppose that the interpretive conclusions that are the product of the preunderstanding of the interpreter would yield conclusions that would serve to alter the very preunderstanding that has resulted in these interpretive conclusions. Also, since the interpreter does not have any non-preunderstanding mediated access to the text, there is no means by which an interpreter can tell whether he is in fact "getting closer to the text." Additionally, since all aspects of one's preunderstanding are subject to change, according to KBH, it would seem that their very assumption that one's preunderstanding ought to be subject to change is itself subject to change. But, if it is subject to change, then it could change only to the assumption that some aspects of my preunderstanding ought not to change. Indeed, KBH indicate that the assumption of the inevitability of and the mutability of one's preunderstanding are themselves immutable.

The alternative, illustrated in **Figure 30**, adopts the basic position illustrated in the diagram by KBH, but modifies it to include the self-evident, undeniable first principles of thought and being that ground interpretation in reality—namely, those assumptions that are not subject to change. This grounding offers an unshakable foundation against which the claims of the text can be evaluated, and against which one's interpretation of the text can be measured. The objective truths of the text, then, can be recognized as such by a preunderstanding that is created in the image of God. The mutable aspects of one's preunderstanding can then be adjusted as the truths of the text interact with the understanding of the interpreter, and adjudication between conflicting interpretations can proceed with reference to first principles that are the same for the interpreter and the text. Also, it is not the case that the interpreter becomes the judge of the text since both the text and the interpreter have the same self-evident first principles, which are the same for all people, at all times, in all cultures.

Figure 30: Objectively Grounded Interpretation



Meaning, Its Causes and Locus

What Are the Causes of Linguistic Meaning?

A Moderate Realist view of the nature of linguistic meaning has provided the epistemological and metaphysical foundation upon which to distinguish the various causes of meaning. Let us look at six causes of meaning and three distinct uses of "intention," which seem to exhaust the possibilities.

> 1) the efficient cause–agent–that by which meaning is caused, namely, the mind of the author. This is the *intent* in the mind of the author–"I didn't *intend* to say that."
> 2) The final cause–purpose–that for which meaning is caused, namely, to communicate. This is the *intent* of the author as to the purpose for his communication, "My *intention* (purpose) was to help you."
> 3) Material cause–material–that out of which meaning is caused, namely, words and symbols, language.
> 4) Formal cause–form–that of which meaning is caused, namely, the meaning of the text. This is the *intent* of the author in the expressed meaning of the text.
> 5) Exemplar cause–pattern–that after which meaning is caused, namely, the Logos, God, the Divine communicator.
> 6) Instrumental cause–means–that through which meaning is caused, namely, logic, reason.[772]

Keeping these causes in mind in the process of interpretation goes a long way in enabling the interpreter to avoid confusion and misinterpretation. At least one persistent and very popular error in interpretation can be traced to the confusion of causes, namely, where meaning is found.

Where Is Linguistic Meaning Found?

Although this is a problem area that is often not recognized as such among

biblical interpreters, it is a point of considerable contention in literary criticism.

Author-centered Theories

E. D. Hirsch has been a prominent figure in the controversy about the locus of meaning. In *Validity in Interpretation*, Hirsch makes some statements early in the book that seem to indicate that he advocates the theory that the locus of meaning is the text. Such remarks as, ". . . sensible belief that a text means what its author means," or his references to the modern emphasis on "semantic autonomy of language" are statements with which anyone advocating a text-centered view would prima facie agree. He even speaks disparagingly of the tendency in modern criticism toward a "prevailing skepticism which calls into doubt the possibility of objectively valid interpretation." However, there appears to be an underlying notion that the author's intended meaning is the criterion for validity in interpretation. The following statement hints at this notion. "For, once the author had been ruthlessly banished as the determiner of his text's meaning, it very gradually appeared that no adequate principle existed for judging the validity of an interpretation."[773]

To say that the author is "the determiner of his text's meaning" sounds very much like the theory that holds that the locus of meaning is in the text. It seems to acknowledge the author as the efficient cause of meaning, as articulated above. However, Hirsch shifts the locus of meaning from the text to the author by his assertion that it is only the author's determination which provides an "adequate principle . . . for judging the validity of an interpretation." If the locus of meaning is the text, then the author is the determiner of meaning, but the text itself provides the only adequate principle for judging the validity of an interpretation. Hirsch seems to be saying, there are, then, two aspects of a text. The first is that meaning is determined by the author. The second is the meaning that the reader has interpreted. They may be the same. They may be different. It is the responsibility of the reader to validate his interpretation of the meaning of the text by comparing it with the meaning that the author determined.

The question, then, is, where will one go to find the author's determinate meaning? Will we go to the text? Apparently not, for the reader's interpretation of the text must be measured against the author's determination of that meaning. Where is this determinate meaning found? It seems that for Hirsch, the validity of an interpretation is *not* found in the understanding of the meaning of the text. The text must be interpreted, not to discover *its* meaning, for *its* meaning is in the author's determination, i.e., in the mind of the author. The reader's interpretation of the meaning of a text must be validated against the meaning that the author determined for his text.

When Hirsch undertakes to define meaning, he does not do so without a certain amount of ambiguity. In attempting to make a distinction between meaning and significance, Hirsch provides the following definitions: "*Meaning* is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable."[774]

A certain amount of ambiguity is caused by the statement that meaning is that which "is represented by a text." What does it mean to "represent" meaning? Do words and sentences represent meaning or do they mean something? It seems that Hirsch is attempting to avoid asserting that the meaning resides in the text while not completely abandoning the text in conveying meaning. The next statement seems to confirm this and again points to the idea that the locus of meaning is the author, not the text; "[Meaning] is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence."[775]

Perhaps it can be argued that Hirsch holds that the locus of meaning is the author rather than the text. It seems that he does. Perhaps it can be argued that Hirsch holds that the locus of meaning is both the author and the text. This view also seems to fit Hirsch's argument. However, either view is problematic, for, from the interpreter's point of view, the only locus accessible is the text, since one person cannot enter into the mind of another person. Now it will be objected that one person can indeed enter into another person's mind. By means of his text, or by historical or biographical information, an interpreter can reconstruct what might have been on the author's mind when he wrote his text. However, to reconstruct what *might have been on the mind of an author* is not to *enter his mind*, for if an interpreter could enter the mind of an author he would not have to reconstruct what *might* have been, for he would know directly *what in fact was*. When it is said that one person cannot enter another person's mind, this is meant in a literal sense. An interpreter cannot actually and literally enter another person's mind.

Although this may seem tautologous or even irrelevant, it is of crucial importance. The impression that is given by referring to the author's intended meaning is that somehow it is possible, apart from any text, to discover what was on an author's mind when he wrote his text. But, this is not possible. Consequently, the priority in interpretation must not be an author's intent as some interpreter has reconstructed it, for this is only an interpreter's supposition. The priority must be the objective text itself. The danger of giving the impression that there is something outside of the text that functions as the

determining factor of meaning for the interpreter is found in statements like the following: “If literature is an act of communication, then meaning resides in the intention of the author. . . . Interpretation then has as its goal the recovery of the author’s purpose in writing.”[776] Who is to say what an author’s purpose was, and what objective standard can be employed to adjudicate between competing proposals of what was an author’s purpose?

The controversy over the locus of meaning is frequently a confusion of causes. As Longman has observed, “The author has encoded a message for the readers.”[777] But the message that the author has encoded resides in the text of that message once it is encoded. The author is the efficient cause of the meaning, but the text is the formal cause, according to the Moderate Realist view. As was illustrated in **Figure 16**, it is not necessary for the knower to go back into the mind of God to know reality, because reality is known by means of the form that constitutes the real thing. Similarly, it is not necessary to go back into the mind of the author to know his meaning, because his meaning resides in the text as form to matter. The error of author-centered theories of interpretation can be effectively countered from a Moderate Realist perspective.

Reader-centered Theories

According to Schuyler Brown, the assumption that linguistic meaning resides in a text “is certainly not intuitively obvious.”[778] Brown proposes to demonstrate that “meaning exists formally only in human beings.”[779] Tremper Longman, in his helpful historical survey, identifies the reader-centered theory as proposing that “Meaning resides in the reader, not in the text.”[780] It seems, however, that those who advocate such a position are advocating a self-contradictory assertion. Surely Brown is counting on his text to communicate his proposition that meaning exists formally only in human beings.

This position also contradicts reality. As a Moderate Realist perspective proposes, if meaning exists formally only in human beings, then it is impossible for one human being to communicate meaning to another. It is necessary that meaning be conveyed by some medium. Between human beings this medium is language, either written or spoken. If meaning exists only formally in human beings, however, then meaning does not formally exist in the vocal sounds or written notations which humans use as linguistic signs to carry meaning from one mind to another. How does Brown suppose meaning can be communicated? He asserts, “meaning is generated by a reader reading a text.”[781] This seems to assert that the meaning of a text originates in the mind of the reader and is not determined by the text, in which case, the meaning of Brown’s own text is not

found in the text, but in those who read his text. But this leaves no objective standard of verifying the interpretation of textual meaning.

In their book *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, Peter Cotterell & Max Turner assert that the Reader-Response interpretation proposes that "meaning is merely potential in any text; it only becomes actual in relation to a reader."[782] Now, either the author is counting on the text to actually mean that texts have only potential meaning, or, since the text has only potential meaning, it does not actually mean that texts have only potential meaning. Consequently, it is a potentiality that some texts do have actual meaning. In either case this assertion is self-defeating.

A Moderate Realist view not only proposes that a text has actual meaning, and that the locus of meaning is the text, but the Moderate Realist perspective provides a metaphysical and epistemological foundation upon which can be based the assertion that meaning exists formally both in the mind and in the text. This is asserted by the relation of the formal sign, or mental word, and its corresponding linguistic sign(s).

Deconstructionism

Robert P. Scharlemann's article on Deconstructionism focuses on Jacques Derrida's contention that there is no transcendental signified. He explains that this transcendental signified means "that there is no access to what is signified by linguistic signs which does not itself in turn have to make use of linguistic signs," and that "no signified thing which is not in some way pointed out by a linguistic gesture and does not in some way signify in turn, or, to put it differently, which is not in some way mediated by and existent in language."[783] By denying a transcendental signified, according to Scharlemann, Derrida is "denying that there is any observing or intuiting or other apprehending of things which is not in some way mediated by language, even if the only language involved is the gesture or word by which a thing is pointed out."[784]

Contrary to these claims, however, it is possible to articulate the existence of a "transcendental signified" by which the mind apprehends or hooks up with reality apart from any linguistic sign. This is the formal sign, or mental word as presented in Moderate Realism. Again, it seems that the abandonment of the foundation of a Moderate Realist metaphysic leads to a self-destructive conclusion. Scharlemann provides two such examples of Derrida's brand of Deconstructionism. According to Scharlemann, Derrida asserts, "there is no absolute ground of the sort that 'metaphysics' had conceived . . . but a play that connects signs to other signs indefinitely." Of course this harks back to both

Saussure and Plato in which the meaning of any sign is determined only by its difference from all other signs. The meaning of a sign is therefore not determinate since it is not conceivable that anyone could possibly come to know the meaning of every other possible sign. For Plato, this same notion permeated the knowledge of the forms. How does one know the form “treeness,” and how can one distinguish “treeness” from “manness”? This distinction is made on the basis of non-being. The knower knows the form of “treeness” and its distinction from “manness” because “treeness” is not “manness”—or for that matter, any other form. The knowledge of the form for Plato, and the meaning of the sign for Saussure is difference. Derrida has imbibed this perspective and applied it to the meaning of texts. A text dos not have determinate meaning because meaning is always differed. Meaning is differed because any given meaning can be determinate only as it is different from all other possible meanings. The self-defeating nature of this approach hardly needs to be identified, except perhaps to ask the question, “Is it an absolute ground that there is no absolute ground?” In his book *Limited Inc*, Derrida asserts, “I shall try to demonstrate why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather, why its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated.” Of course Derrida’s own context is determinable, and Derrida is counting on the fact that his linguistic meaning will be determinate in its meaning, that, because a context is never absolutely determinable, linguistic meaning is fundamentally indeterminate.

A Moderate Realist view of meaning grounds meaning in the reality of being and explains the connection between the mind and the world by the metaphysical constitution of each. Moderate Realism explains how reality provides a determinate context that is the same for every reader and speaker. Moderate Realism maintains an objective point of reference from which to investigate questions of hermeneutics and linguistics and semantics.

A Realist Perspective on the Locus of Meaning

A Moderate Realist perspective on the locus of meaning might be initially identified as a text-centered theory because it asserts that the locus of meaning is the text. This is accurate as far as it goes. It is inaccurate if such a designation is taken to imply that the Moderate Realist perspective makes the same assertions as Structuralism or the New Criticism. The Moderate Realist perspective does not attempt to eliminate the author from his text, or render historical and biographical research unnecessary. Rather, the Moderate Realist perspective demonstrate that objectivity in the interpretive process is possible. The author is the efficient cause of meaning, but the text is the locus of meaning. An author deposits meaning in the text as form in matter.

Meaning and the Historical Context

The book by Cotterell and Turner referred to above provides a good example around which to consider these issues from a Moderate Realist perspective. In section 3.3, entitled "Meaning as Significance and Presupposition Pools," Cotterell and Turner consider the importance of a common set of presuppositions between author and reader in arriving at an appropriate understanding of the significance of a discourse.[785] One example that CT use is the passage in Revelation concerning the letter to the church at Laodicea. They concentrate particularly on the part that speaks of the Laodicean church as being neither hot nor cold (Rev. 3:15-16).

CT observe the older interpretations of this passage that view the 'hot' as being "zealous for the Lord," and 'cold' as being "actual antagonism." CT point out an inconsistency of this position and offer an alternative that takes into consideration the historical setting of the church of Laodicea. Their presentation seems to explain all the data much more effectively. Their point is that, whether or not their understanding of the passage is correct, "it must be elements in the presupposition pool (not merely those in the text) that are potentially determinative of significance."[786]

At this point, CT's discussion becomes confusing. Their discussion seems to employ the terms *significance* and *meaning* interchangeably. Was the difficulty in the Revelation passage over its meaning, or its significance? It will be helpful to employ a distinction between meaning and significance that has been ably defended by E. D. Hirsch: "The important feature of meaning as distinct from significance is that meaning is the determinate representation of a text for an interpreter. An interpreted text is always taken to represent something, but that something can always be related to something else. Significance is meaning-as-related-to-something-else."[787]

The exposition given by CT employs these historical referents to provide information to illustrate that "utterances have meaning . . . and that part of that meaning is fixed by the context."[788] The question is, however, is this an accurate appraisal of the situation? It seems that whether or not we agree with CT's identification of the historical places and events to which the designations 'hot' and 'cold' may have referred, the *meaning* of the passage is nevertheless clear. Jesus said, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold or hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot or cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

At this point, CT observe that the historical information leads to a more

accurate grasp of the significance of the passage. Having made this helpful observation, why do they, then, confuse the significance with the meaning of the text? Earlier in this section they approvingly quote the following observation by Brown and Yule. “One of the most pervasive illusions which persists in the analysis of language is that we understand the meaning of a linguistic message solely on the basis of the words and structure of the sentences(s) used to convey that message.”[789]

CT add, “Such a view clearly does not account for the entirely different conclusions concerning Peter’s discourse that could be reached by his hearers.” If by “significance” CT mean the idea that can be represented by such expressions as “significance of the discourse for the speaker/writer . . . and of the . . . significance for his hearers or readers,” and, “significance for us, today,” then CT have expressed a very important point of hermeneutics.

However, if, for CT, the idea of “significance” of the text is interchangeable with the idea of the “meaning” of the text, then they have only managed to cloud the issue and make the meaning of meaning more obscure. The observation of Brown and Yule has either misrepresented what is meant by saying that meaning is derived from the words and structure of the sentence(s), or they are using meaning and significance interchangeably. But to use these terms interchangeably introduces confusion.

In CT’s example of the Revelation passage, they provide us with helpful information. However, the information they provide does not determine the meaning of the text. That is to say, the historical context is not the formal cause of meaning, nor is the meaning of this text located in the historical information. In this case, the historical information has illuminated the significance of the meaning which was already resident in the text by making known the possible referents involved. If we never come to know with absolute certainty to what the designations of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ and ‘lukewarm’ refer, it would still be clear that, to Jesus, the condition of being either hot or cold is preferable to the condition of being lukewarm. The meaning of the text is clear. The problem for CT was not with the meaning of the text, but with the difficulty of relating the meaning of the text in a significant way to the Laodiceans, and to us today. But, to relate the significance of the passage to the original audience, or to us today is to discern the *significance* of the text, not the meaning of the text. Now, if CT want to use the word ‘meaning’ in the sense of the significance of a text, namely, “What does it mean for me?” then that is their prerogative. However, this is inconsistent and confusing. Perhaps they could have employed a designation such as meaning_1, meaning_2, etc., so that their uses could be distinguished.

Additionally, it must be pointed out that historical material often provides necessary information that will enable the interpreter to understand the linguistic meaning as well as the significance of a text. Historical investigation provides the interpreter with examples of usage which lead to an understanding of the meanings of words in context. Historical information provides the content that an author employs when he communicates meaningfully. The biblical authors wrote about historical events and people. An understanding of the culture in which the author lived aids the interpreter in understanding the linguistic dynamics that shaped the author's use and expression. However, the linguistic meaning of a text is not located in these things. Each of these factors has its own linguistic meaning, and an understanding of their meanings as they relate to a given text may help to illuminate the linguistic meaning of that text. These factors provide vital information that enables the interpreter to discover the linguistic meaning of a text, but it is the linguistic meaning of the text that is discovered. It is the linguistic meaning of the text that is the goal of the interpretative enterprise. Application and significance arise out of the linguistic meaning. They are not determinative of that meaning.

Let me illustrate. Deut. 14:21 states, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk." What does this passage mean? There are many commentators who speculate on the historical possibilities with reference to this text. Keil and Delitzsch assert that, "But the actual reference is to the cooking of a kid in the milk of its own mother, as indicating a contempt of the relation which God has established and sanctified between parent and young."[790] However, they also observe that, "In the Targum Mishnah, etc., it is regarded as a general prohibition against eating flesh prepared with milk," and that "Luther and others suppose it to refer to the cooking of the kid, before it has been weaned from its mother's milk."[791] P. C. Craigie relates the command to Canaanite religious practice and the idea that the prohibition might "be one that had close associations with the fertility cult."[792]

These citations serve well to illustrate the point. What does this passage mean? It seems obvious that the passage means, *do not boil a kid in its mother's milk*. Now, the referents of the words are relatively clear as well; "kid," "milk," "mother," are all clear. The problem arises when the interpreter tries to discover the significance of this passage. On a popular level we ask, "What does it mean?" What is actually being asked is, What does this command prohibit? Is given merely to prohibit this physical activity, or is there some spiritual significance to the prohibition? What was the significance of this passage for Israel, or what is its significance for interpreters today? Now, if some

commentator is able to provide evidence to establish as a fact that this prohibition was given with the Canaanite practices in mind, then the significance would become much clearer. Then we would begin to understand what significance the prohibition had for the lives of the people of Israel and the significance it had for their relationship with the LORD. We would also be brought a long way toward understanding its significance for us today. But, this regards the *significance* of the passage, not its *meaning*.

The danger in confusing these two aspects is the tendency to substitute the significance for the meaning. When one begins to employ what is understood to be the significance of a passage in such a way as to see it as the meaning of the passage, then interpretation has become subjective, and there is no longer an objective determinate factor, viz. the text itself, that preserves the meaning of the text for an interpreter.

The determinate factor in the text is the form/meaning of the text that resides in the text, not the interpreter or the historical information. As we have seen, there is analogous relationship between the form/matter constitution of extra-mental reality and the form/matter constitution of a text. A human being is a thing in reality that is composed of form and matter. Its form is the determinate aspect by which its nature and consequently its function are perceived. The form of the human being, in an analogous way, determines his "meaning," so to speak, or what is the nature of a human being. The "meaning" of the human being is that he is a rational creature functioning as a free moral agent in this world. However, there are a number of different legitimate applications of the humans. A human being can function as an object of investigation by practitioners of various disciplines. A human being can function as a boost to assist another human being to climb a wall, or a tree. In fact, any application that does not destroy the form of the human being is a legitimate application of the human being. However, if someone were to take a human being and break him into parts for firewood, this would not be a legitimate application of a human being as a human being. If someone were to take a human being and remove his skin in order to adorn a lamp as a lamp shade, this would not be a legitimate application of a human being. Any application of the human being that destroys his form is an illegitimate application of the human being *qua* human being. This is because these kinds of applications, in a sense, are not the meaning of the human being. The meaning of a human being is to be a rational creature created in the image of God and functioning as a free moral agent. The difference between legitimate and illegitimate applications are identified in reference to the form that resides in the human being. Any application that destroys the form of the human being is an illegitimate application.

Similarly, the form of the text, which is the meaning of the text, is the determining factor in deciding whether a certain application, or significance is legitimate or appropriate. Any application or understanding of significance is legitimate as long as it does not destroy or distort the form of the text. If an interpreter were to break up the text and apply its parts in some way that destroys the form of the text, this is not a legitimate application of the meaning of this text. It may be a legitimate application of those words as words, but not of this text as *this text*. Likewise, an interpreter cannot take the historical information, as helpful as it is, and make this the meaning of the text. In fact, it is the meaning of the text that makes it possible to identify pertinent historical information. If the meaning of the text were not discernable before the historical investigation, it would be impossible to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant historical information. CT knew what it meant to be hot or cold. Consequently, they were able to discover historical circumstances that helped to illuminate the possible spiritual significance of Jesus' words to the Laodiceans.

Meaning and the Author

What applies to historical information applies to the purpose and intent of the author. Although it is helpful and illuminating to attempt to reconstruct what may have been an author's purpose in writing, these aspects cannot be the determining factor of the meaning of the text for the interpreter once the text is brought into existence by its author. Again we must employ distinctions. It is obvious that the author is the one who determines the meaning of his text. A parrot may utter sounds that humans identify as words and phrases. However, the parrot does not mean anything by these sounds, because the parrot is not a rational creature that employs linguistic expression to communicate meaning. Meaning is communicated by minds that mean. However, once a message is communicated, the meaning must be conveyed from the meaner to the hearer. The meaning is deposited in the text by the author. But the meaning, though it ever remains in the mind of the author, is *deposited in the text*. Consequently, for communication to take place, the meaning that is originally in the mind of the author must be carried to the mind of the hearer by means of the text that the author employs. From the point of view of the hearer, then, the meaning is in the text of the author, not in the mind of the author. The author's mind is always inaccessible to other minds apart from some communication by the author. But if one mind communicates to another by means of signs, then the meaning of the communication is in *what* is communicated, not in *who* communicated it. The author is the secondary efficient cause of meaning, but the text is the locus of that meaning.

Therefore, to propose going back into the mind of an author in an effort to discover the intent/purpose of the author is a confusion of causes and a misunderstanding of where meaning is found. First of all, the human author may be unavailable for comment. But what if he were available? How would he go about telling an interpreter what was his intent? Would he describe what was going on in his mind when he wrote his text? But in order to describe what was going on in his mind he would have to use words to do this. If the meaning of that text is also located in the author's mind we are faced with trying to find out what was his intent behind the words he employed to explain the intent of his first text. How would he explain what he meant by the words he used to explain his intent? Again he would have to employ words, and we are faced with the problem of trying to discover what was his intent behind those words, and the next set of words to explain the intent of the previous set, ad infinitum. By searching for some authorial intent behind the words which the author employs, and then using that to dictate what the text means, entails an infinite regress. All of this is avoided because the intent of the author is expressed in the meanings of the words and sentences which he employs. But if the intent of the author is in the text, then, for the interpreter, the locus of meaning is the text, not the author's mind.

Again it must be pointed out that biographical information about an author is pertinent and helpful in the interpretative process. Information about the author's life, his culture, his experiences provide helpful insight which may illuminate the meaning of his text. For example, it may be important to locate an author in a particular historical period in order to specify the linguistic usage of his language community as over against a later period of this same community in which linguistic usage may have changed. However, from the point of view of the interpreter, the meaning of a text is not located in these things once an author has created his text. The danger here is the tendency to give priority to what a given interpreter views as an accurate picture of the author's intent over the linguistic meaning of the text. Some authors have employed what they understand to have been Moses' intent in writing the creation account in Genesis to determine the meaning of the text. They claim that because Moses' intent in writing this account was to magnify the majesty of God, and that Moses did not intend to provide a scientific record, that Genesis is therefore not an accurate account of the beginning of the universe. Rather, it is a mythical story that accomplishes Moses' intent. In this case the supposed intent of the author is employed in such a manner as to distort what is the normal grammatical-historical signification of the text. The need for biographical research and the illumination it provides for a text should never be employed to overturn the

grammatical-historical signification a text.

Conclusion

The grounding of meaning in being provides an objective standard to which interpretations may be related. The analogous relationship between the form/matter constitution of things in reality and the form/matter constitution of a text provides a foundation upon which the determinate aspect of meaning can be based. It provides a means by which an interpreter can distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate applications and understandings of the significance of a text. It attempts to give priority to the text over extra-textual considerations. The Moderate Realist perspective does not eliminate historical research or attempt to separate an author from his text. Rather, the Moderate Realist perspective seeks to place these aspects in proper relation to the text, locating the meaning in the text and employing these necessary investigations as tools by which to better understand the meaning of the text. The distinction of causes of meaning and the different uses of intention help to clarify the issues and identify the problems in hermeneutic theory and practice. The Moderate Realist perspective endeavors to take hermeneutics out of the realm of the subjective Idealism, and place it in the realm of the objective reality.

11 CONCLUSION

In chapter 2 we set forth three general acknowledgments accompanied by an eight-fold argument. The three acknowledgments were as follows:

First, we acknowledge that there are conflicting interpretations of the Bible, and, as Christians, we want to know which interpretation is the correct one. But, many contemporary thinkers declare that there is no such thing as a "correct" interpretation because everyone comes to the text with his own preconditional framework. Because it is impossible, according to these thinkers, to jettison one's preconditional framework, this necessarily obviates the possibility of objectivity in interpretation.

Secondly, we acknowledge that Evangelical thinkers adamantly maintain that there is a "correct" interpretation of the Bible, or at least one that is more correct than its competitors, and that this interpretation is, at least theoretically, attainable. However, Evangelical thinkers, along with theorists who do not espouse any particular religious commitment, reject the notion of objectivity, or what some call "total objectivity," and likewise assert that everyone comes to the text with his or her own preconditional framework.

Thirdly, we acknowledge that if contemporary thinkers are correct in claiming that our preconditional frameworks are unavoidable, and that if they are correct that these preconditional frameworks obviate objectivity, then it does not seem possible for Evangelical thinkers to maintain the notion of a correct or more correct interpretation while holding to the unavoidability of preconditions, and rejecting objectivity. This is the principle concern of this book, namely, how is it possible to maintain the fact of the preconditional framework of every interpreter and at the same time maintain the possibility of objectivity in interpretation?

The eight-fold argument was as follows:

1. Everyone comes to the world with his own framework of understanding.
2. No particular framework of understanding is universally valid.
3. But, universal validity is precisely what is implied in the notion of objectivity.
4. Therefore, no interpreter can be objective in interpretation.
5. But, if no interpreter can be objective, then no interpretation is universally valid.

6. But, if no interpretation is universally valid, then the concept of a “correct” interpretation is at best relative or at worst empty.
7. Since there is no such thing as a correct interpretation, there is no means of adjudicating between interpretations.
8. In fact, the very idea of adjudicating between interpretations is at best relative and at worst empty.

Also in chapter 2 we proposed to address the question of objectivity along three lines: 1) to investigate the notion of objectivity in an effort to discover its nature; 2) to investigate the notion of the preconditions of interpretation in an effort to uncover the factors that compose one’s preconditions and to attempt to discover whether in fact preconditions are necessarily inimical to objectivity; and 3) to propose an alternative to the popular notions of objectivity and the preconditions of interpretation that will re-define the notion of preconditions in a way that will restore the possibility of objectivity in interpretation.

Restating the Problem of Objectivity

The First Acknowledgment: The Unavoidable Presuppositional Framework

It is now time to recap to see whether we have accomplished our goal. Our first line of investigation was concerning the notion of objectivity in an effort to discover its nature. By perusing the literature we discovered some aspects of objectivity that are generally believed. First, objectivity is associated with having a trans-historical perspective that is not mediated through world-view specific presuppositions or preunderstanding that constitute the framework of understanding. The notion of “total” objectivity implies a view from nowhere, that is, a view that is not peculiar to one perspective. Objectivity is usually associated with “scientific” neutrality in which data is observed apart form a theoretical framework. Although there were a number of proposals about how to reconstitute the notion of objectivity, for example in terms of inter-subjectivity or objectivity within a cultural framework, even these had significance only in terms of the possibility of replacing the more common notion of objectivity as neutrality.

The notion of an Archimedean point from which one can know was the general characterization of objectivity and was the primary notion on the basis of which objectivity was rejected. It is universally acknowledged that no one can approach the text as from a tabula rasa. Everyone possesses a framework of presuppositions and preunderstanding the constitutes the very possibility of understanding. This framework is universally perceived as being a product of one’s culture and language, upbringing, background, training, etc. Since no two

people are identical, it is argued that no two frameworks are identical, and therefore objectivity is eliminated.

The Second Acknowledgment: Evangelicals and Correct Interpretation

Our second line of investigation concerned the notion of the preconditional framework of interpretation in and effort to understand the nature of presuppositions. Our investigation discovered that all theorists, whether professing a commitment to Evangelical theology or not, whether theist or atheist, all theorists agree that all aspects of one's life, including his culture, language, educational background, personal experiences, and even his disposition come together to form the presuppositional framework, and that this presuppositional framework constitutes the very possibility of understanding. Since no one encounters the world with a blank mind, one's presuppositional framework is unavoidable. Presuppositions are of several types and function on several levels. If a truth claim rests on the truth value of a presupposition, the truth claim is necessarily false if its necessary presupposition(s) is false. If a necessary presupposition is true, this does not guarantee the truth of the truth claim that rests on it. Everyone acknowledges the fact and presence of this presuppositional framework, and that all interpretation is carried out by virtue of one's presuppositional framework.

Some theorists, especially Evangelicals, argued that even though there can be no presuppositionless interpretation, this did not obviate the possibility of correct interpretation since presuppositions are mutable and can be altered by the influence of the text. The interpreter should allow the text to interact with his presuppositional framework in order to alter those presuppositions that are not in concert with those of the text. This relationship serves to change the presuppositional framework of the interpreter to bring his framework into line with the presuppositional framework of the text.

The Third Acknowledgment: Evangelicals and the Possibility of Objectivity

In spite of the effort of some theorists to maintain the possibility of correct interpretation and the unavoidability of incommensurate presuppositional frameworks, we discovered that this approach is nonsensical since it proposes that the very presuppositional framework that produced the initial understanding of the text would yield an understanding that would serve to disqualify or alter the very presuppositions that produced this conclusion. Along the same lines, Harvey Siegel argued that to propose on the one hand that there is no

framework-neutral perspective, and then to argue that anomalies can force the alteration or rejection of the aspects of the very presuppositional framework that unavoidably produced these conclusions is contradictory.[793] The proposal by many Evangelical interpreters that one's interpretation of a text that necessarily and unavoidably takes place through one's presuppositional framework can yield interpretive conclusions that can alter or negate the very presuppositions that produced this interpretive conclusion is likewise contradictory. Consequently, it seems impossible to hold to the unavoidable presuppositional framework and at the same time to try to hold to some notion of objectivity. The unavoidable presuppositional framework of the interpreter seems necessarily to obviate the possibility of objectivity.

As a result, we proposed to present an alternative to the traditional notion of objectivity and the preconditions of interpretation that would re-define the notion of preconditions in a way that will restore the possibility of objectivity in interpretation. This proposal took the form of the rejection of the underlying assumption of representationalism in the traditional notion of objectivity, and to introduce the possibility of transcendental presuppositions that transcend all world views and all presuppositional frameworks to provide an objective foundation for interpretation. We will summarize this proposal by addressing each proposition in the eight-fold argument.

Resolving the Problem of Objectivity

How does Moderate Realism serve to resolve the problems of objectivity in interpretation? Let us go through the issues in general and apply the claims of Moderate Realism in each case.

1. **Presuppositions**: Moderate Realism is not a presuppositionless approach. It acknowledges the unavoidability of presuppositions and preunderstanding. However, Moderate Realism avoids the perspectivist or relativist problem by identifying the existence of self-evident, undeniable, first principles of thought and being that function as objective, transcendental presuppositions. These presuppositions are transcendental because they transcend every perspective and are the same for all people, at all times, in all cultures, and in all languages. Not only does Moderate Realism identify these first principles, such as but not confined to the laws of non-contradiction, excluded middle, and identity, but it also indicates how these function in knowledge and interpretation.

2. **Foundationalism**: Moderate Realism is a foundationalism. However, it avoids the criticisms leveled against the Cartesian foundationalism by denying

that subsequent truths or subsequent knowledge is somehow deduced from, inferred from, or in any way necessarily derived from the foundation principles. Moderate Realism readily acknowledges that there are many avenues through which the mind obtains knowledge. The relationship between subsequent knowledge and the foundations is a relation of reduction rather than deduction. A truth claim may be subject to analysis in terms of its relation to first principles. So, knowledge has a foundation in first principles, but is not necessarily arrived at through these foundational principles.

3. **Representationalism**: At the heart of the attack on objectivity is a universally held representationalist epistemology. Moderate Realism avoids this criticism by providing a philosophical explanation of how the mind is able to know the world directly. Consequently, Moderate Realism is not a form of representationalism. What is in the mind is the world by virtue of the very constitution of the world as form and matter. Since the mind is in direct contact with the world by virtue of the forms, the mind is able to hook-up to the world. There is, then, a transcendental signified or transcendental signifier. Consequently, meaning is grounded in reality and can be objective and determinate. Moderate Realism also substantiates a correspondence view of truth. The mind corresponds to reality in the knowing process by virtue of the presence of the forms of things in the mind. Any truth claim can be evaluated in terms of its correspondence because the truth claim and that about which the claim is made are both in the mind. The mind can not only know the world, but can know that it knows the world by virtue of the very constitution of the world and the mind.

4. **Historicism**: Moderate Realism does not deny the place of one's historical situation in the interpretive process. However, Moderate Realism avoids the relativism of historicism because the self-evident, undeniable, first principles are the same for all people at all times in all circumstances. The mind is able to transcend its own historical situation because truth transcends history, and truth is directly accessible to the mind.

5. **Linguistic Relativism**: Moderate Realism avoids linguistic relativism by its explanation of the nature of signs and meaning. Rather than holding that all signs are only instrumental and conventional, Moderate Realism argues that the forms in the mind of the knower provide the universal, determinate meaning because they connect up with reality by virtue of the Formal Sign. Consequently, even though there are differences in the way cultures use their languages, there are

some universal principles that apply across all language barriers. This accounts for the fact of translation. Every human being is encountering the same reality the same way. Moderate Realism explains how meaning is largely determined by the real world, but still allows for and accounts for variations from culture to culture.

6. **Theory-ladenness of Observation**: Moderate Realism accounts for the observed fact of scientific progress and success. It is able to do this precisely because of the constitution of the world and the mind. The scientist is able to observe the world directly, and the world is able to overcome and alter the prior theory of the scientist because of the universal, undeniable, first principles of thought and being. Moderate Realism accounts for the fact that the world often forces the scientist to yield to its nature in spite of the expectations of his theory.

7. **Objectivity**: Moderate Realism accounts for objectivity, but does not presume to guarantee objectivity in every instance. Objectivity is possible because of the direct connection that the mind has with world, and the fact that any truth claim may be subject to analysis in terms of first principles. Indeed, the denial of objectivity is self-defeating because it ultimately reduces to a violation of the law of non-contradiction. The possibility of objectivity assures the possibility of adjudicating between truth claims and even between perspectives and world views.

Let us now apply the resolution of these general problems to the specific eight-fold argument that was initially presented in chapter 2.

1. Everyone comes to the world with his own framework of understanding.

As we have pointed out, we do not deny the fact that everyone encounters the world from a presuppositional framework of understanding. In fact, we acknowledge that contemporary theorists have conclusively demonstrated that the presuppositional framework constitutes the very possibility of knowledge and understanding. However, we disagree that this framework is exclusively or even principally a rational construct that is the result of one's culture and language. The fact that there are transcendental presuppositions, such as the law of non-contradiction, the law of excluded middle, etc., demonstrate that there are presuppositions that are common to all humans as part of the nature of humanity. Two theses articulated by Mortimer J. Adler in *Truth and Religion* serve to make this point.

> 1. The human race is a single biological species, renewed generation after generation by the reproductive determinations of a single gene pool. Hence, man is one in nature—that is, in specific nature. All individual members of the species have the same species-specific

properties or characteristics.

2. The human race being one, the human mind is also one. The human mind is a species-specific property found in every individual member of the species, the same in all, being subject to variations in degree. This precludes the notion that there is, within the human species, a primitive mind that is characteristically different from a civilized one, or an Oriental mind that differs in kind from an Occidental one, or even a child mind that differs in kind, not just degree, from an adult mind.[794]

These two theses, along with a third, are propounded by Adler for the purpose of attempting to identify the necessary basis for a world community in the face of cultural diversity. That basis, as Adler articulates it, is the unity of truth.

> To affirm the unity of truth is to deny that there can be two separate and irreconcilable truths which, while contradicting of one another and thought to be irreconcilably so, avoid the principle of noncontradiction by claiming to belong to logic-tight compartments. Thus, for example, one approach to the conflicts between religion and philosophy, or between science and either philosophy or religion, is to claim that these are such separate spheres of thought or inquiry, employing such different methods or having such different means of access to the truth, that the principle of noncontradiction does not apply.[795]

The relevance of these theses and the definition of the unity of truth for interpretation is that the unity of truth not only applies cross-culturally in a synchronic sense, but also in a diachronic sense.

It is a fact of space-time history that the revelation of God was given in certain periods of history, in certain historical situations, and in a cultural context quite different from our own. However, the principles of the unity of man and the unity of truth demonstrate that there was not a “Hebrew” mind or a “Greek” mind or an “ancient” mind such that truth among those cultures at those periods of time were somehow different than truth today. On the contrary, truth is the same for all ages and among all peoples. The issues relating to men and God were the same issues with which we struggle today, because man is one race and one mind. The differences, then, between these ancient cultures and our modern culture is not the nature of man, or of truth, but are the social and cultural expressions of the same truths.

For someone to claim that there is no such thing as absolute truth is to assert that it is absolutely true that there is no absolute truth. All such relativistic assertions are self-defeating and false. Likewise, for someone to claim that there is no such thing as objectivity is to count on the objective meaning of this very claim, which is likewise self-defeating and false. Truth is unavoidable. Likewise, objectivity is unavoidable. Although everyone encounters the world from a presuppositional framework, the foundations of this framework are the same for

all people, at all times, in all cultures, regardless of language, background, training, world view, perspective, horizon, or what have you. Absolute truth is predicated on the objectivity of truth.

2. No particular framework of understanding is universally valid.

It is simply false to claim that no particular framework of understanding is universally valid. In fact, this very claim assumes its own universal validity. It is undeniably the case that there are aspects of every framework that are unavoidable, self-evident and true, and the same for all frameworks. The basic laws of logic and the undeniability of truth obtain for all frameworks everywhere at all times. Consequently, any framework that attempts to deny these foundational principles is self-defeating and false. Although there certainly are additional factors in any given presuppositional framework, it is self-defeating and false to claim that these are the only kinds of presuppositions that constitute a presuppositional framework, and that therefore no framework is universally valid.

3. But, universal validity is precisely what is implied in the notion of objectivity.

Not only is universal validity implied in the notion of objectivity, it is the very essence of objectivity. Every theorist who attempted to deny neutrality assumed that his own analysis was not simply the product of his own presuppositional framework, but made his claim as if it was a universally valid claim that there can be no universally valid claims. Every theorist who claimed that there could be no neutrality assumed that his own claim was neutral and not world-view specific. All such claims are self-defeating and false.

What we have dubbed Transcendental Presuppositions form the foundation, the Archimedean point upon which objectivity is based. But as we have argued, this foundation is not a deductivist foundation after the manner of representational Cartesianism. Rather, this is the Classical foundationalism of Moderate Realism that maintains the existence of self-evident, undeniable first principles of thought and being. It is worth restating that Moderate Realist/Classical foundationalism does not rest on the assumption that there are indubitable propositions beginning with which one can construct a world view. Rather, this position maintains that there is an undeniable and unavoidable reality on the basis of which certain undeniable first principles are based. Rather than proposing that one can construct a world view by a deductive process from these undeniable first principles, Classical foundationalism holds that these first principles are grounded in reality and all truth claims are reducible to first

principles, not deducible from first principles. These principles are discoverable because of the nature of reality and the fact that the mind is able to know the real world directly. Contrary to popular opinion, there is a transcendental signifier that connects the mind with the real world directly and enables the mind to know reality directly.

4. Therefore, no interpreter can be objective in interpretation.

In light of our investigation, this assertion has been demonstrated to be both self-defeating and false. For anyone to claim that no interpreter can be objective in interpretation assumes that the one making the claim has been objective in his interpretation of the hermeneutical data. In fact, the very fact that all theorists, from contrary and contradictory perspectives, after having investigated the same data, arrive at the same conclusion about the unavoidability of one's presuppositional framework is an example of the very objectivity that these same theorists deny. The illicit conclusion that one's presuppositional framework necessarily obviates objectivity derives from an almost universally held representationalist epistemology, an epistemological perspective that is both self-defeating and false. Regardless of the fact that interpreters do not always achieve the goal of objective interpretation, the fact is that objectivity in interpretation is possible.

5. But, if no interpreter can be objective, then no interpretation is universally valid.

Evangelicals cling to the possibility of a correct interpretation because intuitively we all know that there is absolute truth that is universally valid. Although the fact of conflicting interpretations is part of the history of interpretation, this does not indicate that objectivity is not possible. Not only is it the case that there are correct interpretations, but on the basis of this it is possible to adjudicate between interpretations. It follows from this fact that there are some interpretations that are universally valid. This fact is attested to by the very theorists who attempt to discredit the notion. Theorists who claim that no interpretation is universally valid are assuming that their own interpretation that no interpretation is universally valid is in fact universally valid. They assume the very universality they seek to deny. It is self-defeating and false to claim that no interpretation is universally valid.

6. But, if no interpretation is universally valid, then the concept of a "correct" interpretation is at best relative or at worst empty.

Since it is not true that there is no universally valid interpretation, then it

does not follow that there is no “correct” interpretation. The fact that any interpretation that contradicts the first principles of thought and being cannot either be valid or true indicates that any such interpretation cannot be correct. As in each of the above cases, theorists who claim that there is no correct interpretation assume that their own interpretation is the correct one, namely, that there cannot be a correct interpretation. This too is self-defeating and false.

7. Since there is no such thing as a correct interpretation, there is no means of adjudicating between interpretations.

Although there are a great number of principles that enter into the possibility of adjudicating between interpretations, including semantic factors, syntactic factors, historical background information, cultural considerations, etc., it is indeed possible to adjudicate between interpretations. For example, any interpretation that issues in a conclusion that contradicts the first principles of thought and being cannot be correct. Any interpretation that issues in a conclusion that does not contradict the first principles of thought and being may not therefore be the correct one, but it is preferable to the one that does engage in contradiction. Consequently, one can reject the contradictory conclusion and adopt, at least provisionally, the non-contradictory conclusion as superior. Other factors are important, and every conflict may not be resolvable at our present level of knowledge, but such instances are not counter-examples. Rather, such instances prove that adjudicating is not only possible, but necessary. Every theorist who sought to demonstrate that those who advocate objectivity are wrong was engaging in the very act of adjudication that they sought to deny. To claim that it is not possible to adjudicate between interpretations is itself an act of adjudicating between interpretations. This too is self-defeating and false.

8. In fact, the very idea of adjudicating between interpretations is at best relative and at worst empty.

Evangelicals are right in maintaining that it is possible to adjudicate between interpretations. It is not only possible, it is unavoidable. Every act of understanding is, in one way or another, an act of adjudicating between interpretations. We hold one thing to be true, and its contrary false. We accept one view and reject its opposite. We make claims that necessarily deny their contradictories. It is not necessary for Evangelicals to compromise on the notions of objectivity and truth in order to accept the undeniable fact that all understanding is mediated through one’s presuppositional framework. The fact of the existence of what we call Transcendental Presuppositions, the self-evident, undeniable first principles of thought and being constitute a foundation upon

which objectivity is based. We believe that the rejection of representationalism and adoption of a Moderate Realist epistemology that is grounded in the very nature of the reality that the God of the Christian Scriptures has created, and indeed upon the very nature of God Himself, insures the objectivity of truth and meaning.

ENDNOTES

1. Moisés Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation," in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. And Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 244.

2. James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 163-64 (emphasis in original).

3. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 93.

4. Nicholas Rescher, *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 1.

5. Lorraine Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective," *Social Studies of Science* 22 (November 1992): 597-98.

6. Ibid., 598.

7. Ibid.

8. Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 785.

9. Allan Megill, "Introduction: Four Senses of Objectivity," in *Rethinking Objectivity*, ed. Allan Megil (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), 1.

10. Ibid.

11. Paul Helm, "Why Be Objective?" in *Objective Knowledge: A Christian Perspective*, ed. Paul Helm (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 33-34.

12. Ibid., 33. In this comment can be seen the influence of modern science on the notion of interpretive objectivity. Helm is hinting at the interpretation of quantum mechanics popularly known as the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, which, according to Henry F. Schaefer, III, says "the position and velocity of a particle cannot be simultaneously measured to an unlimited precision." Henry F. Schaefer, III, *Science and Christianity: Conflict or Coherence?* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia, 2003), 112. The popular interpretation of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle is that it demonstrates that all observation necessarily intrudes upon what is observed so as effectively to obviate the possibility of objective knowledge.

13. Helm uses the term 'epistemic' in the sense of having to do with how we know. The terms 'epistemic' and 'epistemology' come from the Greek word *episte4me4* which means "understanding, skill, or knowledge." In philosophy, epistemology is the study of how we know. So, the term 'epistemic objectivity' indicates the notion of objective knowledge.

14. Ibid., 34.

15. Rescher, *Objectivity*, 7.

16. Ibid., 5.

17. Ibid.

18. Mary E. Hawkesworth, "From Objectivity to Objectification: Feminist Objections," in *Rethinking Objectivity*, ed. Allan Megill (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), 151-52.

19. Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 8.

20. J. G. Davies, "Subjectivity and Objectivity in Biblical Exegesis," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 66 (Autumn 1983): 49.

21. Gail Soffer, "Gadamer, Hermeneutics, and Objectivity in Interpretation," *Prexis International* 12 (October 1992): 231.

22. Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, Indiana: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 178.

23. David Weberman, "A New Defense of Gadamer's Hermeneutics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (January 2000) . See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960), 254, *Truth and Method*, 2d ed. trans Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marxhall (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 270.

24. Gadamer, *WH*, 260, *TM*, 276.

25. Ibid., *WH*, 343ff, *TM*, 341ff.

26. Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), 107.

27. Dale Spender, *Invisible Women: The Schooling Scandal* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1982), 2; quoted in Shirley Dex, "Objective Facts in Social Science," in *Objective Knowledge: A Christian Perspective* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 170-71.

28. Hawkesworth, "Objectivity to Objectification," 154.

29. W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 2d ed (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 187.

30. William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 8. Hereinafter referred to as KBH.

31. Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), 334.

32. Philip D. Kenneson, "There's No Such Thing as Objective Truth, and it's a Good Thing Too" in *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, eds. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Pres, 1995), 153-70.

33. Alice Ogden Bellis, "Objective Biblical Truth versus the Value of Various Viewpoints: A False Dichotomy," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 17 (June 1995): 25.

34. One author says, "It is impossible to be totally detached and completely objective in studying anything —science or theology. We all have assumptions about life and God which color our view of Scripture." David G. Moore, "Raising Some Concerns Over the 'Inductive Method' of Bible Study," *Reformation and Revival Journal* 9 (Fall, 2000): 69.

35. Moisés Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation," in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 244 (emphasis added).

36. Bellis, "Objective Biblical Truth," 29.

37. Duncan S. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), 6.

38. Ibid.

39. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991),367, 412.

40. Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1994), 13.

41. Moisés Silva, "The Case for Calvinistic Hermeneutics," in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 263.

42. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 70. Cotterell and Turner define "discourse meaning" as "the meaning of Paul's letter [for example] as it would be understood by a competent reader, fully aware of the linguistic conventions of Hellenistic Greek, after a careful hearing and reading of the entire letter and fully aware of the total situational context shared by Paul and the Corinthians." Ibid., 69.

43. James D. Smart, *The Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 45.

44. Ibid., 46.

45. James B. Reichmann, "Language and the Interpretation of Being in Gadamer and Aquinas," in *Hermeneutics and Tradition (Proceedings of the American Catholic Association, Vol. 62)*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Washington, D.C.: National Office of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1988), 226.

46. Webb B. Garrison, "The Necessity and Relativity of Biblical Interpretation," *Interpretation* 7 (October 1953): 437-38.

47. G. B. Madison, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), 168.

48. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 6.

49. Robert C. Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 33.

50. KBH, 115.

51. McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 14.

52. Of course, according to Wallace's own principles, this observation is a result of his own bias.

53. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 515, n5.

54. Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 16.

55. Robert Van Kampen, *The Sign* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1992).

56. Van Kampen, *Sign*, 24. (Unless otherwise noted, all emphases are original).

57. Ibid., 27.

58. Ibid.

59. Finis Jennings Dake, *The Dake Annotated Reference Bible* (Lawrenceville, GA: Dake Bible Sales, Inc., 1963).

60. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1988) , 235.

61. Dake, *God's Plan for Man*, Inside Back Cover.

62. Finis Jennings Dake, *God's Plan for Man* (Lawrenceville, Georgia: Dake Bible Sales, 1977), 3, 39. Hereinafter referred to as *GPM*. (Unless otherwise noted, all emphases are original).

63. Dake, *GPM*, 224.

64. Van Kampen, *Sign*, 290.

65. Ibid.

66. Dake, *GPM*, 840.

67. Van Kampen, *Sign*, 27 (Emphasis added).

68. Dake, *GPM*, 2-3.

69. Ibid., 43.

70. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 70. (emphasis in original).

71. Ibid.

72. William Lane Craig, "Cumulative Case Apologetics: Responses," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 183.

73. Also we will attempt consistently to employ a convention that is common in philosophy, namely, the effort to distinguish between use and mention. When mentioning a term, we will endeavor always to place it within single quotation marks. When using a term, it will appear unmarked, although terms may be emphasized by italics. So, we might talk about the term 'bodies,' or we might talk about actual bodies.

74. Andrei Marmor, "Three Concepts of Objectivity," in *Law and Interpretation: Essays in Legal Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 177.

75. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, (1989), s.v. "objective."

76. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, (1989), s.v. "objectivity."

77. Moisés Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation," 240.

78. R. W. Newell, *Objectivity, Empiricism and Truth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 16.

79. Ibid., 17.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. David Bell, "Objectivity," in *A Companion to Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 310.

83. Ibid.

84. Of course, it seems necessary that one would need to determine what the consensus is in itself as it really is.

85. Megill, “Introduction,” 1.

86. Ibid., 2.

87. Ibid.

88. Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

89. Ibid., 5.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Marmor, “Three Concepts,” 179.

93. Ibid., 182.

94. Ibid., 186.

95. Nicholas Rescher, *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 3-4 (emphasis in original).

96. Ibid., 4.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid., 4-5.

100. Ibid., 5.

101. Ibid., 6.

102. Ibid.

103. Roger Trigg, *Reality at Risk: A Defense of Realism in Philosophy and the Sciences* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 1980), 1.

104. Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 7.

105. Ibid.

106. Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 4.

107. Heracleitus, *The Fragments of Heracleitus* (np.: Hampstead, 1965), Fr. 117.

108. Donald M. Mackay, “Objectivity in Science,” in *Objective Knowledge: A Christian Perspective*, ed. Paul Helm (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 43.

109. J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 11.

110. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

111. Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering Our Past* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 187.

112. Alex Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), 83.

113. Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, trans. and ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), I, CXXX. "*Etenim in ea opinione sumus: si justam Naturae et Experientiae Historiam praesto haberent homines, atque in ea sedulo versarentur, sibique duas res imperare possent: unam, ut receptas opiniones et notiones dopenerent; alteram, ut mentem a generalissimis et proximis ab illis ad tempus cohiberent*." Latin text taken from Francis Bacon, *Bacon's Novum Organum*, ed. Thomas Fowler, 2d ed. (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1889), I, CXXX.

114. Bacon, *The New Organon*, I, CXV. "*Quum enim in hoc primo Aphorismorum libro illud nobis propositum sit, ut tam ad intelligendum quam ad recipiendum ea quae sequuntur mentes hominum praeparentur*" and "*expurgata jam et abrasa et aequata mentis area;*" Bacon, *Novum Organum*, I, CXV.

115. Del Ratzsch, *Philosophy of Science: The Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986.), 22.

116. Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1967), 1.

117. Ibid., 2.

118. MacKay, "Objectivity in Science," 43.

119. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, "The Image of Objectivity," in *Representations* 40 (Fall 1992): 81.

120. Helene E. Longino, "Values and Objectivity," in *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues*, eds. Martin Curd and J. A. Cover (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), 171.

121. Ibid., 170-71.

122. George Levine, "Why Science Isn't Literature," in *Rethinking Objectivity*, ed. Allan Megill (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), 68. The other summaries are, (2) by its rigorous requirements of verification, by replication of results; (3) by the universal validity of its conclusions; (4) by its capacity to represent adequately a nonverbal and nonsymbolic reality. Unlike literature, its results are (5) progressive, the cumulative acquisition of new knowledge of the real world by means of observation and experiment, developing (6) to the generalized level of natural laws."

123. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34, 37.

124. Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science*, 15.

125. Levine, "Why Science Isn't Literature," 68.

126. David Stove, *Scientific Irrationalism: Origins of a Postmodern Cult* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 21.

127. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science*, 235.

128. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 34.

129. Shelby D. Hunt, "A Realist Theory of Empirical Testing: Resolving the Theory-Ladenness/Objectivity Debate," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 24/2 (June 1994): 133.

130. Frederick Suppe, “Introduction,” in *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, ed. Frederick Suppe, 2d ed. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 30.

131. Keith Windschuttle, “Forward,” in *Scientific Irrationalism: Origins of a Postmodern Cult*, David Stove (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 2.

132. Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science*, 141.

133. Ratzsch, *Philosophy of Science*, 22-23.

134. Antony Flew, “theory-laden,” in *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), 352.

135. Martin Curd and J. A. Cover, *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company,1998), 1309.

136. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 206.

137. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 3d ed. (London: Verso, 1996), 149.

138. Harold I. Brown, *Perception, Theory, and Commitment* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1977), 101; quoted in Harvey Siegel, *Relativism Refuted: A Critique of Contemporary Epistemological Relativism* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987), 99.

139. Paul Feyerabend, “Problems of Empiricism,” in *Beyond the Edge of Certainty*, ed. R. Colodny (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), 180; quoted in Frederick Suppe, ed. *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, 2d ed. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 173.

140. Appleby, *Telling the Truth about History*, 190.

141. Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity*, 2-3.

142. W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1951), 94.

143. Mark Bevir, “Objectivity in History,” *History and Theory* 33 (1994): 328.

144. Keith Jenkins, “Introduction: On Being Open About Our Closures,” in *The Postmodern History Reader*, ed. Keith Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1997), 6.

145. Gilbert J. Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method*, ed. Jean Delanglez (New York: Fordham University Press, 1946), 47.

146. J. J. Jusserand, “The Historian’s Work,” in *The Writing of History*, J. J. Jusserand, Wilbur Cortez Abbott, Charles W. Colby, and John Spencer Bassett (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1926), 22. This quote was taken from Fénelon’s *Lettre sur les occupations de l'Académie Française* first published in 1716 shortly after Fénelon’s death in 1715. In his day, Fénelon was one of the most revered scholars of the Roman Catholic Church.

147. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 1-2.

148. Garraghan, *Guide to Historical Method*, 47.

149. Michael Stanford, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 51.

150. Garraghan, *Guide to Historical Method*, 9.

151. Ibid., 47.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Ronald H. Nash, ed., *Ideas of History*, vol. 1, *Speculative Approaches to History* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1969), 6.

155. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 11.

156. Bevir, "Objectivity in History," 330.

157. Ibid., 330-31.

158. William H. Dray, *Philosophy of History*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), 35.

159. Stanford, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 4-5.

160. A distinction must be made here between the term "historicism" as it is being used in this discussion and the literary-critical approach known as the New Historicism. According to Gina Hens-Piazza, the New Historicism "arose as a literary-critical movement at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1980's . . ." It is not a method, per se, but rather, "trains its view upon the processes of production and consumption of texts." Gina Hens-Piazza, *The New Historicism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 5-6. Historicism, in the sense discussed here, is primarily an epistemological question of the relationship between one who seeks to know the past and his own historical situatedness.

161. Jean Grondin, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), 11.

162. Ibid., 76-77.

163. Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 9.

164. Paul Kecskemeti, "Introduction," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, by Karl Mannheim, trans. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 6.

165. Grondin, 77.

166. Thomas Haskell, *Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Explanatory Schemes in History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3.

167. Ibid., 10.

168. John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1.1.

169. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (W. W. Norton and Company, 1994), 170.

170. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science*, 143.

171. R. Lanier Anderson, "Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism," *Synthese* 115 (1998): 14.

172. Jonathan Culler, *Ferdinand de Saussure* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 16.

173. John B. Carroll, *Language and Thought* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 106.

174. George Yule, *The Study of Language: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 196.

175. Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf,* ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1962), 213.

176. Ibid., 214.

177. Yule, *The Study of Language*, 198 (emphasis in original).

178. Franz Boas, *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office (Smithsonian Institution), 71; quoted in Peter Caws, *Structuralism: A Philosophy for the Human Sciences* (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 46.

179. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959), 65-70: *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, publié par Charles Bally et Albert Sechehaye, 5th ed. (Paris: Payot, 1955), 97-103.

180. Saussure, *Course*, 65.

181. Ibid., 66.

182. Ibid., 112. There are a sufficient number of occasions in which the words “idea” (*idées*) and “concept” (*concept*) are used interchangeably to understand them as synonymous in Saussure’s thought.

183. Ibid., 113.

184. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2.

185. G. B. Madison, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), 86. Madison goes on to refer to “reality in the deepest sense,” which he calls “being,” which he says is not determinate, “has no essence,” nor is the product of language. Our focus here, however, is with the ordinary sense of reality, the extra-linguistic or extra-mental stuff of the world which, at least in traditional terms, has provided the touchstone, so to speak, of objectivity of meaning.

186. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism*, 8-9.

187. In *Phaedo* Socrates argues that a knowledge of the Forms is possible only upon the suggestion of sense experience. When we perceive things that appear to be equal, upon further examination we discover that they in fact are not truly equal. But, we have this notion of absolute equality by which we discern that certain visible things either are or are not equal. If, then, we have this Idea of absolute equality, which is not discovered from unequal things, but is suggested by the appearance of equality, it seems to follow that the Idea of absolute equality is in our minds prior to our having judged anything to be equal or unequal. The sense experience had not provided the knowledge of equality, but suggested its existence. But, if we did not obtain this knowledge of the Idea of absolute equality from the sense experience, then it must have been knowledge that we, in some sense, already possessed. How then are we able to judge that any two visible things are not in fact absolutely equal? “We must have possessed knowledge of the Equal itself if we were about to refer our sense perceptions of equal objects to it, and realized that all of them were eager to be like it, but were inferior” (Plato, *Phaedo*, 75b).

Since we began to perceive immediately after birth, we must have gained the knowledge of the Equal prior to birth. At birth we lost this knowledge, but upon the occasion of sense perception we recover this knowledge, “and we are right to call this recollection” (*Phaedo*, 75e). So then, there is no reason to propose

a prior existence of the soul if sense experience can explain the Idea. But if sense experience cannot account for the Idea, then the preexistence of the soul is required, at least as far at Plato was concerned (Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Platonis Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Tomus I.)

188. Peter A. Redpath, *A Simplified Introduction to the Wisdom of St. Thomas* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1980), 20.

189. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I,1. *Aristotelis Opera Omnia* (Paris: Instituti Francici, 1927), Volumen Primum.

190. Jan Pinborg, "Speculative Grammar," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, eds. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 265.

191. Richard Garner, "'Presupposition' in Philosophy and Linguistics," in *Studies in Linguistic Semantics*, eds. Charles J. Fillmore and D. Terence Langendoen (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1983), 27. P. F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory* (London: Methuen and Company, 1977), first published in 1952. Strawson, whose position is discussed below, was popular for articulating a view that was contradictory to that espoused earlier by Bertrand Russell in his article "On Denoting," *Mind* 14 (1905): 479-93.

192. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 45. Rudolf Bultmann, "Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich?" *Theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1957): 409-17.

193. Henry, "Postmodernism," 42.

194. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 1, 13.

195. Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism*, 62.

196. Henry, "Postmodernism," 42.

197. Tom Rockmore, "Epistemology as Hermeneutics: Antifoundationalist Relativism," *The Monist* 73 (April 1990): 123.

198. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 17.

199. Ibid., 8.

200. T. L. Heath, ed., *The Works of Archimedes with the Method of Archimedes*, (New York Dover Publications, 1953), xix.

201. William P. Alston, "Foundationalism," in *A Companion to Epistemology*, eds. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 146.

202. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 29-30.

203. Alvin Plantinga, "Rationality and Religious Belief," in *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 259.

204. Ibid., 260 (emphasis in original).

205. Ibid. (emphasis in original).

206. Alston, "Foundationalism," 147.

207. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 46.

208. Alston, “Foundationalism,” 145.

209. Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 81 (emphasis in original).

210. Ibid., 83. There is no hint in Nash that there may be other kinds of necessity, such as metaphysical necessity, that may indicate the indubitable character of foundational propositions.

211. Ibid.

212. Ibid.

213. Robert Cummins, “Representation,” in *A Companion to Epistemology*, eds. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 442.

214. Ibid., 442-43 (emphasis in original).

215. Rorty, *Mirror of Nature*, 3.

216. Ibid.

217. Ibid.

218. Ibid., 3-4.

219. Ibid., 4.

220. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), B1.

221. Rorty, *Mirror of Nature*, 7.

222. Rorty, *Philosophical Papers*, 1.

223. Davidson, “The Myth of the Subjective,” 159.

224. Ibid., 162.

225. Ibid., 162-63.

226. Ibid., 163.

227. Rorty, *Mirror of Nature*, 182.

228. Ibid., 163.

229. Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality*, 169.

230. Ibid., 146 (emphasis in original).

231. Ibid., 176 (emphasis in original).

232. Alan H. Goldman, “Given, The,” in *A Companion to Epistemology*, eds. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 162.

233. Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality*, 169.

234. Rorty, *Mirror of Nature*, 139-40.

235. Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality*, 132.

236. Rorty, *Mirror of Nature*, 315.

237. Ibid., 316.

238. Ibid., 318.

239. Ibid.

240. Ibid., 318-19.

241. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider all of the problems of defining knowledge as justified, true belief, the most obvious problem is how to justify those original bits of knowledge by which one would justify other knowledge. Gettier has offered the classic critique of this characterization. See Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121-23.

242. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 46 (emphasis in original). A term that suggests itself, and one that is perhaps more familiar, is "world view." Although Thiselton's account of horizons seems to include various psychological dispositions and specific educational factors, such as background and training, the term "world view" is functional so long as it is not restricted to theoretical constructs and is understood to indicate a basic distinction between the narrowness and foundational notion of presuppositions and the broad and inclusive notion of preunderstanding.

243. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 90.

244. Once again the term "world view" suggests itself so long as the term is not restricted to theoretical constructs, but includes life experiences, background, training, etc.

245. Yule, *The Study of Language*, 100.

246. The fact that people differ in their definitions of "old" does not mean that the car is both old and not old. It means that communication is confusing when commonly agreed upon definitions are not used. The car is either old or not old when the term "old" is clearly defined and commonly understood. Equivocation does not invalidate the law of excluded middle. Equivocation simply posits two (or more) separate propositions or instances of identity claims. The two claims may appear as if they were contradictory but may not be if the two instances are not in conflict when properly understood. When someone says truthfully that the car is both old and not old, they are using different meanings for the term "old" and are thus saying two things about the car, not one thing. Language is not exclusively univocal in terms of vocabulary meanings, and thus careful analysis is often called for in interpretation. If there were no way to do this analysis, however, interpretation would be impossible. Resolving seeming conflicts in a text is one aspect of interpretation. Failure to resolve such conflicts leads to increased chances of error or falsehood.

247. Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, trans. Jean T. Oesterle (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962), introduced the study of logic as a necessary aspect of communication. Philosophers in the Middle Ages were often embroiled in debates about logic and semantics. See, Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). The 20th century Logical Positivist and Analytic Philosophy movements continue to attest to the importance of the place of logic in communication. See, A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), and A. J. Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism* (New York: The Free Press, 1959). Additionally, a standard text on logic, as Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, or Francis H. Parker and Henry B. Veatch, *Logic as a Human Instrument*, discuss these principles.

248. This position can be maintained even within the strictures of relativism. Relativism asserts that there is no absolute truth or universally, but only truth "for me." But, if a relativist makes an assertion that contradicts that which is true for him, then the assertion is necessarily false for him. Though the relativist

may not subscribe to the law of contradiction in any universal sense, it would seem to be necessary for the relativist to subscribe to this law within his own sphere of beliefs and truths. Even a relativist should not want to contradict his own beliefs and the truth that is true for him. If the relativist ignores the law of contradiction within his own belief system, then even that which he claims to be true for him cannot be true for him.

249. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, in *Bibliotheca Buddhica: XXVI* (Leningrad: ЛЕНИНГРАД, 1932), 125.

250. The term "unintelligible" here is analogical in the sense that, although the individual claims can be understood on some level, their contradictory nature makes the overall meaning of the text opaque. What is being meant by the equal assertion of contradictory claims? Is the author engaging in sarcasm? Without some unambiguous explanation by the author, the meaning of the text remains beyond the understanding of the reader, and all suppositions about what it may be are simply that—suppositions.

251. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 481. "Gegen den Positivismus, welcher bei den Phänomenen stehnbleibt 'es gibt nur Tatsachen,' würde ich sagen: nein, gerade Tat sachen gibt es nicht, nur Interpretationen." Notwithstanding the controversy over Nietzsche's "perspectivism," the notion that Nietzsche advocated that, as Robert C. Solomon puts it, "There is no perspective-free, global viewpoint, no 'God's eye' view, only this or that particular perspective," is the popular understanding of this famous quote. Robert C. Solomon, "Nietzsche Ad Hominem: Perspectivism, Personality, and Ressentiment Revisited," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 195.

252. By the term "non-evangelical" we are not supposing that these individuals or sources are not Christian. Rather, this is simply a shorthand way of referring to sources that do not espouse a commitment to an Evangelical, Christian perspective. Likewise, these sources do not necessarily deny such a commitment. Rather, in most instances the possibility of such a commitment is simply not expressed.

253. *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1977), s.v. "Presuppose."

254. *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1977), s.v. "Suppose."

255. Here we are not using the term *ens rationis* in a technical, metaphysical sense. Joseph Owens defines "being of reason" as "something [that] may exist in thought but is incapable of existing as such in the real order . . ." Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Houston, Texas: University of St. Thomas, 1963), 39. Here we use this term to refer to a mental entity. We want to avoid the implication that this "entity" has any determinate form, or content, or nature. We use this term in a generic sense simply to identify a presupposition as something that exists in the mind, though this "something" has been identified in a multitude of ways.

256. Ted Peters, "The Nature and Role of Presupposition: An Inquiry into Contemporary Hermeneutics," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (June, 1974): 210.

257. Avrum Stroll, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2nd ed.) s.v. "Presupposing."

258. Ibid.

259. Ibid.

260. Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (1984), s.v. "Presupposition."

261. Robert Stalnaker, "Presuppositions," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 2 (1973): 447.

262. Ibid, 450.

263. Paul Larreya, “Presuppositions and Grammar,” *Linguistics* 167 (January 23, 1976): 46 (emphasis in original).

264. Ibid. Larreya is referring to the positions of Halliday and Jackendoff’s that are discussed in an article by George Lakoff, “On Generative Semantics,” *Semantics: An Interdisciplinary Reader in Philosophy, Linguistics, and Psychology*, eds. Danny D. Steinberg and Leon A. Jakobovits (Cambridge: The University Press, 1971), 261, *passim*.

265. Ibid.

266. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 45.

267. Rudolf Bultmann, “Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich?” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1957): 414.

268. Ibid., 409.

269. Ibid., 410.

270. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 45f. Compare also Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 205-92.

271. John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2.604.

272. Ibid.

273. Ibid., 2.605.

274. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 404.

275. Ibid.

276. Ibid., 412.

277. Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 19.

278. Ibid.

279. Ibid., 22.

280. Vern S. Poythress, *Science and Hermeneutics*, vol. 6, *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 121-22.

281. Ibid., 122.

282. Ibid.

283. Ibid.

284. Ibid.

285. Ibid.

286. Moisés Silva, “The Case for Calvinistic Hermeneutics,” in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, eds. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 263.

287. Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible?* 7.

288. V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, vol. 5, *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed.

Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 172.

289. Ibid.

290. Ibid., 120.

291. Millard J. Erickson, "Presuppositions of Non-Evangelical Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, eds. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 594.

292. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 45.

293. Ibid.

294. Ibid., 45.

295. Ibid., 605-6.

296. Peters, "Nature and Role of Presupposition," 210.

297. Ibid.

298. Ibid., 211.

299. Lyons, *Semantics*, 2.604.

300. Ibid., 2.733.

301. Ibid., 2.734.

302. Ibid.

303. Ibid., 2.605.

304. Ibid.

305. Jonathan Culler, "Presuppositions and Intertextuality," *MLN* 91 (December 1976): 1389.

306. Ibid.

307. Ibid., 1393.

308. Ibid.

309. Edward L. Keenan, "Two Kinds of Presuppositions in Natural Language," in *Studies in Linguistic Semantics*, eds. Charles J. Fillmore and D. Terence Langendoen (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1983), 45.

310. Ibid., 45-46.

311. Ibid., 49.

312. Larreya, 35.

313. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 9.

314. Gadamer, *WM*, 254; *TM*, 269.

315. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 412.

316. Erickson, "Presuppositions," 594.

317. Poythress, *Science and Hermeneutics*, 164.

318. Raymond F. Surburg, “The Presuppositions of the Historical-Grammatical Method as Employed by Historic Lutheranism,” *The Springfielder* 38 (March 1975): 280-87.

319. David E. Cooper, *Presupposition* (Paris: Moultin, 1974), 12.

320. This even in ancient Greece occurred at 9:00 A.M., May 15, 578 B.C. and is often identified as the moment of the birth of Western philosophical thought.

321. John Frederic Post, “An Analysis of Presupposing,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 6 (Fall, 1968): 167-68.

322. Ibid., 168.

323. Stalnaker, “Presuppositions,” 447.

324. P. F. Strawson, “On Referring,” *Mind* 59 (1950), 320-44.

325. Strawson, *Logical Theory*, 175-76.

326. Stalnaker, “Presuppositions,” 447.

327. Russell, “On Denoting,” 490.

328. Ibid.

329. Strawson, *Logical Theory*, 176.

330. Lyons, *Semantics*, 2.597.

331. Stalnaker, “Presuppositions,” 447.

332. Ibid., 448.

333. Ibid., 451.

334. Ibid., 447.

335. Cooper, *Presupposition*, 24.

336. Ibid., 24-25.

337. Ibid., 29. These paradigms are on page 15 of Cooper’s book. They include four “salient features of presuppositions” which emerge from his introductory considerations. They are, “I. If S presupposes S' then it is ‘odd’ or ‘inappropriate’ to assert S unless one believes S' to be true. ii. If S presupposes S' then the negation of S does not constitute the negation of S', and S? does not constitute a query about S'. In other words presuppositions remain constant under negation and questioning. iii. Presuppositions of sentences relate to the syntactic behaviour of sentences in distinctive ways. iv. If S presupposes S' then S lacks truth value where S' is false.”

338. Ibid., 32. The TVG test is the Truth Value Gap test. Cooper describes the TVG test as follows: “let us say that a pair of sentences, S and S', pass the TVG test if and only if S lacks truth value unless S' is true.” (Ibid.). This is a summary of the view that was asserted against Russell’s position as previously discussed.

339. Ibid., 36.

340. Ibid.

341. Ibid., 45.

342. Ibid.

343. Ibid., 58.

344. Ibid., 58-59.

345. Ibid., 75.

346. Ibid., 119.

347. Ibid., 90.

348. Ibid., 119.

349. Ibid., 9-10.

350. Ibid., 10.

351. Russell, "On Denoting," 490.

352. Irving M. Copi provides the following definitions: "Two propositions are *contradictories* if one is the denial or negation of the other, that is, if they cannot both be true *and* they cannot both be false. . . Two propositions are said to be *contraries* if they cannot both be true, that is, if the truth of either one entails that the other is false." Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 6th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982), 185-86 (emphasis in original).

353. "False" is the normal grammatical-historical meaning of the term "bogus." Either Cooper believes Russell is wrong, or he does not. If Cooper is using the term "bogus" in order to capitalize on its ambiguity, then this may betray Cooper's existential anxiety. Either he means to say it is false, in which case he is betraying his own principles, or he does not mean to say it is false, in which case he seems to be betraying his intuition, which is evidenced in his assertion that Russell's analysis "seems mistaken," which could be the source of his existential anxiety.

354. Poythress, *Science and Hermeneutics*, 122.

355. Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible, 6.*

356. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 35.

357. Roger Lundin, "Our Hermeneutical Inheritance," in *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics*, Roger Lundin, Anthony C. Thiselton, and Clarence Walhout (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 4.

358. Ibid., 6.

359. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 182.

360. David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 20.

361. Susan E. Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 10-11.

362. Rudolph Butlmann, "Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich?" *Theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1957): 409-17, published in English, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Encounter* 21 (Spring, 1960): 194-200.

363. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1972), 152. (Unless otherwise indicated all translations of *Sein und Zeit* are made by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson.)

364. KBH, 87.

365. Ibid., 114.

366. John Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 18.

367. Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics*, 19.

368. Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible?* 6.

369. Ibid., 6-7.

370. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 412.

371. McCartney and Clayton, *Let The Reader Understand*, 13.

372. A. Immer, *Hermeneutics of the New Testament*, trans. Albert H. Newman (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1877), 7.

373. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 595 (page citations are to the reprint edition) (emphasis in original).

374. Bultmann, "Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich?," 409.

375. Ibid., 410, "Von der Frage der Voraussetzungslosigkeit im Sinne der Vorurteilslosigkeit ist die Frage der Voraussetzungslosigkeit in jenem anderen Sinn zu unterscheiden, und in diesem Sinne ist zu sagen: *voraussetzungslose Exegese kann es nicht geben*. Daß es sie faktisch deshalb nicht gibt, weil jeder Exeget durch seine Individualität im Sinne seiner speziellen Neigungen und Gewohnheiten, seiner Gaben und seiner Schwächen bestimmt ist . . ." (translation by Schubert M. Ogden).

376. Ibid., ". . . soll er gerade ausschalten und sich zu einem rein sachlich interessierten Hören erziehen." (translation by Schubert M. Ogden).

377. Ibid., 413.

378. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 44.

379. Ibid., 45.

380. Ibid.

381. Ibid., 46.

382. Lundin, "Hermeneutics,"162.

383. Ibid.

384. KBH, 87, claim that "anyone who says that he or she has discarded all presuppositions and will only study the text objectively and inductively is either deceived or naive" See also, Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 104, who argues, "The so-called 'empty head' principle whereby the investigator divests himself of all preconceived notions and opinions while approaching the subject to be studied in complete neutrality, is simply illusory." Moreover, Luiz Gustoavo da Silva Goncalves, "The Deconstructing of the American Mind: An Analysis of the Hermeneutical Implications of Postmodernism," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics: Selected Essays from the 1994 Evangelical Theological Society Convention*, eds. Michael Bauman and David Hall (Camp Hill,

Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1995), 246, states, “Neutral exegesis does not exist,” and Moisés Silva makes a similar claim when he asserts that “total objectivity on the part of the interpreter . . . does not exist.” Silva, “Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation,” 244.

385. Ibid, 233-34.

386. KBH, 8.

387. McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 14.

388. Ibid., 115.

389. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 182-83.

390. Peters, “The Nature and Role of Presupposition,” 210.

391. Ibid.

392. Ibid., 211.

393. McCartney and Clayton, *Let The Reader Understand*, 13.

394. McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying*, 19.

395. Poythress, *Science and Hermeneutics*, 121-22.

396. Ibid., 122.

397. Ibid., 164.

398. Ibid., 122.

399. Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, 120.

400. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 46.

401. Peters, “The Nature and Role of Presupposition,” 210.

402. Ibid., 233-34.

403. Silva, “Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation,” 242.

404. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 9.

405. Gadamer, *WM*, 254; *TM*, 270.

406. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 127-28.

407. Ibid., 128.

408. Ibid.

409. Peters, “Nature and Role of Presuppositions,” 212.

410. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, 195-96.

411. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 87.

412. Ibid.

413. Brice R. Wachterhauser, “Introduction: History and Language in Understanding,” in *Hermeneutics and*

Modern Philosophy, ed. Brice R. Wachterhauser (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), 23.

414. Peters, "Nature and Role of Presuppositions," 212.

415. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 120-21.

416. Ibid., 121.

417. Heidegger, *SZ*, 152.

418. David Couzens Hoy, "Heidegger and the Hermeneutic Turn," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 172.

419. Heidegger, *SZ*, 153.

420. Ibid.

421. Ibid., "*sondern in ihn nach der rechten Weise hineinzukommen*."

422. Ibid., "*den Sachen selbst*."

423. Gail Soffer, "Gadamer, Hermeneutics, and Objectivity in Interpretation," *Praxis International* 12 (Oct. 1, 1992): 234.

424. Gadamer, *WM*, 251-52; *TM*, 267.

425. Peters, "Nature and Role of Presuppositions," 213-14.

426. KBH, 113-14.

427. Ibid., 114.

428. Ibid.

429. Larkin, *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics*, 302.

430. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 324.

431. McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 17-18.

432. KBH, 114.

433. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 486. Wie sollte das Werkzeug sich selbst kritisieren konnen, wenn es eben nur sich zur Kritik gebrauchen kann? *Der Wille zur Macht* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Berlag, 1930), 212.

434. It is highly probable that evangelical theorists would gladly affirm the intervention of God to change the interpreter's mind, but they do not explicitly include this as a formal aspect of their methodology as it touches on the role of preunderstanding and presuppositions in interpretation.

435. KBH, 115.

436. Ibid.

437. Ibid.

438. Ibid., 109.

439. Ibid., 115.

440. Larkin, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 299.

441. Ibid., 18.

442. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 412.

443. McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 17.

444. Ibid.

445. Ibid.

446. Ibid. (emphasis in original).

447. Peters, "The Nature and Role of Presupposition," 214.

448. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 70.

449. Ibid.

450. Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation," 244.

451. Ibid., 241.

452. Ibid.

453. Ibid. (emphasis in original).

454. Ibid., 242 (emphasis in original).

455. Marilyn Gaye Piety, "Kierkegaard on Rationality," in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology of Contemporary Views*, ed. Melville Y. Stewart (Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1996), 49.

456. It must be pointed out that we have surveyed some Evangelicals who espouse the notion of and possibility of objectivity in interpretation. However, even in these instances their discussions of the nature of interpretation, preunderstanding, presuppositions, and other relevant topics tend to undermine their own attempts to hold on to the possibility of objectivity. Indeed, this is the very import of our Third consideration, namely, How can Evangelicals subscribe to the currently popular notion of presuppositions and preunderstanding and at the same time hold on to the possibility of objectivity? Adapting an observation from Gilson, "The whole question here is whether it is possible to overcome [anti-objectivity] 'starting from its own principles.' To this we must answer: no, for [anti-objectivity] is inscribed within the principles from which it flows, which is precisely why they are its principles." If one starts with the anti-objectivity principles that are currently espoused, then one will necessarily fall prey to the very anti-objectivity one was attempting to avoid. Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 130-31.

457. Moisés Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation," 240.

458. The notion of a correspondence view of truth need not be predicated on a representationalist epistemology. Rather, a correspondence view of truth can be predicated on the basis of a moderate realist metaphysic such that what is in the mind is not a "representation" of the thing in reality, but is *that very thing*. Therefore, the correspondence between the mind and extra-mental reality is possible because that which is in the mind corresponds to that which is in reality by virtue of their being one form. The moderate realist definition of knowledge is not justified, true belief. Rather, the moderate realist definition of knowledge is when the knower and the known become one.

459. Of course this observation is self-defeating. If it is true that observers never see things as they are in themselves, then it must be the case that anyone who makes such a claim has never seen things as they are in themselves. But, if the claimant has never seen things as they are in themselves, then he doesn't know how they look. But, if he doesn't know how they look, then on what basis does he claim that the way the observer sees them is unlike how they are in themselves? No observer has the grounds for making such a claim since no one has ever seen anything as it is in itself. Additionally, since no one can see things as they are in themselves, how can any observer know how any other observer sees things? In order to make such a claim, one observer would have to be able to see in itself what another observer sees. But, by this definition, that would be impossible, since no observer has ever seen anything as it is in itself, not even what another observer sees.

460. Once again this is a self-defeating statement. If no observer has ever seen anything as it is in itself, then on what basis can it be claimed that sensation is confronted by a chaotic stream of data? If sensation molds this stream of data into an intelligible order, then how can the observer know that the stream was chaotic prior to his mind ordering it? This would imply that the observer has observed something as it is in itself, namely, a chaotic stream of data. But, according to this position, such an act of perception cannot be performed. Consequently, the observer cannot know that the world is a chaotic stream of data.

461. Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation," 241.

462. Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism*, 130-31. Although Gilson is critiquing the critical realism of Fr. J. Maréchal, the basic question is the same with reference to a Kantian starting point in objectivity.

463. David Bell, "Objectivity," in *A Companion to Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 310.

464. Megill, "Introduction," 1.

465. Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

466. Ibid., 5.

467. Megill, "Introduction," 2.

468. Nagel, *View from Nowhere*, 68.

469. See chapter 3 for our introduction to Representationalism and its critics.

470. Nagel, *View from Nowhere, 7*

471. Ibid.

472. Ibid.

473. Megill, "Introduction," 2.

474. Nagel, *View from Nowhere*, 65.

475. Megill, "Introduction," 2.

476. The principle of second intention accounts for the existence of the viewer. Once I include myself in the picture of viewing, any subsequent pictures of my viewing myself viewing are not distinct from the initial picture, since objectively viewing is the same second intentional act simply being repeated. The act of knowing is not like the act of painting. The painter can never include all of reality in his painting since he is always painting a picture that does not include himself painting that picture. Knowing, on the other hand, can and does in every epistemological event include the knowledge that he or she is the knower knowing.

477. As Joseph Owens explains, “In subsequent Scholastic tradition, ‘first intentions’ became a technical phrase for direct look at whatever could be seen in things in their real existence. ‘Second intention,’ as though by way of a second look at the same things now in cognitional existence in the mind, bore upon the logical relations between the various ways in which the things are conceived, such as ‘an individual,’ ‘a species,’ a ‘genus,’ a ‘predicate.’” Owens, *Cognition*, n20, 164.

478. Régis, *Epistemology*, 110.

479. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 9.

480. Of course, once again, this is a hopelessly self-defeating claim. Is this claim neutral or objective? If no observer is neutral or objective, then N. T. Wright is not neutral or objective, and therefore his assertion about whether observers are neutral and objective is not neutral or objective. Wright is, then, only touting what is the result of his own point of view. Yet, these writers never seem to make these assertions as from their own perspectives. They always make them as if they are absolutely true, neutral, and objective.

481. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 36.

482. Ibid.

483. J. Alberto Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap to the Vienna Station* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9.

484. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1. This quote is actually taken from a statement in which Rorty is defining antirepresentationalism as not viewing knowledge as a matter of getting reality right.

485. See Chapter 3.

486. Tom Rockmore and Beth J. Singer, eds., *Antifoundationalism Old and New* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 1.

487. Ibid., 5.

488. J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 118.

489. Tom Rockmore, “Introduction,” in *Antifoundationalism Old and New*, 6.

490. Ibid., 6f.

491. Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Edward Bullough (New York: Dorset Press, 1948), 260.

492. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 29-30.

493. Alvin Plantinga, “Rationality and Religious Belief,” in *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Steven M. Cahn, and David Shatz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 259.

494. Ibid., 260 (emphasis in original).

495. Ibid., (emphasis in original).

496. Ibid., 261.

497. David Wisdo, “The Fragility of Faith,” *Religious Studies* 24 (1988): 366.

498. Alvin Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” in *Faith and Rationality*, eds. Alvin Plantinga, and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 47-48.

499. Ibid., 44.

500. Ibid. *Quia veritas de Deo per rationem investigata, a paucis, et per longum tempus, et cum admixtione multorum errorum homini proveniret; a cuius temen veritatis cognigione dependet tota hominis salus, quae in Deo est.*

501. S. Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Ottawa, Canada: Studii Generalis O. Pr., 1942), Ia.I.1.

502. Ibid.

503. Thomas A. Russman, “‘Reformed’ Epistemology,” in *Thomistic Papers IV*, ed. Leonard A. Kennedy (Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988), 189, (emphasis in original).

504. Ibid., 190.

505. Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 47-48.

506. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I, 11, 2. Nam simpliciter quidem *Deum esse* per se notum est, squum hoc ipsum quod Deus est sit suum esse. The Latin texts is from S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Taurini, Italia: Marietti, 1820), 1.11.

507. Ibid., I,10,2.

508. Henri DuLac, “An Incredulous First Reaction to *Faith and Rationality*,” in *Thomistic Papers IV*, ed. Leonard A. Kennedy (Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988), 66-67.

509. Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 56.

510. Alvin Plantinga, “Justification and Theism,” in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology of Contemporary Views*, ed. Melville Y. Steward (Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1996), 83.

511. Russman, 198.

512. Ibid.

513. Jonathan Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1985), 26.

514. Alvin Plantinga, “Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function,” in *Philosophical Perspectives 2: Epistemology 1988*, ed. James E. Tomberlin (Atascadero, California: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1988), 1.

515. Ibid., n1, 47.

516. Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), iii.

517. Russman, 198.

518. Alvin Plantinga, “Justification and Theism,” in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology of Contemporary Views*, ed. Melville Y. Stewart (Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1996), 86.

519. Henry B. Veatch, “Preliminary Statement,” in *Thomistic Papers IV*, ed. Leonard A. Kennedy (Houston,

Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988), 33.

520. Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologica*, II-II.5.2.

521. Harold I. Brown, "For a Modest Historicism," *The Monist* 60 (1977), 549; quoted in Harvey Siegel, *Relativism Refuted* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987), 9. Siegel goes on to reject the association between the foundationalism characterized by Brown with absolutism. However, the foundationalism to which Siegel is referring is the brand proposed by Brown, which, as we have already shown, is not coincident with Classical Foundationalism.

522. Ibid, 10.

523. Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Interpretation," 243.

524. Siegel, *Relativism Refuted*, 3.

525. Ibid., 8. It seems, in fact, that the critics of relativism have the stronger case. A full-scale critique of relativism would be beyond the scope of this Dissertation, but two helpful studies that have undertaken this very task are Harvey Siegel, *Relativism Refuted: A Critique of Contemporary Epistemological Relativism* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987), and James F. Harris, *Against Relativism: A Philosophical Defense of Method* (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1992). Both authors demonstrate that relativism falls to the problem of self-referential incoherence.

526. Jack W. Meiland, in "On the Paradox of Cognitive Relativism," *Metaphilosophy* 11 (1980): 121; quoted in Siegel, *Relativism Refuted*, 10; wrote, "That relativism is self-refuting . . . is a myth which must be laid to rest."

527. Jack W. Meiland, "Concepts of Relative Truth," *The Monist* 60 (October, 1977): 569, passim (emphasis in original).

528. Ibid., 571.

529. Siegel, *Relativism Refuted*, 14.

530. Ibid., 21.

531. Gadamer, *WH*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 327.

532. Warnke, *Gadamer*, 1.

533. Soffer, 237. Soffer employs the term "historicity thesis" to refer to the same concept referred to herein by the term "historicism."

534. Ibid., 238.

535. Ibid.

536. John Haldane, in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (1st ed.), s.v. "Brute fact."

537. Bryan Neal Baird, "An Apology for My Theology: The Inseparable Link Between Reformed Theology and Presuppositional Apologetics," [Online]. Available: <http://www.reformed.org/apologetics/baird.html.> [18 February 1998].

538. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972), 74.

539. Ibid., 100.

540. Ibid., 103.

541. Ibid., 101 (emphasis in original).

542. Ibid., 103.

543. Ibid.

544. It is only fair to note that Van Til believes that “beams are there” because God made them and in some cases told us what He had done. Thus he believes that the “beams” are there for non-Christians as well as for Christians. He seems to think, however, that no one would look for or believe in floor supports if God did not call them to our attention. Van Til is an epistemological Calvinist as well as a soteriological one.

545. Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 80.

546. Ibid., 214.

547. Again it must be pointed out in fairness to Van Til, that he does not claim to be requiring opposing views to meet his criteria. He would say that only God is in the position to require such. Van Til develops his apologetic not by offering factual evidence intended to elicit belief but by attempting to show that opposing views are self-referentially incoherent and that only Christianity is not self-refuting. God must then call and persuade and regenerate the unbelieving mind. However, to assert that competing world views are self-referentially incoherent imposes a notion of self-referential coherence that either is a brute fact for all world views, or it is only an interpreted “fact” relevant to Van Til’s own world view.

548. The drawing is taken from George Couvalis, *The Philosophy of Science: Science and Objectivity* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 12.

549. Ibid., 13.

550. There are numerous other similar illustrations, but they all fall victim to the same criticism.

551. Couvalis, 15.

552. Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 333.

553. Siegel, 100.

554. Siegel, 100-1.

555. Siegel accentuates this very self-referential problem in his continued critique of Brown. See especially pages 116-18.

556. Nagel, *View From Nowhere*, 9.

557. Harold I. Brown, “Objectivity,” in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, eds. Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 369.

558. Richard Rorty, “Introduction: Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy,” in *The Linguistic Turn*, ed. Richard M. Rorty (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2.

559. Aristotle, *Ta Meta Ta Phusika*, E 1, 1026a24, referred to by the Medieval philosophers as philosophia prima., or *tou ontos e hon* (“being qua being”), E 1, 1026a30.

560. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 137.

561. The claim here that God is all things should not be taken in a pantheistic sense. God is not all things ontologically. God is all things intellectually, by virtue of the existence of the forms of all things in the

Divine Mind as Divine Ideas.

562. Of course, human beings are not necessarily infallible in their efforts to deposit the meaning in the text, but this is not a counter-example to the basic thesis. Problems like this can be effectively dealt with only if the foundation is established from which the deviations can be identified.

563. Jacques Maritain, *A Preface To Metaphysics* (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company Publishers, 1987), 12.

564. Maritain, *Introduction To Philosophy*, 186-87.

565. Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 214-15.

566. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 259.

567. Francis H. Parker and Henry B. Veatch, *Logic as a Human Instrument* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1959), 242.

568. Ibid., 238.

569. Ibid., 242.

570. Aquinas, St. Thomas, *Truth*, trans. James V. McGlynn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 14.9.R. "Quæcumque autem sciuntur, proprie accepta scientia, cognoscuntur per resolutionem in prima principia, quæ per se præsto sunt intellectui." The Latin text is take from S. Thomae Aquinatis, *De Veritate (2)*, vol. 4, *Quaestoines Disputate et Quaestiones Duodecim Quodlibetales* (Taurini, Italia: Marietti, 1942), 14.9.

571. Finis J. Dake, *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible: The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 97, John 4:24, note r. (emphasis in original).

572. Finis J. Dake, *God's Plan for Man* (Lawrenceville, Georgia: Dake Bible Sales, 1977), 834.

573. Ibid.

574. Dake, *God's Plan*, 57.

575. Ibid., 42 (emphasis in original).

576. Ibid. (emphasis in original).

577. Ibid.

578. It is perhaps important to note that this distinction is based on an assumed metaphysics of natures. Dake presupposes that entities have determinate natures by which they can be known to be what they are. Persons have the nature of personhood. Doors have the nature of doors. It is because of this underlying metaphysical presupposition that this distinction can be made on the level of interpretation.

579. Dake specifically asserts that God exists as three "separate persons with three separate bodies, souls, and spirits . . ." Dake, *God's Plan*, 55.

580. W. Randolph Tate flatly asserts, "There is no such thing as a pure reading, an objective interpretation." W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 2d ed. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 187. Moisés Silva says, "In effect, this is what historical exegesis has had as its goal: total objectivity on th part of the interpreter so as to prevent injecting into the text any meaning other than the strictly historical one. But such objectivity does not exist." Moisés Silva, "Contemporary

Approaches to Interpretation," in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 244.

581. Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 154.

582. Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, 224.

583. For a helpful analysis of the relation between Thomistic metaphysics and modern physical theory, see Richard J. Connell, *Substance and Modern Science* (Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988).

584. McCall, *Reality of Substance* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1956), 49.

585. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I.1.10-11, 79, 81.

586. McCall, *Reality of Substance*, 50.

587. Ibid.

588. Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 144.

589. Ibid.

590. Ibid. (emphasis in original).

591. The same can be said about properties. Properties cannot be all there is since this would mean that the total sum of all properties would constitute an independent existence, which is the definition of substance. So, to claim that properties is all there is is to claim that properties are a substance. Therefore, properties must not be all there is.

592. McCall, *Reality of Substance*, 51.

593. Quoted by Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, I.1.39. Another quote for which Heraclitus is well known is, "No one steps in the same river twice" (Fr. 12 (41,42)). In the *Cratylus*, Socrates says, "Heraclitus says somewhere that 'everything gives way and nothing stands fast,' and, likening the things that are to the flowing of a river, he says that 'you cannot step into the same river twice.'" Plato, *Cratylus*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 402a. *Kratulos*, 402a. On a popular level, these quotes have led many to think of Heraclitus as teaching that reality is ultimately becoming rather than being. As Copleston points out, "In this respect Heraclitus is a Pirandello in the ancient world, crying out that nothing is stable, nothing abides, proclaiming the unreality of 'Reality.'" Copleston, *Greece and Rome*, 39. Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) was a prolific writer and playwright. His primary concern was with the question of identity. He understood the self to exist only in terms of its relation to others. However, Heraclitus also says, "We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not (Fr. 49a (81), which indicates a unity behind the flowing. Concerning this underlying unity in Heraclitus' teaching, Aristotle says, "But what these thinkers maintained was that all else is being generated and is flowing, nothing having any stability, except one single thing which persists as the basis of all these transformation. So we may interpret the statement of Heraclitus of Ephesus and many others." Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, trans. J. L. Stocks, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 298b, 29-32.

594. Margaret Gorman, *General Semantics and Contemporary Thomism* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 17 (emphasis in original).

595. Ibid., 89.

596. George P. Klubertanz and Maurice R. Holloway, *Being And God* (New York: Appleton-Century-

Crofts, 1963), 97.

597. Antony Flew, in *A Dictionary of Philosophy,* 1st, s.v. “Predication.”

598. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1007 a 34.

599. Ibid., 1007 b 22.

600. Ibid., 1006 b 5.

601. McCall, *The Reality of Substance*, 54.

602. Klubertanz, *Being and God*, 116. (emphasis in original).

603. Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 147.

604. Benignus Gerrity, *The Theory of Matter and Form and the Theory of Knowledge* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1936), 2.

605. Klubertanz, *Being and God*, 117.

606. Gerrity, *The Theory of Matter and Form and the Theory of Knowledge*, 36.

607. Form in the Aristotelian sense must not be confused with Platonic form. In Plato’s system, at least the way Aristotle understood Plato, the forms were universals that exist in the realm of the ideas. For Aristotle, and St. Thomas, the form was a constituent principle of the being of real things. The Moderate Realist concept of the form is that each particular finite thing is composed of its form and its matter.

608. Klubertanz, *Being And God*, 117.

609. Joseph M. Marling, *The Order of Nature* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1934), 19.

610. Gerrity, *The Theory of Matter and Form and the Theory of Knowledge*, 2.

611. Ibid., 57.

612. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 266.

613. Maritain, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 84.

614. Brennan, *Moderate Realist Psychology*, 115.

615. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 264.

616. Robert Edward Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 111-12.

617. Plotinus, *Plotini Opera*, ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1982), III. 8 (30) 6.15-17.

618. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 266.

619. Aquinas, *Truth*, II.6.3r. *Proprie loquendo, sensus aut intellectus cognoscunt, sed homo per utrumque. De Veritate*, II.6c.

620. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 263.

621. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 115.

622. Ibid.

623. Ibid., 118.

624. M. Aloysius, “Toward a Thomistic Theory of Sensation,” *The Thomist* 20 (April, 1957): 145. The passivity of the cognitive powers does not indicate simply a state of being acted upon. Passivity “means a capacity to receive” and does not indicate inactivity [L. M. Regis, *Epistemology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 198-99].

625. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), II.12.424a.16-24.

626. Mortimer J. Adler, “Sense Cognition: Aristotle vs. Aquinas,” *The New Scholasticism* 42 (Autumn, 1968): 585, (emphasis in original).

627. Aloysius, “Thomistic Theory of Sensation,” 147.

628. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 68.

629. Ibid.

630. Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 32.

631. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 266.

632. John F. Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism* (New York: Bookman, 1952), 51.

633. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 116-17.

634. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 267.

635. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 126.

636. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 228.

637. L. M. Regis, *Epistemology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 268.

638. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 101.

639. In addition to the power of imagination, the scholastic philosophers proposed two other powers of the internal senses, the memorial power and the estimative power. Each power has its respective function; however, their functions are not crucial to the thesis of this paper. Therefore, we will refrain from a consideration of these powers.

640. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 102.

641. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 128.

642. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 127.

643. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 199.

644. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 126.

645. Roy J. Deferrari and M. Inviolata Barry, *A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Baltimore, MD: The John D. Lucas Printing Company, 1948), Fascicle IV, 836.

646. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 103.

647. Gerald Phelan offers a word of clarification on this expression. “For Kant the ‘thing-in-itself’ was some inscrutable entity beyond the reach of reason which only an indefensible dogmatism or an act of faith

or an irrational experience could lead one to accept. . . . The thing in itself of which I am speaking [and in this paper] is an essence exercising an act of existence in the world of reality–actual or possible–as contrasted with that same essence exercising an act of existence in the world of knowledge." Gerald B. Phelan, "Verum Sequitur Esse Rerum" *Mediaeval Studies* 1 (1939): 16.

648. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 105.

649. Gerrity, *Theory of Matter and Form and Theory of Knowledge*, 96.

650. Ibid., 90.

651. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, 43.

652. Gerrity, *Theory of Matter and Form and Theory of Knowledge*, 90.

653. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 110.

654. Regis, *Epistemology*, 232.

655. Gerrity, *Theory of Matter and Form and Theory of Knowledge*, 93.

656. Ibid.

657. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.85,1.

658. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 115-16.

659. Ibid., 119.

660. Joseph Owens, "Thomistic Common Nature and Platonic Idea," *Mediaeval Studies* 21 (1959): 218.

661. Ibid., 213.

662. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 180.

663. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 157.

664. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 137.

665. Adler, *Intellect*, 144.

666. Mortimer Adler, *Some Questions About Language* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1976), 94.

667. Quoted by Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 111-12.

668. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 173-74.

669. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.85,5.

670. Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 48.

671. The term 'judgment' here is not proposed in an evaluative sense of moral judgments. This is a philosophical term used to identify that act of the mind by which we affirm or deny existence.

672. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 175. It is at the level of judgment that misunderstanding and error is initially encountered. In Thomistic Epistemology, errors of judgment are the result of illicit judgments produced by the mind on the basis of inadequate information, or the overriding influence of the will, or similar acts. The discipline of logic explores many errors of judgment.

673. Ibid.

674. Ibid.

675. Ibid., 177.

676. Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 242-43.

677. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 173-75.

678. Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 270.

679. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 167.

680. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 180.

681. Adler, *Intellect*, 35.

682. Ibid., 36.

683. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4.2.21.

684. Couvalis, *Philosophy of Science*, 39.

685. Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1998), 287.

686. Parker and Veatch, *Logic as a Human Instrument*, 250-51.

687. Ibid., 251.

688. Ibid., 270.

689. Adler, *Some Questions about Language*, 13.

690. Louis Lachance, "The Philosophy of Language," *The Thomist* 4 (October, 1942): 548.

691. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 199.

692. Jacques Maritain, "Language and the Theory of Sign," in *Language: An Enquiry into its Meaning and Function*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1957), 90 (emphasis in original).

693. Adler, *Some Questions About Language*, 15.

694. John Wild, "An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Signs," *Philosophy & Phenomenological Research* 8 (1947): 223.

695. Ibid., 230.

696. Henry Babcock Veatch, *Intentional Logic* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1952), 13.

697. St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, II.1.2.

698. Veatch, *Intentional Logic*, 12.

699. Aquinas, *Aristotle: On Interpretation*, II. 8.

700. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, 61.

701. Lyons, *Semantics*, 1.100-101.

702. Veatch, *Intentional Logic*, 13.

703. Oesterle, “Another Approach to the Problem of Meaning,” *The Thomist* 8 (April, 1944): 252.

704. Oesterle observes that, “The formal sign, the concept, can be understood ultimately only in terms of how there is any knowledge at all.” “Another Approach to the Problem of Meaning,” 259.

705. Ibid.

706. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, 54.

707. Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, I.16a. 5.

708. Ibid., I. 16a. 3.

709. Ibid., I.16a.6. The passions of the soul are “passions” because they arise as the result of an impression upon the possible or “passive” intellect. As St. Thomas’ comment points out, “the conception arises from things by way of a kind of impression or passion.” *Aristotle On Interpretation*, II.6.26.

710. Aquinas, *Aristotle: On Interpretation*, II.5.

711. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, 61.

712. Gorman, *General Semantics*, 119.

713. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 198.

714. Aquinas, *Truth*, 4.2. ad. 5 (emphasis in original).

715. Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 158.

716. Etienne Gilson, *Linguistics and Philosophy* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 64.

717. Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 16a, 6.

718. Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, 197-98.

719. Adler, *Some Questions About Language*, 25-26.

720. Ibid., 26-27.

721. Saussure asserts, “The two-sided linguistic unit has often been compared with the human person, made up of body and the soul. The comparison is hardly satisfactory.” *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 103. He offers instead the analogy of a chemical compound. Since a chemical compound is homogenous, and, as Saussure himself claims, the two-sides of the linguistic compound are not, it is difficult to understand why he used this analogy (compare the analysis by Gilson, *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 34-35). It will not do to claim that Saussure is considering the individual molecule of a chemical compound, because the molecule is composed of distinct elements, each of which is what it is apart from the compound. However, words are not words if they have no meaning.

722. Aquinas, *Aristotle On Interpretation*, II.4.

723. Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Bangalore, India: Theological Publications in India, 1985), 135.

724. For a defense of the claim that language is a uniquely human activity, see Clifford Wilson and Donald McKeon, *The Language Gap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

725. Lyons, *Semantics*, 1.95.

726. Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, 11. From this point this work of Ogden and Richards will be referred to as O&R.

727. Ibid., 11-12.

728. In his book *Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949), Max Black also characterizes the theory of Ogden and Richards as "causal and behavioristic" (195).

729. Lyons, *Semantics*, 1.98.

730. Adler, *Some Questions About Language*, 40.

731. Oesterle, "Another Approach to the Problem of Meaning," 258.

732. Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, 21 (emphasis added).

733. Jonathan Culler, *Ferdinand de Saussure* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 12.

734. Ibid., 13.

735. Ibid.

736. Ibid., 14 (emphasis in original).

737. Ibid. (emphasis in original).

738. Ibid.

739. Ibid., 14-15.

740. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 65.

741. Ibid., 66.

742. Ibid., 112. There are a sufficient number of occasions in which the words 'idea' and 'concept' are used interchangeably to understand them as synonymous in Saussure's thought.

743. Ibid., 113.

744. Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, 6.

745. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 111 (emphasis added).

746. Although the later Wittgenstein mounted a sever criticism of the notion of ostensible definition, it is the opinion of this writer that Wittgenstein's criticism assumes the representationalist/idealist epistemology that is the legacy of the Cartesian/Kantian tradition and therefore succumbs to the same criticisms leveled against this tradition. For an exposition of Wittgenstein's position see, Robert J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, 2d ed., in *The Arguments of the Philosophers*, ed. Ted Honderich (London: Routledge, 1996).

747. Lyons, *Semantics*, 1.113.

748. Ibid.

749. Ibid.

750. Ibid.

751. Ibid., 114.

752. Ibid.

753. Ibid., 19.

754. Ibid., 114. “In the sense of ‘word’ in which *find* and *found* are said to be forms of, or belong to, the same word, it is a vocabulary-word that is being referred to; and vocabulary-words constitute one subclass of what (with some support in current linguistic usage) we are calling lexemes” (Vol. 1, 19, emphasis in original).

755. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.87,4.

756. Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 215.

757. Oesterle, “Another Approach to the Problem of Meaning,” 251. The notion of meaning here avoids Wittgenstein’s criticism of language as naming because Wittgenstein is attacking a view in which words name things. This view holds that some words name things by means of the concept. The word “man” does not name an individual man, but names, in a sense, the concept “man” which is form of manness. Words denote things, but they mean concepts.

758. Adler, *Intellect*, 130.

759. Ibid.

760. Aquinas, *Aristotle On Interpretation*, II.5.

761. Adler, *Some Questions About Language*, 55.

762. Ibid., 31.

763. The major problem with the verification principle as it has been applied to meaning, is that it is unverifiable. The only way a sentence can be declared meaningless according to the verification principle is if it is understood to make an assertion about something that does not exist, or to make an assertion that is false. However, the only way to know that an assertion is false is if the meaning is understood and understood to be false. In other words, the only thing to which the verification principle can be applied is to meaning. The verification and falsification principles themselves are neither verifiable nor falsifiable.

764. Adler, *Some Questions About Language*, 33. This is in fact the fine point of distinction upon which Immanuel Kant capitalized in attacking the ontological argument of St. Anselm. Simply because a word, such as “God,” has referential significance does not necessarily mean it has existential denotation. Simply because we can conceive of the greatest possible being does not necessitate his existence.

765. Paul Horwich, *Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 12.

766. Stanley L. Jaki, *Means to Message: A Treatise on Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 13.

767. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 247.

768. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, 66.

769. Winfried Corduan, “Philosophical Presuppositions Affecting Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics Inerrancy, and the Bible*, eds. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1984), 496.

770. May, “Knowledge of Causality in Hume and Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 34 (1970): 283.

771. Ibid., 287.

772. These categories are adapted from Norman L. Geisler, *Introduction-Bible*, vol. 1, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2002), 174.

773. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967), 3.

774. Ibid., 8 (emphasis in original).

775. Ibid.

776. Tremper Longman, III, *Literary Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 64-65.

777. Ibid., 64.

778. Schuyler Brown, "Reader Response: Demythologizing the Text," *New Testament Studies* 34 (April 1988): 232.

779. Ibid., 232.

780. Longman, *Literary Approaches*, 38.

781. Brown, "Reader Response," 232.

782. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 55.

783. Robert P. Scharlemann, "Deconstruction: What is it?" *Dialog* 26 (Summer, 1987): 186-87.

784. Ibid., 187.

785. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 90-97. Throughout the remainder of this discussion, this book will be referred to by the designation CT.

786. CT, 97.

787. E. D. Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 79-80.

788. CT, 97.

789. Ibid., 94.

790. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament In Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 1.3.151.

791. Ibid.

792. Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 232-33.

793. See chapter 6.

794. Mortimer J. Adler, *Truth in Religion. The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1990), 113-14.

795. Ibid., 118.

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