

product of the author's soul, and subjective divinatory reconstruction attempts to determine how the process of writing affects the writer's inner thoughts. Interpretation for Schleiermacher is at once psychological and grammatical, intuitive and comparative. It is an art of understanding, not just explaining, the act of a living, intuiting person gifted with foreknowledge and experience of life as well as linguistic and cultural competence—an art that always requires a leap into the midst of textual complexities and circularities.

Earlier German hermeneutics, as practiced in the contexts of theology, law, and literature, focused narrowly on philology, particularly its penchant for interpretive procedures and rules of validation. Schleiermacher here broadens its scope toward a phenomenological philosophy attentive to the roles of intuition, understanding, and foreknowledge in the lived world of human beings. This shift was variously amplified by his greatest successors, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Heidegger, and Gadamer. Schleiermacher is generally credited with grounding hermeneutics in human understanding, with according language a foundational role in interpretation, and with highlighting the interdependence of mind and medium, subject and object, divination and comparison.

However much successors and followers admire and build on Schleiermacher's work, they find problems with his hermeneutic theory. In the various editions of his *Truth and Method—Outline for a Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1960), Gadamer characterizes the principle of divination as hopelessly Romantic, and he faults Schleiermacher for not taking into account the historical context and prejudices of the interpreter, which, he shrewdly argues, are essential constituents of understanding. Intuition assumes uniform human experience; prejudices arise in a world of antagonistic standpoints. And the leading modern French hermeneuticist, Paul Ricoeur (b. 1913), contends that Schleiermacher does not sufficiently distinguish between the author and the ideas governing the work; Ricoeur sees the latter as the true object of interpretation. Schleiermacher vacillates, too, on what constitutes the "text" (or object of inquiry)—it is sometimes the author's oeuvre (complete works), sometimes a particular work, and sometimes a genre or cultural archive.

Various critics, moreover, have noted Schleiermacher's tendency, especially in his late works, to "psychologize": that is, to pass through language to the supposed prelinguistic mental processes and intentions of the author, forgetting that grammar and psychology are interdependent. When this happens, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics turns into psychological reconstruction, which is the direction taken by Dilthey. A similar path is staked out by E. D. Hirsch Jr., who, however, turns to interpretative reconstruction as a way to rectify the rampant critical subjectivism and relativism that he believes plague contemporary literary criticism, including much hermeneutics.

In spite of criticisms, Schleiermacher's contributions to hermeneutics should not be underestimated. His psychological notion of divination enabled him to explicitly correct and complement earlier Enlightenment concepts of rationality. He usefully jettisoned the old rigid separations of hermeneutics into specialized biblical, legal, and literary kinds, developing a self-conscious project for a general hermeneutics. Like his important contemporaries FRIEDRICH SCHILLER and SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, he attempted to reconcile well-entrenched inherited philosophical oppositions, especially subject/object, finite/infinite, individual/social, and psychology/grammar. He construed understanding as an act of dialogue, not verification. Lastly, he pictured the act of interpretation as antiauthoritarian and nonhierarchical, in keeping with the radical social forces of his time (committed to toppling monarchical regimes and feudal class arrangements, manifested especially in the French Revolution) and with the dynamics of early democracy and capitalism. All these elements, which marked Schleiermacher historically as a Romantic, significantly influenced the work of later philosophical hermeneutics.

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From Hermeneutics

From Outline of the 1819 Lectures

INTRODUCTION?

1. Hermeneutics as the art of understanding does not yet exist in general; rather, only various specialized hermeneutics exist.

1. [We speak of] only the art of understanding, not the exposition of the understanding. The latter would only be a specialized part of the art of

1. Edited and translated by Jan Wojcik and Roland Haas, who occasionally insert the original German or explanatory words or phrases in brackets. The Outline consists of an "Introduction," "First Part: The Grammatical Exposition," and

"Second Part: The Technical (or Psychological) Interpretation." The headings are somewhat misleading: The "Introduction" gives a systematic exposition of principles for analyzing the language and psychological manifestations of a literary text. The "First Part" elaborates the principles for the

speaking and writing that could only be dependent on the general principles of hermeneutics.

2. This refers as well to difficult points in foreign-language texts. In reading them, one more often presumes familiarity with the subject matter and the language. When one is familiar with both, the distinction between them becomes difficult to make because one has perhaps not understood properly the more apparent. Only an artistic understanding consistently grasps the discourse [*Reden*] of a text [*Schrift*].³

3. Usually one supposes that one could rely on a healthy knowledge of human nature for formulating the general principles of interpretation. But then there is the danger that one would also tend to rely on a healthy feeling about the exceptional qualities of a text in determining what they meant.

2. It is very difficult to determine the exact nature of a general hermeneutics.

1. For a long time it was handled as a supplement to logic, but as one had to give up all logical tenets in its practice, this had to cease. The philosopher has no inclination to establish a theory about hermeneutics because he believes that it is more important to be understood than to understand.

2. Philology⁴ has made positive contributions throughout history. But its method of hermeneutics is simply to aggregate observations.

3. [Hermeneutics is] the art of relating discourse [*Reden*] and understanding [*Verstehen*] to each other; discourse, however, being on the outer sphere of thought, requires that one must think of hermeneutics as an art, and thus as philosophical.

1. Thus the art of exposition depends on their composition. They are mutually dependent to the point that where discourse is without art, so is the understanding of it.

4. Discourse is the mediation of shareable thought. As a result both rhetoric and hermeneutics share a common relationship to the dialectic.⁵

1. Discourse is of course also a mediation of thought among individuals. Thought becomes complete only through interior discourse, and in this respect discourse could be considered manifested thought. But where the thinker thinks original thoughts, he himself requires the art of discourse to transform them into expressions that afterwards require exposition [*Auslegung*].

2. The unity of hermeneutics and rhetoric results from the fact that every act of understanding is the obverse of an act of discourse, in that one must come to grasp the thought which was at the base of the discourse.

analysis of language; the "Second Part" extends the "Introduction" in describing how the two parts of interpretation work together in the "divination" of a text. We limit our translation to the "Introduction" and the "Second Part" which comprise the heart of Schleiermacher's hermeneutical principles. We have referred to the marginal notes Schleiermacher added to the manuscript in 1828 only when they clarified ambiguities in the text [translators' note].

3. Discourse (*Reden*) is Schleiermacher's term for the discursive sense of a text, shaped by the par-

3. The dependence of both on the dialectic results from the fact that all development of knowledge is dependent on both discourse and understanding.

5. As every discourse has a two-part reference, to the whole language and to the entire thought of its creator, so all understanding of speech consists of two elements [*Momente*]:—understanding the speech as it derives from the language and as it derives from the mind of the thinker.

1. Every speech derives from a given language. One can also turn this around and say that originally and continuously language only comes into being through discourse; at any rate, communication presupposes the accessibility of the language; that is, a shared knowledge of the same. When something comes between unmediated discourse and communication, the art of discourse begins, for one must take into consideration the possibility that the listener might find something strange in someone else's use of language.

2. Every discourse depends on earlier thought. One can also turn this around, of course, but in relation to communication it remains true, since the art of understanding only has to do with progressive thinking.

3. It follows that every person is on one hand a locus in which a given language is formed after an individual fashion and, on the other, a speaker who is only able to be understood within the totality of the language. In the same way, he is also a constantly developing spirit, while his discourse remains an object within the context of other intelligence.

6. Understanding is only an interaction of these two elements.

1. Discourse can only be understood as a fact of the spirit if it is understood as a characteristic of the language, because the innateness of the language modifies the spirit.

2. It can also only be understood as a modification of the language if it is understood as a fact of the spirit, because all influences of individuals on the language are manifested through discourse.

7. Both stand completely equal, and one could only with injustice claim that the grammatical interpretation is the inferior and the psychological the superior.

1. The psychological is the superior only if one views language as the means by which the individual communicates his thoughts; the grammatical is then merely a cleaning away of temporary difficulties.

2. The grammatical is the superior if one views language as stipulating the thinking of all individuals and the individual's discourse only as a locus at which the language manifests itself.

3. Only by means of such a reciprocity could one find both to be completely similar.

8. The essential hermeneutical task is to handle every part in such a way that the handling of the other parts will produce no change in the results, or, in other words, every part must be handled as a discrete unit with equal respect paid to all other parts.

1. This reciprocity is important even if one part predominates over the other according to what was said in paragraph six.

2. But each is only complete if it makes the other redundant and contributes to construing the other, because indeed language [*Sprache*] can only be learned inasmuch as its discourse [*Rede*] can be understood; and in the same way, the inner cohesion of humanity can only be understood as it manifests itself externally through its discourse.

9. Exposition [*Auslegung*] is an art.

1. Every part stands by itself. Every composition is a finite certainty out of the infinite uncertainty. Language is an infinite because every element can be determined in a specific manner only through the other elements. And this is also true for the psychological part because every perspective of an individual is infinite; and the outside influences on people extend into the disappearing horizon. A composition composed of such elements cannot be defined by rules, which carry with them the security of their application.
2. Should the grammatical part be considered by itself, one would need in some cases a complete knowledge of the language, or, in others, a complete knowledge of the person. As neither can ever be complete, one must go from one to the other, and it is not possible to give any rules as to how this should be done.

10. The successful performance of the art depends on a linguistic talent and a talent for assessing individual human nature.

1. By the first point we do not mean the facility for learning foreign languages—the difference between the mother tongue and a foreign language does not come into consideration here for the time being; rather, a sense for the contemporaneity of a language; for analogy, difference, etc. One could mean by this that rhetoric and hermeneutics must always be together. Just as hermeneutics requires other talents, so also does rhetoric, if not always the same ones. The linguistic talent, at any rate, is shared, even if the hermeneutical method develops it differently than the rhetorical method does.
2. The knowledge of human nature is here the superior of those subjective elements in the development of discourse. No less importantly, hermeneutics and artistic human presentation are always together. But a great number of hermeneutical mistakes are based on the deficiency of linguistic talent, or in its faulty application.
3. Inasmuch as these talents are generally given by nature, so hermeneutics is a commonsense endeavor. Inasmuch as a person is missing one talent, he is crippled, and the other talents can only serve to help him adjudicate about that which all together would have permitted him to know directly.

11. Not all discourse is on an equal footing for exposition. Certain discourses have no value for it, others an absolute value; the majority lie between these two points.

1. Something of no value might excite no interest as an entity, but would still be important in the language as a reiteration which language requires for the preservation of its continuity. But that which repeats only already available things is worth nothing in itself. Like talking about the

weather. Alone, this is not an absolute nothing, only minimal. For it developed itself in the same way as significant things.

2. When the grammatical aspect predominates in a work, even the most imaginative, we call it classical. When the psychological aspect predominates, we call it original. And, of course, one part could absolutely dominate the other only if the author was an absolute genius.

3. To be classical, a work must be more than transitory; it must determine subsequent production. No less so the original. And even the best work cannot be free from influence.

12. When both aspects of interpretation—the analysis of the grammatical and the psychological part of a text—are used equally throughout, they are nevertheless always used in different proportions.

1. This follows from the fact that something of grammatical insignificance does not necessarily have to be of psychological insignificance, and vice versa; and insignificance in one does not imply insignificance in the other.

2. A minimum of psychological interpretation is needed with a predominantly objective subject. [To this belongs] pure history, especially of specific individuals, as comprehensive studies tend more to draw on subjective conclusions; also epics, commercial discussions which want to become history, and strictly didactic writings of every kind. The interpreter's subjectivity should not enter the exposition; rather, it should be affected by the exposition. A minimum of grammatical interpretation accompanies a maximum of psychological in the exposition of personal letters, especially when they transmit didactic advice or historical information. (Lyrics or polemics too?)

13. There is no other diversity in the methods of exposition aside from those cited above.

1. As an example, we can take the wonderful perspective which comes from the argument over the historical exposition of the New Testament, based on the question whether there are special modes of interpretation reserved for it alone. In this debate the assertion of the historical school is the only correct one, that the New Testament authors are products of their age. The only danger in their reasoning is their tendency to overlook the power of Christianity to create new concepts and forms of expression; they tend to explain everything in light of available concepts and forms. To correct the historical style of interpretation one has to resist this one-sidedness. Correct interpretation requires a relationship of the grammatical and psychological interpretation, since new concepts can arise out of new emotional experiences.

2. One would also err if one thought of a historical interpretation as simply a retrospective view of the textual events. One must keep in mind that what was written was often written in a different day and age from the one in which the interpreter lives; it is the primary task of interpretation not to understand an ancient text in view of modern thinking, but to rediscover the original relationship between the writer and his audience.

3. The Allegorical Interpretation. First of all, it is not an interpretation of an allegory, where the only purpose is to understand the figurative mean-

ing without reference to whether there is truth at the base of it or not. Examples of allegories would be the parable of the sower, or the story of the rich man.⁶ Rather, allegorical interpretation begins with a presupposition that the meaning is lacking in the immediate context, and so one needs to supply a figurative one. With this supposition one is unsatisfied with the general principle that every speech can have only one grammatical meaning. The dissatisfaction arises, perhaps, from the correct assessment that an allusion in a text does point to a second meaning; one who does not comprehend it could completely follow the whole context, but would still be missing one meaning situated within the discourse. The danger is that one could find an allusion which is not situated within the discourse. Then one would dissect the discourse improperly. The test for a proper allusion is this: to see whether it seems entwined as one of the contextual ideas within the main line of thought, to assess whether the explicit thoughts inspire the implicit. But the contextual ideas are not therewith to be considered merely individual and insignificant. Rather, just as the whole world is made up of many men, each idea contributes to its whole sense, even if it appears only as its dark shadow. There is, after all, a parallelism in many various lines of thought, so that something could inspire something else; for example, there is parallelism between the physical and ethical, and between the musical and the visual arts. One should be careful, however, to detect whether there are any indications for the figurative expressions one seems to detect. The allegorical interpretations which have been made without such indication, especially in traditional interpretations of Homer and the Bible, all depend on a special assumption. This is that the books of Homer⁷ and the Old Testament are special compendiums, the Old Testament above all, which contains all wisdom in some form or another. Along with this, both of them have appeared to have a mystical content compounded of sententious philosophy on the one hand and history on the other.

With myths, however, no technical interpretation is possible, since one cannot focus on an individual text⁸ and alternatively compare the literal and the figurative meaning. There is certainly a different situation regarding the New Testament which leads to two kinds of blunders. First, its association with the Old Testament encourages the use of the same methods often associated with the Old Testament interpretation. Second, the New Testament interpreters tend more than their Old Testament counterparts to view the Holy Spirit as the book's author. But the Holy Spirit cannot be thought of as a temporally contingent and characteristic consciousness. From this false view springs the inclination to find everything foreshadowed everywhere. Common sense, or precise instructions on how texts should be read, can protect texts from this inclination, but isolated passages which seem to be unmeaningful in themselves seem to encourage it.

4. Here the question occasionally intrudes upon us, whether the holy books of the Holy Spirit must be handled differently than others. We must not be concerned with dogmatic decisions about inspiration, since they themselves derive from interpretation. We must not distinguish between the

6. Both in the New Testament: for the sower, see

Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23; for the rich man, see Luke 16.19-31.

7. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (ca. 8th c. B.C.E.),

each divided into 24 books.

8. Myths have no single author and no single established text; therefore technical (psychological) interpretation is impossible.

preaching and the writing of the apostles, since their future church had to be built on the preaching. And it follows from this that we must not believe that the whole of Christianity directly developed from the writings, since they are all aimed at specific communities and could also not have been understood by subsequent readers if they had not been understood by the original audience. Each community simply sought out the specific characteristics of the Jesus story according to its own given particular focus on the many details. Therefore, we must expose it to the same method and consider that even if the authors were no more than dead tools, still the Holy Spirit could only have spoken through them as they themselves would have spoken.

5. The most dangerous deviation from this principle is encouraged by the cabalistic⁹ style of exposition which directs its endeavors to find everything in everything. Only their interpretive endeavors which respect the diversity which results from the various relationships of both constructed parts can rightfully be called exposition.

14. The difference between artful and crude exposition has nothing to do with whether the work is familiar or strange, or with the discourse or the text, but solely with whether one wants to understand certain things exactly or not.

1. If it were only foreign and old texts that needed the art, the original readers would not have needed it, and the art would then depend on the differences between them and us. This difference must first be resolved, of course, through a knowledge of language and history; the exposition begins only after a successful identification of the text's original meaning. The difference between interpreting an old foreign text and a local contemporary one is only that with the old text the process of discovering its relevance to its milieu cannot completely precede the identification of its meaning; rather, both must be integrated from the beginning.

2. The text [*Schrift*] is not always the focus of attention either. Otherwise the art would only become necessary through the difference between text and discourse; that is to say, by the absence of the living voice and by the inaccessibility of other personal influences. These things, however, require exposition themselves, while they always remain somewhat nebulous. A living voice can certainly facilitate understanding a great deal, but even the writer must take into consideration that writing is not the same as speaking. If it were, then the art of exposition would be superfluous, which is, of course, not the case. Consequently, the need for exposition depends on the difference between written and spoken discourse, when the latter does not accompany the former.

3. Thus, when discourse and text behave so that no other difference remains between them save the one indicated, it follows that the artfully correct exposition has no other goal than that which we have in hearing every common spoken discourse.

15. The careless practice of the art results from the fact that understanding is pursued in the light of a negative goal: that misunderstanding should be avoided.

9. Esoteric, mystical.

1. Careless interpretation tends to limit its understanding to obtaining certain easy-to-attain goals.

2. But even it must avail itself of the art in difficult cases; and thus hermeneutics can even arise from the artless practice. But since it only sees difficulties as isolated problems, it becomes an aggregate of observations. And for the same reason tends to consider itself a specialized hermeneutics because it brings special methods to the solving of difficult problems. This is how the theological, the juristic, and the philological methods originated, and what they consider to be their special purposes.

3. The basis for their view is the peculiarity of their special languages and the peculiar manner in which their speakers communicate to their hearers.

16. Strict interpretation begins with misunderstanding and searches out a precise understanding.

1. This results from its beginning with an assumption about what the meaning is that properly should only be discovered in the way the language and intention present it.

2. Careless interpretation distinguishes only the [predetermined] sense from the manner of expression, which in fact depend on each other for their mutual identity, the determination of which is the minimum requirement for avoiding artless practice.¹

17. Two things should be avoided: qualitatively misunderstanding the content, and quantitatively misunderstanding nuance.

1. Examined objectively, qualitative misunderstanding is mistaking the place of a part of a discourse in the language with that of another one, as, for example, the confusion of the meaning of a word with that of another. The qualitative misunderstanding is subjective, the mistaking of the meaning of an expression, so that one gives the same thing a different meaning than the speaker gave to it in his sphere.

2. Quantitative misunderstanding arises from a subjective response to the value of the elaboration a speaker gives to a part of the text, or by analogy from an objective response to a part taken out of context.

3. The quantitative, which is normally taken little into account, always leads to the qualitative.

4. These negative expressions cover all interpretive operations. But one could not develop the rules from their negativity alone; rather, one must develop them positively, with a constant eye on the negative.

5. One must also distinguish the difference between passive and active misunderstanding. The latter is timidity which, however it might be the consequence of a bias that nothing can appear certain unless it is very obvious, can still entertain very false assumptions.

18. The art can only develop its rules from a positive formula, and this is the historical and the divinatory [prophetic], objective and subjective reconstruction [*Nachkonstruieren*] of the given discourse.

1. Paraphrase: artful interpretation begins with a hunch about a text's meaning which it continuously corrects and refines; careless interpretation begins with a prejudice about a text's meaning which it forces the text to support [translators note].

1. Objective historical reconstruction considers how the discourse behaves in the totality of the language, and considers a text's self-contained knowledge as a product of the language. Objective divinatory reconstruction assesses how the discourse itself developed the language. Without both of these, one cannot avoid qualitative and quantitative misunderstanding.

2. Subjective historical reconstruction considers a discourse as a product of the soul; subjective divinatory assesses how the process of writing affects the writer's inner thoughts. Without both, just as was the case above, misunderstanding is once again unavoidable.

3. The task is this, to understand the discourse just as well and even better than its creator. Since we have no unmediated knowledge of that which is within him, we must first seek to become conscious of much which he could have remained unconscious of, unless he had become self-reflectingly his own reader. For objective reconstruction he has no more data than we do.

4. Posed in this manner, the task is an infinite one, because there is an infinity of the past and the future that we wish to see in the moment of discourse. Hence, this art is just as capable of inspiration as any other. In fact, a text has no meaning unless it can give rise to this inspiration. However, the decision on how far one wishes to pursue an approach must be, in any case, determined practically, and actually is a question for a specialized hermeneutics and not for a general one.

19. One must first equate oneself with the author by objective and subjective reconstruction before applying the art.

1. With objective reconstruction one proceeds through a knowledge of the language as the author used it. It must be more exact than even the original readers possessed, who themselves had to put themselves in the place of the author. With subjective reconstruction one proceeds through the knowledge of the author's inner and outer life.

2. But both can only be completely secured through a similarly complete exposition. For only from a reading of all of an author's works can one become familiar with his vocabulary, his character, and his circumstances.

20. The vocabulary and the history of the period in which an author works constitute the whole within which his texts must be understood with all their peculiarities.

1. This complete knowledge is contained within an apparent circle,² so that every extraordinary thing can only be understood in the context of the general of which it is a part, and vice versa. And all knowledge can only be scientific to the extent that it is complete.

2. This circle makes possible an identification with the author, and thus it follows that, first, the more complete knowledge we possess, the better bolstered we are for exposition, and, second, no material for exposition can be understood in isolation; rather, every reading makes us better suited for understanding by enriching our previous knowledge. We can only be satisfied with immediate understanding when dealing with the meaningfulness.

2. The troubling yet unavoidable "hermeneutic circle" of interpretation.

21. If the knowledge of the particular vocabulary can only be amassed during the exposition through lexical help and through individual observation, there can exist no self-sufficient exposition.

1. Only an independent knowledge of the actual life of a language gives one a source independent of the exposition for the knowledge of the vocabulary. For this reason we have only an incomplete understanding of what Greek and Latin words mean. Hence, the first lexical task in such cases is to consider the whole literature as a context for understanding the individual linguistic item. These complementary tasks balance each other through the exposition itself, contributing to an artful exposition.

2. Under the term *vocabulary* I subsume the dialect, period, and the mode—prose or poetry.

3. Even first impressions should be based on lexical meaning, for spontaneous interpretation can only rest on prior knowledge [*Vorkenntnisse*], but even all decisions about the language in dictionaries and in explanatory notes proceed from special and other perhaps unreliable expositions.

4. In the area of the New Testament, one can say with certainty that the unreliability and arbitrariness of the exposition rests largely on this fault. This is because contrasting analogies always develop from individual observations. For example, the development of New Testament vocabulary is rooted in classical antiquity and developed through Macedonian Greek through its use by the profane Jewish writers and by Josephus and Philo, by the deuterocanonical writers, and by the writers of the Septuagint,³ who flavored their Greek with Hebrewisms.

22. Even if the necessary knowledge of history comes only from prolegomena, there can still exist no self-sufficient exposition.

1. Such prolegomena are the sort of critical helps it is the duty of a publisher who desires to be a mediator to use. But they must depend on a knowledge of the whole literary circle a work belongs to, and the whole development of an author himself. Thus they are themselves dependent on exposition, and so are all reckonings whose beginnings are not determined by a specific goal. The exact expositor must, however, gradually glean everything from the sources themselves, and it is because of this that his task can only progress from easy to more difficult. But the dependency becomes most injurious if one brings in such notes in the prolegomena that actually could only be derived from the interpreted work itself.

2. The New Testament has given birth to a special discipline: the writing of the introduction. This is not an actual organic component of the theological discipline; but it is a practical expedient, partly for the beginner, partly for the master, since it is easier to bring together all of the relevant examinations in one place. But the expositor should always contribute to it so as to augment and relate the great mass of evidence.

23. An individual element can only be understood in light of its place in the whole text; and therefore, a cursory reading for an overview of the whole must precede the exact exposition.

3. A Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures by Jewish scholars (ca. 3d c. B.C.E.). Flavius Josephus (b. 37/8 C.E.) and Philo Judaeus (ca. 20 B.C.E.—ca. 50 C.E.): secular Jewish writers of

history and philosophy, respectively. "Deuterocanonical writers": authors of books of the Scriptures contained in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew canon.

1. Understanding appears to go in endless circles, for a preliminary understanding of even the individuals themselves comes from a general knowledge of the language.

2. Synopses that the author gives himself are too dry to engage even the technical aspect of interpretation, and with summaries like those publishers authorize for prefaces one comes under the influence of their interpretations.

3. The aim is to find the main idea in light of which the others must be measured, and this goes as well for the technical aspect—to find the main procedure from which the others can more easily be found. It is similarly indispensable for grammatical interpretation, which is obvious from the various forms of misunderstanding it often raises.

4. One can omit it easier when dealing with the unmeaningful, and although with difficult works it appears to be less helpful, it is actually all the more indispensable. A general summary is characteristically the least help in understanding difficult writers.

Should the exposition be done partially, one would eventually have to connect both aspects in the execution of the interpretation, but in theory one must divide and handle each specially, even if afterwards one must endeavor to develop each so completely that the other becomes indispensable, or, what is more important, so that its result coincides with the first. The grammatical interpretation leads the way.

PART TWO

THE TECHNICAL INTERPRETATION

1. The common beginning for both the technical and the grammatical interpretation is the general overview which grasps the unity of the work and the main features of the composition. The unity of the work, the theme, will be viewed here as the writer's motivating principle, and the foundation of the composition as his peculiar nature as it is manifested in each motif.

The unity of the work derives from the manner in which the grammatical constructions available in the language are composed or connected. The author sets a verbal object in motion as communication. The difference between popular and scientific works is that the author of the former arranges the subject according to his peculiar style, which mirrors itself in his ordering. Because each author has minor conceptions each of which is determined by his peculiarities, one can recognize them from among analogous omissions and anomalous inclusions.

I perceive the author as he functions in the language: partly bringing forth new things by his use of language, partly retaining qualities of language which he repeats and transmits. In the same way, from a knowledge of an area of speech, I can perceive the author's language as its product and see how he operates under its aegis. Both methods are the same process begun from different starting points.

2. The ultimate goal of the psychological [technical] exposition is nothing other than to perceive the consequences of the beginning; that is to say, to consider the work as it is formed by its parts, and to perceive every part in light of the work's overall subject as its motivation; this is also to say that the form is seen to be shaped by the subject matter.

When I have looked at everything individually, there is nothing left over to understand. It is also obvious in itself that the apparent contrast between understanding the individual parts and understanding the whole disappears when every part receives the same treatment as the whole. But the goal [of good interpretation] is only achieved in the continuity of both perspectives. Even when much is only to be understood grammatically, it is not understood fully unless one can make an intrinsic analysis which never loses sight of the genesis of the work.

3. The goal of good interpretation is to understand the style completely. We are accustomed to understanding style as the handling of language. We presume that thought and language intertwine throughout, and the specific manner with which one understands the subject requires an understanding of the arrangement of words: i.e., the handling of language. The peculiarity of an individual conception results from what is missing or added to a conventional conception. Whatever peculiarity results from imitation or habit results in a bad style.

4. Good interpretation can only be approximated.

We are, considering all advances in hermeneutical theory, still far from making it a perfect art, as the perennial fights over the writings of Homer and over the comparative merits of the three tragic writers⁴ show.

No individual inspection of a work ever exhausts its meaning; interpretation can always be rectified. Even the best is only an approximation of the meaning. Because interpretation so seldom succeeds, and because even the superior critic is open to criticism, we can see that we are still far from the goal of making hermeneutics a perfect art.

5. Before beginning the technical exposition, we must know the manner in which the subject occurred to the originator, and how he acquired his language, and anything else one can learn about his mannerisms.

First, one must consider the prior development of the genre of the work at the time when it was written; second, one must consider the use made of the genre typically in the place where the writer worked and in adjacent areas; finally, no exact understanding of the development and usage is possible without a knowledge of the related contemporary literature and especially the works the author might have used as a model. Such a cohesive study is indispensable.

The third goal raises very troublesome problems. We could say that the interpretive process as a whole is only as easy as this step is to take. But because even this step requires a judgment which can also be anticipated in the previous steps, it is possible that one might be able to omit it. Biographies of the author were originally annexed to their works for this purpose; nowadays this connection is overlooked. The best sort of prolegomena attends to the first two points.

With these contextualizations [*Vorkenntnissen*] in hand one can gain an

4. That is, the Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides (all active 5th c. B.C.E.). "Perennial fights"; over whether the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were by a single poet or were collections of short works put together from various sources.

excellent perception of the essential characteristic of a work upon a first reading.

6. The whole task requires the use of two methods, the divinatory and the comparative, which, however, as they constantly refer back to each other, must not be separated.

Using the divinatory, one seeks to understand the writer intimately [*unmittelbar*] to the point that one transforms oneself into the other. Using the comparative, one seeks to understand a work as a characteristic type, viewing the work, in other words, in light of others like it. The one is the feminine force in the knowledge of human nature; the other is the masculine. Both refer back to each other. The first depends on the fact that every person has a susceptibility to intuiting others, in addition to his sharing many human characteristics. This itself appears to depend on the fact that everyone shares certain universal traits; divination consequently is inspired as the reader compares himself with the author.

But how does the comparative come to subsume the subject under a general type? Obviously, either by comparing, which could go on infinitely, or by divination.

Neither may be separated from the other, because divination receives its security first from an affirmative comparison, without which it might become outlandish. But the comparative of itself cannot yield a unity. The general and specific must permeate each other, and this can only happen by means of divination.

7. The idea of the work, by which the author's fundamental purpose [*Wille*] reveals itself, can only be understood in terms of the convergence of the basic material and its peculiarity of his developments.

The basic material by itself stipulates no set manner of execution. As a rule it is easy enough to determine, even if it is not exactly specified; but for all that, one can be mistaken. One finds the purpose of the work most precisely in its peculiar or characteristic development of its material. Often the characteristic motif has only a limited influence on certain sections of a work, but nonetheless shapes the character of the work by its influence on others. The interpretive knack is to somehow intuit the meaning while being cautiously aware of how the intuition in some ways predetermines the process of validating it.

1819, 1828

1959, 1974