

WHAT DOES HERMENEUTICS HAVE TO DO WITH BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION?

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In common usage, 'hermeneutics' is a word often used interchangeably with 'interpretation'. This has especially become so in biblical studies, but a review of how the word 'hermeneutics' came to prominence in biblical scholarship suggests that there is value in continuing to keep it as a concept distinguishable from interpretation. The omnipresence of the word in contemporary biblical studies obscures some of the specific roles that hermeneutics is well suited to perform. The potential benefits of hermeneutics in this more limited sense for biblical interpretation are discussed with respect to the two main hermeneutical theorists of the late twentieth century: Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND 'HERMENEUTICS'

Hans Frei once remarked that he hoped to be spared the word 'hermeneutics' in a future life.¹ As one who contributed greatly to the development of theological reflection on interpretation, even he acknowledged that the repeated encounter with 'hermeneutics' as one went about one's theological business, whether in systematics or biblical studies, could induce a certain weariness of the spirit. Enter once into the hermeneutical minefield and one might never emerge, or at best emerge scarred and determined to get on with the theological task at hand by bracketing out hermeneutical prolegomena. The professional practices of biblical interpretation today certainly seem to suggest that one can at least delay hermeneutical consideration to the moment where the impact of the text on the reader is considered. If one is simply engaged in biblical interpretation, or 'exegesis', then hermeneutics appears functionally irrelevant much of the time.

Of course, to make any progress with our title question, we shall have to define our terms carefully. For it is equally apparent that there is a widespread acknowledgement now that all interpretation operates within some evaluative framework, and that there is no supposedly neutral 'view from nowhere', to borrow Nagel's memorable phrase.² In this sense,

many will take the title question of this article as somewhat bizarre: surely hermeneutics has everything to do with biblical interpretation, since, in the minds of many at least, they are the same thing.

It is evident that the way many people who are interested in the Bible use the word ‘hermeneutics’ is simply as a label for ‘biblical interpretation’, and with conventions being the habit-forming things they are, there is in a sense nothing wrong with this. For my part, I have always suspected that it is this convention which lies at the root of a good deal of the basic distrust of hermeneutics on the part of biblical scholars who want to get on with writing works of biblical interpretation, or commentary. To take but one example, Ben Witherington is both a prolific and astute commentary writer, and a thinker very much interested in bringing the import of the biblical text into human life today. Yet in his commendable 500 page commentary on Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, replete as those texts are with all manner of hermeneutical puzzles in terms of transferability to today, he provides only 2 pages of discussion of hermeneutics, in the preface no less, and therein dispenses with the insights of Ricoeur in one footnote.³ Similarly his 900 page commentary on Acts, another great hermeneutical minefield of the NT, offers only ‘The real hermeneutical task cannot be undertaken without first having a detailed engagement with the text itself, resulting in sound exegesis’.⁴

Clearly, Christian faith involves serious and persistent attention to the biblical text, and has done so now for two thousand years. For most of that time, the serious and persistent attention was confined to the small literate minority among believers, and it is only with the Reformation and the development of the printing press, two events inextricably entwined in many ways, that the biblical text moves into a wider public sphere and is open to inspection by all parties. Eventually, of course, the biblical text becomes available to believer and unbeliever alike, and takes up a dual residence as the sacred text of the Christian community and also one of the canonical texts, if not the canonical text *par excellence*, of the academic community in the West, where it is subject in turn to the critical canons of the university. As the twentieth century progressed, this long and complicated history took a turn towards the explicit consideration of ‘hermeneutics’. By the mid 1960’s, two books had appeared in English announcing the theological significance of the ‘new hermeneutic’,⁵ and a German hermeneutic tradition had taken root in theological circles.⁶ By the 1970’s, courses on ‘hermeneutics’ were beginning to appear on the theological syllabus, beginning in England at Sheffield University,⁷ and before long theological colleges and seminaries were all offering hermeneutics courses. Such has been the extent to which such courses are an expected feature of theological education today that it is hard to recall how easy it once seemed to be theologically and biblically literate and not even know what the word ‘hermeneutics’ meant.

Thus we find this situation: Christians have been concerned with biblical interpretation for centuries, while equally hermeneutics as such was not a common topic of reflection in theological circles for most of that time. How may we account for this? For some people it indicates the regrettable state of affairs whereby academic specialization has over-run the agenda of the church. For others it is simply a terminological issue: we have always had hermeneutics but we did not call it that.

What seems most likely is that the word ‘hermeneutics’ can mean a variety of things, all loosely related but not all the same. In what follows I shall attempt to sketch out some of the various things that it can mean, and then explore some of the ways in which this can lead us into the concerns of ‘biblical interpretation’.

WHAT IS ‘HERMENEUTICS’? – THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LABEL IN THE MID 20TH CENTURY

One of the clearest discussions of the meaning of the term ‘hermeneutics’ remains that of Richard Palmer in his 1969 work designed specifically to introduce the burgeoning field of German-language philosophical reflection on hermeneutics to an English-speaking audience.⁸ Palmer separates out three main directions of the ancient usage of the terms *hermeneuein* and *hermeneia*, noting the link with *Hermes*, the messenger of the gods, charged with carrying meaning from the gods (the realm beyond human understanding) to humans.⁹ The three directions are:

- (1) *to express* aloud in words (to say)
- (2) *to explain* (e.g. a situation)
- (3) *to translate* (from another language).¹⁰

All three of these dimensions are significant, although for the biblical interpreter it is perhaps the second one which is of most immediate relevance. It is in this sense that Luke uses the word of Jesus on the Emmaus Road: the risen Jesus ‘interpreted [diermēneusen] to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’ (Lk. 24:27). This ‘explanatory’ aspect of the ‘hermeneutical problem’ is a matter of setting a word or a text in an appropriate context, and this is a two-fold task. The interpreter approaches the text to get a meaning out of it (what Palmer calls the ‘realistic’ way of interpreting), but crucially this meaning of the text is shaped by the framework, or preunderstanding, which the interpreter adopts (the ‘hermeneutic’ approach).¹¹

The subsequent development of the term ‘hermeneutics’ is traced by Palmer in six main stages.¹² For many centuries, it is a term which refers largely to the practice of reflecting on biblical exegesis, a practice which has been going on for as long as the church has had the Bible. Thus ‘retroactively’ one can allow that there has always been hermeneutics in

this sense, although it appears to be the case that the first explicit use of the word in this way is its appearance in 1654 in J. C. Dannhauer's work entitled *Hermeneutica sacra*.¹³

The first major shift in the application of the term occurs with the development of so-called historical-critical interpretation, particularly with the work of Spinoza (1632–77) and Ernesti (1707–81).¹⁴ For them the Bible is a source of timeless moral truth, but this truth needs digging out from its culturally specific modes of expression. Within such a framework, hermeneutics becomes the study of what words meant in their specific times and places: a general philological methodology. Along with this broadening of the term, the idea of 'biblical hermeneutics' develops as a specific sub-discipline.

The work of Schleiermacher (1768–1834) on hermeneutics brings about a fundamental change of conception: it now becomes a general science or art of understanding, relevant to all types of texts and concerning the relationship between text and interpreter.¹⁵ This, Palmer's third category of hermeneutics, is widely seen as the beginning of modern hermeneutics, and it is still noteworthy that Schleiermacher's concerns were fundamentally entwined with his approach to scripture. His *Hermeneutics* manuscripts contain various discussions of New Testament interpretation.¹⁶ From this point on, however, hermeneutics becomes its own discipline, and while it always has significance for theological thought, it tends to develop separately from it.

Palmer's remaining steps in the development of the term basically relate it to the work of several key thinkers. The fourth phase occurs with Dilthey (1833–1911) in his 19th century work on the historical nature of understanding in the 'human sciences' (the *Geisteswissenschaften*). Next comes hermeneutical phenomenology: the interpretation of existence itself in Heidegger (1889–1976), subsequently focused back on language by Gadamer in his claim that 'being that can be understood is language'.¹⁷ The final stage, combining text interpretation with psycho-analytic concerns, was exemplified for Palmer by the work of Paul Ricoeur, whose major work by that time was his *De L'Interpretation* (1965), subsequently translated into English as *Freud and Philosophy*.¹⁸

Palmer's book appeared not long after the work of E. D. Hirsch, jr, entitled *Validity in Interpretation*.¹⁹ Hirsch's approach requires us to limit the sense of hermeneutics to the broadly philological task of 'umpiring between already understood meanings so as to judge between conflicting possible interpretations'.²⁰ Hirsch separates out meaning and significance, and restricts hermeneutics to the former, attacking Gadamer explicitly as he does so.²¹ Hirsch's book has held remarkable sway over large sections of the biblical studies community, including but not limited to those of a conservative bent, and of course the practice of modern commentary writing, which has become a recognisable genre in itself, trades implicitly, if not explicitly, on this kind of disjunction.

But as Palmer points out, what is remarkable about Hirsch's definition of hermeneutics is less what it says than what it leaves out: the whole twentieth century development of what makes up the event of understanding. In short, we need to know 'what understanding a text means; it is not simply . . . arbitrating among competing interpretations'.²² The first reality of interpretation is that we have to decide what it is that confronts us in the text, and this is not a naively realist meaning equally accessible to all who read, but is a dynamic event of understanding which involves the reader, although need not be entirely at the mercy of the reader.

Palmer's account is by now a third of a century old, and it is fair to ask what has changed in the intervening period. One striking difference is that the *word* hermeneutics has become almost universally adopted in biblical studies for the various practices of biblical interpretation, while at the same time the existentially orientated tradition which so much dominates the tone of Palmer's discussion has lost much of its impetus in academic life and thought. Experience remains a valid touchstone of interpretative activity, but the Heideggerian hermeneutical programme of Bultmann and the so-called Bultmannians stands revealed as yet one more temporally and culturally shaped step along the theological way.

In the light of this survey of how the term 'hermeneutics' has developed, it seems that there are three possible ways in which one could go at this point. It could be argued that 'hermeneutics' is best understood as indeed allied to the existentially-orientated concerns in association with which it came to prominence, and that if these have faded then so too has hermeneutics. It is certainly salutary for a biblical interpreter familiar with the loose use of 'hermeneutics' in connection with every text and every interpretation to encounter a thorough review of modern literary theory which succeeds in limiting its coverage of 'hermeneutics' to a mere four pages, which are almost entirely concerned with Hans Robert Jauss' version of 'reception history' hermeneutics.²³

A second approach is to retain the label 'hermeneutics' for the broadly conceived project of interpreting texts, and then to subdivide within it distinguishably different conceptions of the task. The most thorough cataloguing of such options is provided in Edward Tingley's admirable survey, which begins by allowing that the sheer variety of approaches labeled at one time or another as hermeneutics 'lends weight to the suggestion that hermeneutics is less a subject than a kind of historical accident – maybe a philosophical eddy created by the forceful influence of Heidegger'.²⁴ Nevertheless, Tingley goes on helpfully to map out a complex intersection of eight identifiable areas, which allow at least six applications of the central concept of 'method'. These eight, listed for the purpose of illustration, are: theory of exegesis, hermeneutic theory, hermeneutic philosophy, applied hermeneutics, pretheoretical interpreta-

tion, post-theoretical interpretation, hermeneutic reflection (or ‘philosophical hermeneutics’), and atheoretical interpretation. Tingley concludes by (mis-)quoting Gadamer: hermeneutics is ‘not so much a philosophical position as a philosophical task’.²⁵

These two approaches perhaps provide the two extreme cases. A third option is to navigate somewhere through the middle: not everything that calls itself hermeneutics is hermeneutics, but certain specific understandings of the hermeneutical task are indeed hermeneutical, and in pursuing these we shall find a way of clarifying what it is that biblical interpretation can appropriate productively from the discipline of hermeneutics. We shall pursue this route with reference to the work of Gadamer (1900–2002) and Ricoeur (1913–2005).

GADAMER’S HERMENEUTICS AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Palmer wrote in eager anticipation of the translation of *Warheit und Methode* into English, but despite its appearance in two translations as *Truth and Method*,²⁶ a considerable body of clarificatory secondary literature on Gadamer,²⁷ and the increasingly rapid translation of many of his minor works into English,²⁸ it does not seem to be the case that his work has made much difference to the practice of biblical interpretation. Arguably one reason for this is that his comprehensive hermeneutical writings were neatly digested for the English-speaking audience by Anthony Thiselton’s *The Two Horizons*,²⁹ the title of which draws its guidance from the Gadamerian notion of *Horizontverschmelzung*, or ‘fusion of horizons’.³⁰ This had the simultaneous effect of popularising a key notion of Gadamer’s *magnum opus*, and leaving the majority of biblical scholars feeling that they no longer needed to read Gadamer for themselves, since it had been done for them. Gadamerian hermeneutics remains distanced from exegetical insight: it is all about learning how the process of interpretation can or could work. Gadamer himself has said that when he subsequently read the later work of Wittgenstein, he found it entirely congenial to his approach,³¹ for Wittgenstein too is engaged in the demanding project of trying to describe what really happens in everyday acts such as reading and understanding. In responding to critiques of *Truth and Method* Gadamer could write, ‘Fundamentally I am *not proposing a method*; I am describing *what is the case*’.³²

This is the sense in which Gadamer’s hermeneutical approach is sometimes called ‘ontological’, not simply that it is probing the fundamental nature of Being (though it takes on this Heideggerian quality too), but in that it is trying to describe what there really is in the ‘universal’ hermeneutical categories of being: language, text and meaning. If we could get into position to see this aright, then we would not have developed some further explanatory power which will shed light on as-yet

unread texts, or in Gadamer's key terms, we would not have a *method* for understanding, but rather we would have *truth*. Those critics who have challenged the title *Truth and Method* are right: the book could better be called 'Truth or Method'. Adopt a method and you foreclose the requisite openness to the particular horizon of the work, rendering it most likely that you will miss its truth, or at least suggesting that if you do encounter truth in it then this will be more by luck than judgment. Alternatively, dialogue with the text, in its specificity and with respect to its own agenda, and you will have a chance of being open to its truth, or of encountering its truth in dialogue with the text.³³

This is without a doubt a powerful and persuasive account of the nature of interpretative understanding, but it self-evidently does not offer exegetical method or insights, and it perhaps belongs to the age of theory, the age which was characterized by Jonathan Culler as follows: 'In this critical climate it is important . . . to maintain that . . . the interpretation of literary works is only tangentially related to the understanding of literature'.³⁴ Scholars of biblical interpretation, to focus the point, have been able and willing to acknowledge the usefulness of Gadamer's way of thinking,³⁵ but this has not led to, for example, 'Gadamerian readings' of biblical texts, and there are good reasons for supposing that it never will. Those who wish to reflect on how they (and others) go about interpreting the Bible will benefit from reading Gadamer. Those who wish to interpret the Bible will probably find that life is too short to justify such an investment. This judgment is perhaps borne out by what is to date the fullest investigation of the resources offered by Gadamer for biblical interpretation, the multi-faceted volume of readings of Pauline texts offered by Brook Pearson: *Corresponding Sense: Paul, Dialectic & Gadamer*.³⁶

The major analytic device Pearson chooses to develop is Gadamer's 'logic of question and answer', whereby a text is 'interrogated' as a conversation partner in the work of interpretative enquiry.³⁷ This leads to the 'dialectic' of his title: the pursuit of the subject-matter of a text wherever the questions lead, as against the imposition of a subject-matter by the application of a pre-formed 'method'. Pearson then pursues New Testament studies in terms of how far they measure up to this insight, and more specifically he explores the kinds of benefits available to explicit reflection on this dialectic in Pauline interpretation. He gives four detailed explorations of aspects of Pauline studies: the sustainability of traditional background assumptions about the interpretation of Philemon, the general methodological muddle of how to relate Acts to reconstructions of the life of Paul, how Paul perhaps alludes to Egyptian mystery-religion parallels to the discussion of baptism in Romans 6, and finally an examination of the letter of James as part of a Paul-James dialectical argument around the time of the collection for Jerusalem. It is entirely in keeping with Gadamer's hermeneutics that what Pearson is seeking to do

in these studies is 'suggest lines of inquiry into human interaction'³⁸ as much as interpret any texts. Pearson's 'state of the question' survey, which he adds as an appendix, further indicates that when NT interpreters do make use of Gadamer they frequently do so under the conviction that they are turning to hermeneutical theory precisely to furnish an interpretative method here or an interpretative insight there.³⁹

Pearson's work demonstrates that an approach which is faithful to Gadamer's hermeneutics will take quite a different route, and will find itself a constructive niche at precisely those points where the issues at stake in the biblical text can themselves be illuminated through the adoption of Gadamerian hermeneutical insights. Where Paul is arguing with others across a gap of presupposition (or prejudice, i.e. *pre-judgment*, to use Gadamer's preferred term), where he is engaged in question-and-answer in pursuit of the truth of a text (or opinion, or work of art, . . .), or where the conversational dialectic of ongoing understanding are themselves the issues at stake, then biblical interpretation finds itself occupied with the issues of hermeneutics in the world of the text. Since this is not the concern of most biblical interpreters addressing themselves to hermeneutics, it becomes clear why Gadamer's work has its relatively low profile in biblical interpretation.

INTERLUDE: THE DECONSTRUCTIVE CHALLENGE TO HERMENEUTICS

Gadamer's work was fully in Palmer's sights in the 1960's. When we consider how the hermeneutical world has moved on since 1969 we immediately confront one of those historical coincidences and contingencies which forever interrupt the smooth flow of ideas. Palmer could not have known that by the time his *Hermeneutics* was published, the American academy would have passed the watershed of Jacques Derrida's introduction of structuralism to America by simultaneously superseding it at the same moment, with his celebrated 1966 conference paper on 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'.⁴⁰ This is the moment of Derrida's 'two interpretations of interpretation', the one of which 'dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin' while the other 'is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism'.⁴¹ For Derrida, to take the road less playful is to consign oneself to the pursuit of a long-gone presence: every construction of meaning in any text will immediately invite the perception of an alternative construction of meaning. Structure shifts endlessly, meaning is deferred endlessly, and texts thus 'deconstruct' in a kind of interpretative freefall.⁴²

This is not the place for either a presentation of Derrida's thought in any detail, or a discussion of how it might play out in biblical interpretation.⁴³ The more limited observation relevant to our present

purpose is to note that the point at issue between hermeneutical and deconstructive approaches might best be understood as one of *trust*, or interpretative charity. Gadamer holds out a by and large positive evaluation of the text before him, seeking to accommodate himself to it in order to understand it on its own terms. Derrida, perhaps, wishes to say that left unchecked this accommodation becomes a kind of interpretative will-to-power, subsuming the text (or 'other') into oneself. At least, this is as far as the abortive 'dialogue' between the two managed to go when they met in April 1981 in Paris. Derrida appeared simply to evade the issues put to him by Gadamer, and one is left to deduce what the dialogue between the two might have been.⁴⁴

For most commentators, however they estimate its merits, deconstruction is not a *hermeneutical* option. Its working assumptions diverge too significantly, and it may be that the contrasting measures of generosity with which Gadamer and Derrida treat each other's positions in *Dialogue and Deconstruction* typifies precisely the point at stake. One of the few exceptions to this estimate is John Caputo, whose project of 'radicalising' hermeneutics explicitly attempts to demonstrate continuity between Derrida and Heidegger. Caputo proposes that hermeneutics develops in three directions after the latter's *Being and Time*: to the 'right' with Gadamer; to the 'left' with Derrida, and with (the later) Heidegger himself in some sort of (disputable) continuity.⁴⁵ Even those sympathetic to Caputo's broader aims feel inclined to suggest that this misreads the possibility of making a link between Gadamer and Derrida: his project in fact relies on the later Heidegger.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the idea of interpretative charity is an important one, and one does not need to follow Derrida to wonder whether Gadamer's hermeneutic gives away too much to the need for sympathy in understanding, to such an extent that it is left lacking in defence against the ideology of the text. David Hoy argues cogently that there is a significant difference between charity and agreement: 'agreement is neither a condition of interpretation, nor the telos of all understanding. If charity is a condition, it does not entail ultimate agreement or final convergence'.⁴⁷ In the light of this important distinction, we turn now to a thinker for whom the interplay of critique and charity forms one of the central issues in hermeneutics: Paul Ricoeur.

RICOEUR'S HERMENEUTICS AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

As noted above, Palmer's work on *Hermeneutics* does mention the 'new trend' exemplified by Paul Ricoeur and his work 'on interpretation'.⁴⁸ The subsequent decades saw Ricoeur develop arguably the most significant hermeneutical voice of the late twentieth century, and (with the noted exception of Caputo) almost every later attempt to characterise

hermeneutics as a twentieth century pursuit offers a taxonomy which places Ricoeur squarely at the post-Heideggerian centre of activity. Thus Don Ihde periodises hermeneutics into (1) its oldest phase, linking hermeneutics to biblical exegesis and interpretation, (2) its modern period, branching out into the social sciences and humanities, and (3) its twentieth-century concern with ‘an ontology of human existence’.⁴⁹ And when Werner Jeanrond offers his illuminating survey of the field of ‘philosophical hermeneutics’ by way of background for a discussion of *theological* hermeneutics,⁵⁰ it is a Palmer-style epoch-dividing exercise which demarcates time periods with reference to key thinkers.

The five stepping stones for Jeanrond are Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur, and although Jeanrond does not express the point this way, there is a sense in which these five trace out an arc of development with respect to hermeneutics and the *problem* of understanding. Schleiermacher first expands hermeneutics from the solution of difficult cases to a general approach to all interpretation. Dilthey universalises this historicity of understanding. Heidegger attempts to situate all being (and indeed ‘Being’) with respect to text, and then Gadamer fuses the horizons of one with the other to allow understanding.

With Ricoeur, we begin the journey back to critique: yes we may understand but how do we actually explain? ‘Ricoeur’s hermeneutics’, says Jeanrond, ‘represents the first effort in hermeneutics to integrate critical concerns into interpretation theory proper’.⁵¹ It is perhaps not irrelevant to his work that Ricoeur’s life was deeply marked by experiences of intense conflict, including time spent in a WW2 prisoner of war camp, and involvement in negotiating the student unrest of Paris in 1968–69. Certainly his work is marked by a passionate desire to mediate between *The Conflict of Interpretations*, as the title of his collection of essays from the 1960’s has it.⁵²

In particular, Ricoeur wishes to find a way of bringing into dialogue Gadamer’s ‘hermeneutics of tradition’ and the *Ideologiekritik* associated with thinkers like Jurgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel.⁵³ The way in which Ricoeur does this is particularly worthy of note, modeling as it does a key feature of his mediating hermeneutic work. His point is not to find some sort of over-arching structure which subsumes these two approaches into one unifying scheme, but rather he seeks to show that the claim of each tradition to universality (i.e. to successful explanation of the phenomena of interpretation) can be articulated in each case in such a way that the role of the other tradition is shown to lie within its own version of the interpretative dynamic.⁵⁴ The starting points for reflection of each tradition are different and cannot simply be subsumed into some new synthesis: this would be to fail to take either tradition seriously on its own terms. And yet, one cannot rest content with simply pronouncing the two traditions as incommensurable if one wishes to do both the courtesy

of engaging seriously with their versions of interpretation. The implication, for Ricoeur, is that if there is merit in each approach then there must be ways of articulating them which make allowance for each other's insights. Is the interpreter caught between recovering the tradition or standing outside it in a position of critique? On Ricoeur's reading, the interpreter does both (which seems undeniable as an observation of actual interpretative practices) and therefore each focus has something to learn from the other. Although for Ricoeur this remains a discussion of the negotiation of a Gadamerian hermeneutics of tradition and the critique of ideology, he couches his conclusion in startlingly theological terms, suggesting that we are caught between Exodus and the on-going need for deliverance; between Resurrection and the need for new life: 'eschatology is nothing without the recitation of acts of deliverance from the past'.⁵⁵

Such language alerts us to the particular relevance of Ricoeur's hermeneutics to biblical studies, because as well as his prolific writings on hermeneutics in general, he has written widely on biblical interpretation in particular.⁵⁶ Dan Stiver has recently pointed out that in fact a full appreciation of what Ricoeur is trying to do in the area of biblical interpretation or theological reflection is only possible by taking into account Ricoeur's explicitly philosophical work, and furthermore that it is only with the publication of Ricoeur's Gifford Lectures, as *Oneself as Another*, in 1992, that a sufficiently well-rounded position emerges for this to take place.⁵⁷ Theological estimations of Ricoeur have varied widely, and this is not the place to review them all. We may note briefly James Fodor's attempt to articulate a 'Christian Hermeneutics' which draws many of its positive features (though not uncritically) from Ricoeur.⁵⁸ More strikingly, Mark Wallace offers a limited alignment of Ricoeur with Barth's concerns for theological interpretation: 'the hermeneutical programs of both Barth and Ricoeur seek to release a thoughtful openness toward the "world" portrayed in the biblical witness', although they differ on the 'proper subject matter' of this program, it being 'christocentric exegesis' for Barth and a 'polysemic model' for Ricoeur (a model to which we shall return below).⁵⁹ Kevin Vanhoozer, in contrast, sees Ricoeur as one step removed from the theological task proper: 'like John the Baptist, Ricoeur serves the Gospel by baptizing our imaginations, philosophically preparing the way for the Word'.⁶⁰ Vanhoozer's later writings suggest that even this is too positive: he worries that Ricoeur has 'secularised' biblical interpretation by turning the power of appropriation of biblical narrative over from the Holy Spirit to the creative imagination.⁶¹

What of Ricoeur himself? His 'Preface to Bultmann', originally an introduction to the French translation of Bultmann's works *Jesus and the Word* (1934) and *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1958), offers a 3-fold characterization of 'moments' in the ever-present 'hermeneutic problem in Christianity'.⁶² The first is to understand the relationship between the

two testaments (or covenants): a concern reflecting the primary assumption that there is finally one scripture, and one Jesus Christ, and yet somehow this one scripture is bipartite in structure. The second moment is the realization that ‘the interpretation of the Book and the interpretation of life correspond and are mutually adjusted’.⁶³ The text and the mirror, as it were, are conjoined in a profound hermeneutic circle. The third moment, which goes right back to the heart of Christian faith, is the hermeneutic constitution of faith itself, since faith is in an interpretation of texts which are themselves an interpretation of the primitive Christian *kerygma*, and there is no unmediated access to this person Jesus Christ other than through the interpretative tradition.⁶⁴ This third hermeneutic root of Christianity is, in Ricoeur’s opinion, as central if not more so than the first two, but has generally been obscured by the prominence of the first two moments. It leads, in due course, to both a necessarily ‘modern’ sense of the word ‘hermeneutics’, and to the motivation which underlines Bultmann’s whole demythologization programme.⁶⁵ One might summarise the point here, as it relates to our topic, by saying that without hermeneutics Christianity cannot get started as a faith with a scripture, but this is not yet to determine the relationship of hermeneutics to biblical interpretation.

We may make a closer pass at this relationship by examining the subject matter of Ricoeur’s article on ‘Biblical Hermeneutics and Philosophical Hermeneutics’.⁶⁶ Here he challenges the Schleiermachian notion that ‘biblical hermeneutics’ is just one regional example of a general theory. Such a challenge straddles the major structural fault-line that runs through all of Ricoeur’s work: his persistent refusal to mix philosophical and theological modes of enquiry.⁶⁷ In keeping with what we have already seen of Ricoeur’s understanding of the necessity of negotiating between integrally different conceptions of inquiry, he reasons that theological work requires a different conceptual starting point from philosophy, which can only bring the enquirer to the brink of what is revealed. This approach is taken even as far as excluding from his published Gifford lectures the two explicitly theological lectures from the original series.⁶⁸ In the light of this, his argument concerning biblical and philosophical hermeneutics cannot be expected to be a theological one concerning the nature of the Bible, but rather a hermeneutical one concerning the kinds of understanding available in the reading and interpreting of texts as dissimilar as the Christian canon and any other text. Several of the key themes of his later philosophy can be pulled together around this central topic of the relationship between biblical and philosophical hermeneutics, in a way which in fact is not entirely clear in his 1975 article. Read back through the lens of his later work, the argument of ‘Biblical Hermeneutics and Philosophical Hermeneutics’ becomes much clearer, and it is this (reconstructed) argument which we shall now attempt to articulate.⁶⁹

The key insight which separates the 'early' Ricoeur and his interests in *Interpretation Theory* from the later Ricoeur and his interests in the self, if such a demarcation is possible,⁷⁰ is the insight that corresponding to every text's way of 'narrating as', where the story told is construed and constructed through textual figures and manoeuvres, there is a way of 'being as' which is correlated with that narration.⁷¹ To be, in this post-Heideggerian sense, is to be always *in medias res*, interpreting at the same time as acting and being acted upon. *Dasein* is that way of being-in-the-world which Heidegger saw as the ordinary everyday aspect of human existence, and which he wanted to unleash to its fullest potential. For Ricoeur, *dasein* is a kind of 'being-as': our lives are narrated in different configurations, and indeed they are *re-figured* in every telling. This 'refiguration' is not simply a re-configuration, but neither does it go quite so far as a full reconstruction of the way we are. Rather, it moves us further along in our own narrated existence. We see (and hear and understand . . .) in new ways not just because what is there to see is changed, but because we ourselves are changed through the text.⁷²

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur traces this characteristic of texts from Augustine (on time) and Aristotle (on plot) onwards.⁷³ It is a feature of (especially) Western thought that we are always seeking to make sense of this emplotment of human existence, and existing in ways which correlate with such narratives. All texts promote this possibility, and indeed what 'emplotment' consists of is a 'configuring operation' which mediates the reader from prefiguration of the world of the author, through the configuration of the words in the text, to the refiguration of the text by the reader.⁷⁴ It is in this precise context that Ricoeur's well-known characterisation of the 'worlds' of narrative comes into its own: the world 'behind' the text, which is the world of historical reference; the world 'in' the text, of literary structures and deconstructions; and the world 'in front' of the text, wherein we are invited to dwell, by imagination, refigured in the process.

Self-evidently such a possibility lies in all texts, unimaginative and flat, or deeply contoured and provocative as they may be. In biblical texts, this other way of being, a 'being-as' as it is explored in *Time and Narrative*, is something re-figured in the world of the biblical texts. To call this way of being disclosed in the world of the biblical text 'revelatory' is not to ally Ricoeur's concerns to any sort of traditional Christian doctrine of revelation, such as Barth, for example, would be most keen to uphold, but is simply to point out the refiguring with which the biblical text engages us. However, if that text invites us into the most profound self-reflections, and refigures our ways of being-as in keeping with the deepest sort of self-examination, then this is the sense in which biblical hermeneutics can be the 'full-scale' model of interpretation, while philosophical hermeneutics operates in shallower waters. The ontological self-examination of

non-biblical texts is, in Kathleen Blamey's serendipitous translation, a 'truncated' version of such ontological possibilities.⁷⁵

Ricoeur's constitutive hermeneutic of biblical texts has been tried out in various places, but is brought together most clearly in his concluding Gifford lectures.⁷⁶ 'The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures' is a powerful exploration of 'the self, informed by scripture' which is 'a responding self', because the biblical texts 'precede life itself' in the sense that they witness to the naming of God.⁷⁷ Why should these texts be taken seriously? For Ricoeur, this is the wager of Christian faith: there is no objective means whereby it can be demonstrated that these texts deserve serious attention. Rather, it is in the taking of them seriously that the self experiences the engagement with the God named and mediated through these texts. The wager is irreducibly an act of faith, a faith which 'marks the limit of any hermeneutics, because it is the origin of any interpretation'.⁷⁸ Two dialectics hold together Ricoeur's sense of how the self is to be refigured in the scriptural mirror. Firstly, following Northrop Frye's *The Great Code*,⁷⁹ Ricoeur contrasts the ways in which the Bible exhibits a typological and imaginative unity (a unity of primary subject matter, that is, rather than of historical coherence), with the ways in which it renders this unity by way of a polyphonic discourse. This in turn leads to 'a polysemic production of the figures of the responsive self'.⁸⁰ It is not coincidental, on this account, that the Bible consists of so many different genres. Indeed, in an important earlier work, Ricoeur argued that it is the 5-fold characterization of biblical discourse as prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom and hymnic which is key to understanding the way in which the Bible mediates revelation: 'in none of its modalities may revelation be included in and dominated by knowledge'.⁸¹ What followed from this, he had urged, was that 'The God who reveals himself is a hidden God and hidden things belong to him'.⁸² This same idea now becomes the second chief dialectic of his biblical interpretation: that in Exodus 3:13–15, God's giving of the name y-h-w-h is simultaneously a giving and a with-holding.⁸³ Where in one sense this giving of a name of God reveals him as unnameable (he cannot be captured by a name), in another sense there is 'the polyphonic unity among all the names of God: God is the same, whether he saves, blesses, judges, takes pity, etc'.⁸⁴ And in the same way, the self reflected in these scriptures is called to a letting go, and to the search for this 'imaginative unity'.⁸⁵

The second lecture ventures to be much more specific, reading the nature of the 'summoned self' in Old Testament prophetic call narratives, as well as in conformity to the image of Christ. 'The Christian is someone who discerns "conformity to the image of Christ" in the call of conscience. This discernment is an interpretation'.⁸⁶ The lectures thus conclude in the same place as their parent *Oneself as Another*, on the need for ethics to stand against endless interpretative indeterminacy, but they do so with explicit engagement with the biblical text.

Ricoeur's investigation of self and biblical text is the culmination of his lifelong pursuit of a hermeneutical phenomenology of human existence. Biblical interpretation is concerned with text, which is only one form of Ricoeur's more general category of 'action',⁸⁷ but 'hermeneutics' opens up the text-as-action model to bring in other dimensions of the task. It allows biblical interpretation to step back from the interpretative coal-face and ask the broader orientating questions, 'Why did they preserve the text? . . . For whom was it meaningful? . . . within even the historical-critical method there is a problem of being meaningful FOR'.⁸⁸ Once again, as with Gadamer, hermeneutics does not furnish a method or even a set of interpretative insights for biblical interpretation,⁸⁹ but it does offer ways of conceptualizing interpretative enquiry which in turn open up avenues to explore. The reading self is configured into the process whereby the God named in scripture is engaged with refiguring that self. By contrast, biblical interpreters who work with an assumption about the identity of the God who is given in scripture will perhaps tend to find a series of interpretative puzzles to solve rather than a summoning of the self.

The most persistent attempt to work out Ricoeur's hermeneutic in biblical interpretation is provided by the massive *oeuvre* of Walter Brueggemann. The influence of Ricoeur on Brueggemann's work has been immense, but as Brueggemann notes it is hard to pin it down to specific points or passages: 'it is impossible to specify any one text of his as a specific reference point',⁹⁰ although Brueggemann does highlight the themes of time, narrative and imagination. Perhaps it is in reading Brueggemann that we may get the best idea of what a biblical interpretation informed by Ricoeur's approach might look like.

CONCLUSION

What, then, does hermeneutics have to do with biblical interpretation? Understood in the narrow sense urged here, hermeneutics has less to do with biblical interpretation than it does with biblical interpreters. For those determined to keep the self out of the way, and to argue that hermeneutics simply does translate into the practice of interpreting the (biblical) text, then the relative value of the discipline for biblical interpretation remains small indeed. Small enough, possibly, to justify that attitude noted at the beginning whereby commentary writers may dispense with self-understanding in a footnote. But the self stubbornly refuses to keep out of the way.⁹¹ Furthermore, one need not be talking about any sort of 'postmodern' constructed or contingent self in saying this: even the most unreconstructed self still plays a contributory role in interpretation. Elsewhere I have argued that what is needed to navigate this maze is a hermeneutic of 'self-involvement': that the very nature of

the act of interpretation draws the self into the process, challenging and refining it as it does so.⁹²

In short: for embodied practices of biblical interpretation, hermeneutics offers resources for understanding the interpreting self. This insight may now be maintained separately from the existentially-orientated contexts within which hermeneutics rose to prominence in biblical studies, under the sway of Bultmann and the new hermeneutic. In the light of our focus on particular ways in which Gadamer and Ricoeur allow us to understand the requisite hermeneutical resources, it may be fitting to leave the last word to them.

What does hermeneutics have to do with biblical interpreters? For Gadamer it orientates us toward a way of being: 'Just as health is not known in the same way as a wound or disease, so the holy is perhaps more a way of being than of being believed'.⁹³ For Ricoeur, it 'reminds us that biblical faith cannot be separated from the movement of interpretation that elevates it into language. . . . Such is the properly hermeneutical constitution of faith'.⁹⁴

Notes

1 Hans Frei, *Theology & Narrative: Selected Essays* (eds. George Hunsinger & William C. Placher; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 155. The other term he hoped to eschew was 'narrative'.

2 Cf. Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 56: 'a conception of the world as simply existing, seen from no particular perspective . . . conceived from nowhere within it'.

3 Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans & Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), pp. xiii–xiv, see n.12.

4 Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans & Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), p. 97 n.287.

5 James M. Robinson & John B. Cobb, Jr (eds.), *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) and Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

6 Most commonly associated with the work of Fuchs and Ebeling. For representative works see E. Fuchs, *Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 4th ed., 1970) and G. Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1963).

7 The course was taught by Anthony C. Thiselton: 'a course in hermeneutics which . . . was the first of its kind to be offered in a British university', as described in his *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 3.

8 Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969). More recent summaries rarely improve upon Palmer's formulation: for one of the best see the multi-author entry 'Hermeneutics' in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans & Leiden: Brill, 2001) 2: pp. 531–9.

9 For a detailed discussion of the role of Hermes, the originary interpretive thief, see W. Dow Edgerton, *The Passion of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 18–42.

10 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 13; noting Gerhard Ebeling, 'Hermeneutik', *RGK* III (1959), pp. 242–64.

11 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 26. I have discussed Luke 24 from a hermeneutical point of view in Richard Briggs, *Reading the Bible Wisely* (London: SPCK, 2003), pp. 11–23.

12 These are described in Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 33–45. The summary provided here is my own.

13 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 34.

14 See now Roy A. Harrisville & Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Theology and Historical-Critical Method from Spinoza to Kasemann* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 32–48 for an account of Spinoza's influence, and J. Sandys-Wunsch, 'Johann August Ernesti', in Donald K. McKim (ed.), *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), pp. 316–9.

15 See Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, pp. 204–36, on 'Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics of Understanding'.

16 Note especially the entire 'Criticism' section of Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* (ed. Andrew Bowie; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 158–224.

17 Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (see n.26 below) p. 474 (orig in italics). This is Gadamer's comment on the universal aspect of hermeneutics: that any thing-in-itself projects itself actively, and is 'suffered' (i.e. passively) by thought, in understanding.

18 Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970).

19 E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

20 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 62. See Hirsch, *Validity*, pp. 169–73.

21 See especially Hirsch, *Validity*, p. 8 for his definitions, and appendix 2, entitled 'Gadamer's Theory of Interpretation', pp. 245–64.

22 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p.62, with quote on p. 69.

23 See Peter V. Zima, *The Philosophy of Modern Literary Theory* (London: Athlone, 1999), pp. 57–61.

24 Edward Tingley, 'Types of Hermeneutics', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 36 (1998), pp. 587–611, here p. 588.

25 Tingley, 'Types of Hermeneutics', p. 608, citing Gadamer's foreword to Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. ix, where Gadamer actually says that it is the term 'universality' of which this can be said.

26 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Warheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), translated as *Truth and Method* (ET G. Barden and J. Cumming; London: Sheed and Ward, 1975) and revised as *Truth and Method* (2nd revised ed., ET Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; London: Sheed and Ward, 1989). All citations are from this 1989 revision.

27 For a recent treatment see the work of Gadamer's biographer Jean Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer* (Continental European Philosophy; Chesham: Acumen, 2003).

28 Beginning with *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (trans & ed. David E. Linge; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) and including *Hermeneutics, Religion & Ethics* (Yale Studies in Hermeneutics; trans. Joel Weinsheimer; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

29 Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with special reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), esp pp. 293–356.

30 'In the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs- which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded', Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 307.

31 Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Reflections on My Philosophical Journey' in Lewis E. Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Library of Living Philosophers; Chicago: Open Court, 1997), pp. 3–63, here p. 19.

32 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 512, in supplement I (orig. 1965).

33 In *Truth and Method* Gadamer works with the paradigmatic example of the 'work of art' in order to discuss how we appropriate truth. For a clearer discussion of how his approach translates to written text, see his 'On the Truth of the Word', in Lawrence K. Schmidt (ed.), *The Specter of Relativism: Truth, Dialogue, and Phronesis in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 135–55.

34 Jonathan Culler, 'Beyond Interpretation', in his *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 3–17, here p. 5. We are now in

something of an 'after-theory' stage, as evidenced by Culler's new foreword to the 2002 Routledge Classic reprint of this book, as well as Valentine Cunningham, *Reading After Theory* (Blackwell Manifestos; Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) and Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

35 See for example Mark G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis? The impact of the canonical approach on Old Testament studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 135–48; Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2nd edn, 1999), pp. 64–93 (on tradition) and pp. 157–79 (on interpretation and appropriation).

36 (Biblical Interpretation Series 58; Leiden: Brill 2001).

37 Pearson, *Corresponding Sense*, pp. 8–17 and more generally pp. 1–45.

38 Pearson, *Corresponding Sense*, p. 288.

39 Pearson, *Corresponding Sense*, pp. 297–311, an appendix entitled 'An Indicative Survey of Gadamer's Hermeneutics in New Testament Theology, Hermeneutics, and Criticism'.

40 Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in his *Writing and Difference* (trans. Alan Bass; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 278–93. The paper was read at the Johns Hopkins University, 21 October 1966.

41 Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 292.

42 The most succinct presentation of his thinking is, in my estimation, his 'Signature Event Context', *Glyph 1* (1977), pp. 172–97.

43 I have attempted to outline Derrida's insights into the workings of texts, and make suggestions for their positive appropriation in biblical interpretation, in Richard Briggs, 'Gnats, Camel and Aporias: Who Should Be Straining Out What? Christianity and Deconstruction', *Vox Evangelica*, 25 (1995), pp. 17–32.

44 See Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation' in Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (eds.), *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 21–51, as well as Jacques Derrida, 'Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer', pp. 52–4 and Gadamer's 'Reply to Jacques Derrida', pp. 55–7. A summary is offered in Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 135–6, and more fully in Jean Grondin, *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 323–8.

45 John D. Caputo, 'Hermeneutics after *Being and Time*', in his *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 95–119.

46 Thus Francis J. Ambrosio, 'Caputo's Critique of Gadamer: Hermeneutics and the Metaphorics of the Person', in Schmidt (ed.), *The Specter of Relativism*, pp. 96–110, esp pp. 100, 108.

47 David C. Hoy, 'Post-Cartesian Interpretation: Hans-Georg Gadamer and Donald Davidson', in Hahn (ed.), *Philosophy of Gadamer*, pp. 111–28, here p. 125.

48 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 43–5.

49 Don Ihde, 'Paul Ricoeur's Place in the Hermeneutic Tradition', in Lewis E. Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Library of Living Philosophers; Chicago: Open Court, 1995), pp. 59–70, esp p. 62.

50 Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), pp. 44–77.

51 Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, p. 74.

52 See Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). For background see Charles E. Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur: His Life and Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 4–51, a 'Biographical Essay'.

53 See especially the 'transcendental-pragmatic perspective' of Karl-Otto Apel, *Understanding and Explanation* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 1984).

54 This is the project of Ricoeur's masterly essay 'Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology', in his *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), pp. 270–307.

55 Ricoeur, 'Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology', p. 306.

56 See his collections of essays: *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Lewis S. Mudge; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) and *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (ed. Mark I. Wallace; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), as well as his 'Biblical Hermeneutics', *Semeia* 4 (1975), pp. 29–148, and his several substantial philosophical-exegetical contributions to *Thinking*

Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies (with Andre Lacocque; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

57 Dan R. Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 23.

58 James Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics: Paul Ricoeur and the Refiguring of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

59 See Mark I. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale Theology* (StABH 6; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2nd ed., 1995) pp. xiii, 81.

60 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 288.

61 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), p. 231, n.89. This is from an article 'The Spirit of Understanding: Special Revelation and General Hermeneutics' (pp. 207–35) which postulates a dichotomy between 'Yale' and 'Chicago' and situates Ricoeur on the opposite side of the fence from Hans Frei. Such a Ricoeur-Frei 'typology' is deeply problematic, and is critiqued, though not nearly strongly enough, by Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*, pp. 258–330, who suggests that 'there is something of a convergence between their respective approaches'. (p. 305) Space precludes a full treatment of this issue here.

62 Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann', reprinted in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 49–72, here pp. 49–50.

63 Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann', p. 52.

64 Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann', p. 54.

65 Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann', p. 57.

66 Reprinted in Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, pp. 89–101, originally part of a symposium on exegesis (1975).

67 For Ricoeur's own account of this matter see *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 23–5.

68 The two excluded Gifford lectures are now published, but perhaps suffer undue neglect in overall estimations of Ricoeur's thinking. They are discussed below.

69 For a similar endeavour see Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*, pp. 239–46.

70 See Ricoeur's own account of his development in 'From existentialism to the philosophy of language' (1971), reprinted in Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 315–22; and with a focus on his continuous development in 'On Interpretation' (1983) reprinted in *From Text to Action*, pp. 1–20.

71 See Paul Ricoeur, 'Intellectual Autobiography', in Hahn (ed.), *Philosophy of Ricoeur*, pp. 3–53, here pp. 28–29; summarising the discussion of the verb 'to be' in *Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 247–56.

72 This bald summary scarcely does justice to Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (3 vols; trans Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–88), but for as concise a presentation of it as may be found see particularly 'Time and Narrative: Threefold Mimesis' (*Vol 1*, pp. 52–94, esp pp. 76–7).

73 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol 1*, pp. 5–51.

74 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol 1*, p. 53. I am indebted here to the clarifications of Mario J. Valdés, 'Paul Ricoeur and Literary Theory' in Hahn (ed.), *Philosophy of Ricoeur*, pp. 259–80, esp pp. 272–6.

75 This is Blamey's translation of Ricoeur's 'ontologie brisée', although I am unable to locate the reference.

76 See, in the order in which they were given and should be read: Paul Ricoeur, 'The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures', in David E. Aune & John McCarthy (eds.), *The Whole and Divided Self* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), pp. 201–20, and 'The Summoned Subject in the School of the Narratives of the Prophetic Vocation' in *Figuring the Sacred*, pp. 262–75. In the light of this publication process it is at the very least odd that the former essay opens with 'My final two Gifford lectures form an inseparable whole.' Note that the first essay is followed by an illuminating 'Conversation' between Ricoeur, David Pellauer, and John McCarthy (pp. 221–43).

77 Ricoeur, 'The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures', p. 207.

78 Ricoeur, 'The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures', p. 206.

79 Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

80 Ricoeur, 'The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures', p. 211.

81 Paul Ricoeur, 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', in *Essays in Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 73–118, here p. 93.

82 Ricoeur, 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', p. 93.

83 On this see further Paul Ricoeur, 'From Interpretation to Translation', in LaCocque and Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically*, pp. 331–61.

84 Ricoeur, 'The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures', p. 218. Fodor flags up the interesting point that it is not the text as such which names God, but those conformed to the God so named, bringing in an ecclesiological dimension, Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 303 and p. 329 n.233.

85 Fodor faults Ricoeur here, rightly I think, for misappropriating Matt 10.39 as 'Whoever would save his life will lose it', whereas the verse in question offers a specific narrative context, i.e. Jesus' 'for my sake'. Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 256, n.84.

86 Ricoeur, 'The Summoned Self', p. 274.

87 Ricoeur, 'Intellectual Autobiography', in Hahn (ed.), *Philosophy of Ricoeur*, pp. 31–4; and note also 'The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text' (1971), reprinted in the significantly titled collection *From Text to Action*, pp. 144–67.

88 Ricoeur, 'Interview', p. 240. Compare R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (OBT: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 2: 'The crucial question, which is prior to questions of method and sets the context for them, is that of purpose and goal. To put it simply, *how we use the Bible depends on why we use the Bible*. In practice, many of the disagreements about how are, in effect, disagreements about why, and failure to recognize this leads to endless confusion.'

89 Although this is not to say that interpretative insights might not be generated along the way. Such seems to have happened with Ricoeur's memorable aphorism about being called 'beyond the desert of criticism' – but this is not a method one can pursue so much as a description of the kind of result one is looking for.

90 Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 57–60, here p. 57 n.167.

91 Witness the growing volume of biblical studies literature which consciously foregrounds the interpretative self in acts of biblical interpretation. Examples include Daniel Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger (ed.), *Autobiographical Biblical Criticism: Between Text and Self* (Leiden: Deo, 2002).

92 Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), esp pp. 147–82.

93 Gadamer, 'Reflections on the Relation of Religion and Science', in *Hermeneutics, Religion, & Ethics*, pp. 119–27, here p. 127.

94 Ricoeur, 'Philosophy and Religious Language', (1974), reprinted in *Figuring the Sacred*, pp. 35–47, here p. 47.