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SEMIOTICS, SEMANTICS AND TEXTS: THE QUESTION OF REFERENCE
FOR HERMENEUTICS

The University of Oklahoma

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Semiotics, Semantics and Texts:
The Question of Reference for Hermeneutics

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
KATHARINE S. MULFORD
Norman, Oklahoma
1983

SEMIOTICS, SEMANTICS AND TEXTS: THE QUESTION
OF REFERENCE FOR HERMENEUTICS
A THESIS
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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Dedication

Dr. Edwin Hastings Mulford

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Preface

The discussion in this text is about meaning and reference in the context of hermeneutic theory. A prevailing question in the text is whether or not a phenomenologically based theory of discourse can clarify the postulate of reference in interpretation theories. Less supple questions are slow on the ascent, but the discussion gives way to reflection on the concept of philosophical truth.

I have relied upon specific texts of Ricoeur's for an exposition of the problem of reference in each of three contexts: semiotics, semantics and texts. Ricoeur's theory of discourse and its developments in a theory of metaphorical reference abandons semiotics as an abstraction of semantics. The semantic theory applies to both spoken and written discourse.

The first step in the exposition is to clarify the rift between structuralism and hermeneutics. Once the leading suppositions could be set down, Ricoeur's aim of restoring unity to the phenomenon of language, a forfeiture in the structuralist system, could be viewed as the backbone of his theory of discourse. Parity between the language system and spoken discourse countermands the structuralist error of excluding

meaning and reference from language.

The second step in the exposition is to isolate the assumptions of hermeneutics and examine the structure it imputes to spoken discourse. Ricoeur's analysis follows the theses of Husserl's Logical Investigations¹ rather closely, with the specific aim of explicating the intentional structure of speech and the referentiality of each instance of discourse.

Hermeneutics is, however, a theory about written texts. The third step in the exposition is to augment the theory of spoken discourse and to re-apply it at the level of written texts. The hermeneutic supposition of the indivisibility of language is compelling once the argument for it includes the premises of intentionality, the ideal status of linguistic meanings, and the referentiality of all discourse, i.e., phenomenological theses. The first two steps, applied to written discourse, secure the autonomy of the text and in this way hermeneutics becomes a philosophy of consciousness which preempts the structuralist analysis of language.

The fourth step in the exposition is to present Ricoeur's theory of metaphorical reference. The theory argues for a suspension of literal reference in metaphorical discourse - a suspension that splits rather than eliminates literal reference. Although modelled on the theories of Frege and Husserl, Ricoeur's theory of reference includes poetic discourse and

¹Edmund Husserl, Logical Investigations.

so removes a prominent exception to the former positions.

Finally, I have traced Ricoeur's theory of discourse to its phenomenological roots in the works of Husserl and Heidegger. But another hermeneutic path can be traced to these same roots. This other path is that taken by Derrida. The fifth step in my exposition is to show the common roots of Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics and Derrida's deconstruction hermeneutics. This poses a considerable challenge to the phenomenological program. Although Ricoeur's position could be viewed as an attempt to mediate Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, this may only be accomplished through the explication of a nascent hermeneutic in Husserl's studies on linguistic meaning so that, like Heidegger, Ricoeur seems intent upon thinking out the transcendental conditions for phenomenology. Ricoeur's hermeneutic is not, then, the dialectical outcome of tension between Husserl and Heidegger. Rather, it becomes, on Ricoeur's analysis, the transcendental condition for phenomenology. Whether deconstruction hermeneutics, a hermeneutic of "suspicion," shares this position is a question posed in this last section.

CHAPTER I

The structuralist dichotomy between language and speaking may be summarized in the following three points¹:

- 1) Language is an isolable, well-defined "object". It can therefore be studied separately by a single science while speech falls under the scope of several related sciences, e.g., philosophy, social psychology.
- 2) Language is only "perfected" in an abstract collectivity. It is trans-individual and homogeneous. The exigencies which pertain to speech may therefore be eliminated from the study of language.
- 3) Language is a potentially live entity. Its actuality lies in the speech event. Structuralism is, ipso facto, a static analysis.

Because speech is the function of an individual speaker it is an individual act in which random and sometimes unprecedented use of rules are possible. Language, Saussure claims, is a social-system or institution. It exists only in a collectivity and so has no subject-pole. It follows, then, that language can become the object of a scientific investigation on just those grounds which separate it from speech while speech resists even basic scientific organization

¹Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wade Baskin, New York, 1959, p. 65ff.

(unity) due to its characteristic heterogeneity.

This dichotomy is at the root of both further important distinctions within Saussure's work and the forms structuralism has taken after Saussure, e.g., Levi-Strauss, Barthes. It is also the main target of any debate between hermeneutics and structuralism. On Saussure's analysis, linguistics is defined as the study of a system of signs and is therefore a semiology. This definition is significant on two counts. First, it gives a clear definition of the object of linguistics. Second, it paves the way for linguistics to become the paradigm, the "master-pattern" for all branches of semiology. Because language is the most "complex and universal of all systems of expression", it is also the most characteristic.² In short, the linguistic model becomes paradigmatic for all systems of meaning or expression whether verbal or non-verbal, e.g., texts, myths, socio-cultural codes.

In addition to the separation of language and speech, the basic suppositions of structuralism which pose such formidable problems for hermeneutics are three: the distinction between synchrony and diachrony, between the signified and the signifier, and between semiotics and semantics.

Ricoeur challenges the alleged "triumph" of the structuralist program by citing inevitable losses which go along with the structuralist gains. The first assumption, i.e., that language may be a properly scientific object, subordin-

²Ibid., p. 15.

ates the concept of objectivity to theory making the object a theoretical construct. Saussure never questioned the viability of this assumption, for the simple exclusion of the speech act from linguistics purified and unified the field for study. This maneuver enabled Saussure to exclude both individual and collective production of new utterances and meanings. Ricoeur argues that the production of new meanings is essential to language and so the gain of scientific rigor in structuralism masks the incompleteness of the resulting study.

In stressing the division between synchronic and diachronic linguistic methods, and in emphasizing the former over the latter, the potentiality of language is made to prevail over its actuality. In this synchronic closure change per se becomes unintelligible. According to Saussure, change is an intra-systemic phenomenon which may be measured by a single result: the shifts in the relations between signifier and signified. If linguistic change is intra-systemic, it is a function of the system and therefore a function of permanence. In traditional structuralism the phenomenon of change is disarmed by the continuity of the system.

Synchronic linguistics will be concerned with the logical and psychological relations that bind together co-existing terms and form a system in the collective mind of speakers...Diachronic linguistics, on the contrary, will study relations that bind together successive terms not perceived by the collective mind but substituted for each other without forming a system.³

³Ibid., p. 99.

Indeed, diachronic relations may be eliminated in favor of synchronic relations since it is only by way of the latter that we get a system of relations at all - and this, we recall, is the main accomplishment that promises rigor in linguistics. The already meager status granted to linguistic innovation is further impoverished by restricting the concept to diachronic linguistics and so to an unfavorable study.

Saussure's definition of the linguistic sign is the third point of contention for Ricoeur. The sign is a unit constituted by the union of signifier (signifiant) and signified (signifié). Prior to adopting this terminology Saussure states that the sign is a union of concept and sound-image.⁴ It is a conjunction which rests upon an immanent difference and this is the meaning of Saussure's remark that "in language there are only differences".⁵

Separating language from speech is the first step in isolating the proper object for linguistic study. But this is not yet the structuralist victory. Signs and their relations become the "concrete entities" of structural linguistics and this marks the more significant accomplishment in that linguistics becomes semiology.

The sign results from an immanent difference between the signifier and the signified. The system itself is also

⁴Ibid., p. 67.

⁵Ibid., p. 67.

characterized by the relation of difference between the signs which comprise it as such. The value of the sign, i.e., its positive identity of ideality is the result of the "simultaneous presence" of other signs within the system. The ideality of the sign, its meaning, relies upon two levels of constitution. The simple difference among signs is the proper entrance of meaning, but this relation is itself possible on the basis of a prior relation, i.e., between signified and signifier. In the context of hermeneutics this reduction of meaning to an abstract concept of difference is untenable.

Ricoeur argues that along with the structuralist exclusion of speaking, historicity (actuality in time) and meaning in language, "the primary intention of language, which is to say something about something" is also excluded. I shall say more about Ricoeur's thesis of intentionality in the appropriate context. Presently, our concern is with the alleged forfeitures of structuralism. The aim in language to say something about something introduces a link between meanings and the reference. Saussure's aim was to close the system of signs in such a way as to permit the construction of a linguistic universe without positing extralinguistic facts. According to Ricoeur, this closure places language in extreme peril and it is the task of hermeneutics to retrieve the essential unity of language and speaking.

Our task appears to me to be rather to go all the way with the antinomy, the clear conception

of which is precisely the ultimate result of structural understanding. The formulation of this antinomy is today...the condition for the return to an integral understanding of language; to think language should be to think the unity of that very reality which Saussure had disjoined, the unity of language and speech.⁶

The hermeneutic task thus has a definite condition for its own fulfillment and this is, ironically, the antinomy which sets structuralism on its course.

Ricoeur claims that a dialectical examination of the structuralist antinomy between language and speech aims at relocating the phenomenon of speech, i.e., the speech act, at the center of language.⁷ One must begin with an explication of the hierarchical levels of language in order to show that passing from one level to another entails not only a change in the primary linguistic unit, but also a change in the linguistic function of that level. The primary unit at the level of speech is the sentence. Accordingly, the dialectical aim of re-locating of the centrality of the sentence for linguistics. We will see that this move is finally aimed at re-locating the primacy of meaning in language.

The introduction of hierarchical levels in language emphasizes an important hermeneutic axiom, i.e., that language is multi-leveled. Ricoeur's contention is that a shift from the semiological unit (the sign) to a larger unit (the sen-

⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, ed. Charles Reagan, David Stewart, Boston, 1978, p. 113.

⁷Ibid., p. 112.

tence) is actually a shift from semiotics to semantics. The sentence, as we shall see, is a production, a work of meaning which Ricoeur argues is central to language. Here we note the advent of meaning in that the sentence refers signs to things while in structuralism the sign is the primary unit and refers only to other signs by way of difference. The speech act neutralizes the axiomatic exclusion of meaning and reference that we encountered at the level of semiotics and constitutes a new version of the antinomy of language and speech. Now we have a contrast between semiology and semantics which is not restricted to the structuralist distinction between synchronic and diachronic methodologies. Semantics, on the structuralist model, is subordinated to the synchronic account of meaning, i.e., the relation of difference between the signifier and the signified.

Let us review this cursory discussion on the main points of contention between hermeneutics and structuralism.

The antinomy of language and speech is central to the Saussurean linguistic model. Its fecundity is demonstrated in Saussure's reappraisal and definition of the linguistic sign, the structuralist concepts of time and history as applied to language and the distinction between semiology and semantics. Ricoeur states that the condition for a hermeneutic recovery of the essential unity of language and speech (ultimately the condition for hermeneutics) lies in pressing the structuralist antinomy to its extreme form.

The semiotics of language represents this extreme and constitutes, for Ricoeur, one pole in the dialectic of structuralism and hermeneutics. The anti-thetical pole consists of Ricoeur's theory of discourse which will be examined presently. Three forms of Ricoeur's dialectic have been noted:

- 1) Structuralism and hermeneutics
- 2) Language and speaking
- 3) Semiotics and semantics

The resolution of the dialectic in each formulation is a restoration of meaning in language.

I have noted four main theses in structuralism to which Ricoeur is opposed. These were:

- 1) The priority of language over speech
- 2) The priority of the synchronic over the diachronic
- 3) The priority of the linguistic sign over other linguistic units, e.g., the sentence
- 4) The priority of semiotics over semantics

Ricoeur's positive contribution to the debate between structuralism and hermeneutics, i.e., his theory of discourse, corresponds roughly to these four theses. In each case Ricoeur offers the converse thesis and so brings the debate to an extreme antinomy. But the conflict between semiotics and semantics, as I have said, is the strongest representative of this debate since the remaining structuralist theses are grounded in semiotics (language just is a system of

signs).⁸

Before proceeding with this discussion, I want to summarize Ricoeur's counter proposals to the four points noted above. We will then be in a position to examine the proposed resolution of the conflict between semiotics and semantics.

The speech act, on Ricoeur's thesis, is a temporal event. Speech is always a "vanishing event" because its temporal mode is that of presence. Always unique, the speech act is the instantiation of language. This point contributed to Saussure's exclusion of speech from linguistics.⁹ But according to Ricoeur speech also has an ideal structure, the explication of which would render Saussure's distinction between language and speaking superfluous.

In contrast to the closed system of signs, i.e., language, spoken discourse "consists in a series of choices"¹⁰ and innovation. For the speaker, language is not so much an object as it is a mediation of expression. Meanings are conveyed through selective processes which rule out certain forms of expression while including others. This is the screening process of contextuality. In such a manner infinitely many

⁸Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 16.

⁹Saussure also envisaged a linguistics of speech, but this was not consummated.

¹⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", p. 115.

new combinations may be produced in discourse.

Ricoeur's third point introduces the concept of reference. The speech act refers the listener to the speaking subject. The anonymity of the language system could preserve itself against the selective process noted above partly because there is no one in that system to make choices. There is no speaker for structuralism. It follows that the advent of meaning is intimately connected to the advent of a speaking subject, i.e., the speech act. But at the same time the speech act implies an act of communication and so "the subjectivity of the act of speech is from the beginning the inter-subjectivity of allocation".¹¹

Just as discourse refers to both the subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of the speech act, so does it refer to a world about which one speaks. Discourse is both self-referring and, by way of the structure of the sentence, it is world-referring. This double referentiality of discourse stands in sharp contrast to the limited and abstract function of reference in the context of structuralism.

Having set the opposition between hermeneutics and structuralism by way of the antinomy of language and speaking, Ricoeur proposes a second level of thought. He proposes to examine a synthesis between the two models by discovering "an instrument of thought" which can overcome the polarities.¹²

¹¹Ibid., p. 115.

¹²Ibid., p. 116.

The synthetic step would mean bringing the phenomenon of language into view as an "incessant conversion" of the structure and event of discourse. While the first level of thought was one of simple opposition, the second level must complete the dialectic of the first level. Failing this synthetic step would leave us with the antinomy as a simple, irreducible opposition. But in order to achieve the second and synthesizing level of thought, Ricoeur subordinates the two poles of structure and event to discourse while "discourse" is still understood by way of opposition to the structural concept of language. The strong sense of the antinomy is thus moved to a level internal to discourse which has itself been one pole in the dialectic of language and speech.

Ricoeur transforms the problem of the synthesizing step into a discussion of the relation between syntax and semantics. It may be that the role of semiotics is replaced by that of syntax for purposes of Ricoeur's argument. According to Ricoeur, the disrelation of syntax and semantics; of grammar and meaning; of sentence parts and sentence wholes, is emphasized in structuralism. The sentence is the primitive linguistic unit on Ricoeur's view - not syntactical forms. Ricoeur turns to the work of Chomsky to examine the possibilities of linking syntax and semantics.¹³ Although the link between syntax and semantics is important for Ricoeur's theory

¹³Ibid., p. 116.

of discourse, Chomskyan linguists are far from settled on the issue of specifying the link in question.¹⁴ Even if the issue were settled, it seems that the standard view would still subordinate semantics to the syntactical structures operating at the "deep levels" of sentences. That is, syntactical structures may be semantically meaningful but the interpretation of semantic meaning is governed by "base components", e.g., syntactical, lexical, phonological. It may be misleading to raise these doubts about the utility of Chomskyan linguistics for Ricoeur since the main point in noting Chomsky's work is simply to show that syntactic structures do not comprise the completion of a self-sufficient system, i.e., language.¹⁵ The concept of a deep structure is, for Chomsky, syntactic, and it determines the semantic interpretation of a sentence.

...the syntactic component of a grammar must specify, for each sentence, a deep structure that determines its semantic interpretation...¹⁶

and,

...when we define deep structures as 'structures generated by the base component', we are, in effect, assuming that the semantic interpretation of a sentence depends only on its lexical items and the grammatical functions and re-

¹⁴Douglas Stalker, "Deep Structure", Philosophical Monographs, Philadelphia, 1976.

¹⁵Paul Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", p. 117.

¹⁶Noam Chomsky, Aspects of theory of Syntax, Cambridge, 1965, p. 16.

lations represented in the underlying structures in which they appear.¹⁷

What is important for Ricoeur is the idea that the discussions on syntax and semantic interpretation occur within the context of sentences rather than that of an abstract concept of the linguistic sign. Apart from exegetical problems of Chomskyan linguistics, the thesis that the link between syntax and semantics can be specified as significant. For Ricoeur it brings the synthetic step a bit closer because it affords the possibility of introducing the sentence as the principal object of linguistics. The problem posed by the fact that new meanings and new sentences are produced in language, which includes the recognition of deviant sentences and therefore interpretation skills, can then be reintegrated and in this step the problem of meaning becomes central to the phenomenon of language.

Having driven the poles of structure and event into discourse, i.e., into the speech-act per se, Ricoeur narrows the focus so that one forgets that the condition for this polarity is actually the polarity between language and speech as specified by the traditional structuralist position. The concept of language undergoes a shift which, in turn, becomes a shift in the object for linguistics. Since the speech-act comprises the antinomy formerly held between language and speech, the linguistic object is significantly limited to the structure

¹⁷Ibid., p. 136.

of this act (which is explicated in terms of the sentence). The concept of a formal language is no longer necessary in Ricoeur's dialectic.

Establishing a link between syntax and semantics is thus a first step in Ricoeur's semantic theory of discourse. The direct result is that the sentence, the principal carrier of meaning, replaces the sign. Indirectly, a link between semiotics and semantics results, but as we shall see, it is a link that reverses the order of priority established in structuralism. Whether this step is synthetic, or a simple reversal of the dialectical poles, remains a question.

CHAPTER II

A Semantic Theory: The Structure of the Sentence

Recall that a motivating factor in Ricoeur's debate with structuralism is the structuralist priority of the system over the actuality of spoken discourse. To the "unidimensionality" of structuralism, i.e., its reduction of language to signs or to "difference", Ricoeur opposes what he calls a "two dimensional approach" by which language "relies on two irreducible entities, signs and sentences".¹ The two kinds of sciences that correspond to these linguistics units are, respectively, semiotics and semantics. Although Ricoeur's first efforts are to achieve a parity between these two approaches, claiming that their objects are irreducible, we shall see that in fact Ricoeur comes to see semiology as an abstraction of semantics. The duality of semiotics and semantics though *prima facie* coincident with the structuralist dichotomy of language and speech takes the form of an antinomy within discourse itself, i.e., within the antinomy of structure and event. With this move it is clear that the

¹Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", Centennial Lectures, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, 1976, p. 7.

terms of Ricoeur's polemic are not simple replacements for those of structuralism. The structuralist dichotomy becomes a dialectic within a new concept of discourse.

In a later essay, "Interpretation Theory"², Ricoeur replaces the term "structure" with that of "meaning". The antinomy in discourse now reads: event and meaning rather than event and structure. What Ricoeur means by the event of discourse is fairly clear, though more will be said on this. What he means by the structure of discourse, and indeed meaning, is rather vexing.

Analysis of the structure of discourse introduces a "new unit", i.e., the sentence. Ricoeur argues that the sentence is a new unit precisely because it cannot be reduced to the combinatory possibilities of signs.

This structure (of parole) is the synthetic construction of the sentence itself as distinct from any analytic combination of discrete entities.³

Words are not simply "short sentences" any more than sentences are stretched out, more complex words. The sentence is not the sum of its parts; it does not itself become a sign. The designation "discourse" which replaces one pole, i.e., speech, of the structuralist dichotomy, is intended to bring this point into focus.

The specification of the sentence introduces yet another

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 7.

element. The encompassing science of semiology, of which linguistics was a part, takes the sign as the basic linguistic entity. The sign, we recall, is itself the result of a relation of difference (signifier-signified) and its ontological status is one of potentiality. The sentence, on Ricoeur's view, cannot be reduced or decomposed into such elements. Again, the sentence is not itself a sign and is therefore not a candidate for semiological analysis (though its parts, in so far as they may be signs, may be objects for semiology). One cannot, then, justify the extension of the semiological method to the analysis of sentences and this is why Ricoeur introduces a semantic analysis of the sentence.

There is therefore no linear progression from the phoneme to the lexeme and then on to the sentence and to linguistic wholes larger than the sentence. Each stage requires new structures and a new description.⁴

I have already pointed out that one of the basic axioms for a hermeneutic is that language is composed of several layers or levels. Ricoeur's point here is based upon this supposition. A shift from terms to sentences cannot proceed in a linear fashion because these phenomena are irreducible, autonomous entities which require different modes of analysis. The shift from sentences to larger entities, i.e., texts, will be examined in the following chapter. It is well to consider the possibility that this latter shift may consti-

⁴Ibid., p. 7.

tute problems for Ricoeur's thesis which at this point emphasizes the discontinuity of linguistic levels.

In summary, the redesignation of language as discourse accomplishes the following renovations:

- 1) It drives the distinction between language and speech-act pole so that discourse comprises language as speaking.
- 2) It reformulates the antinomy within discourse to read: event and meaning.
- 3) It introduces the concept of meaning and consequently introduces the concept of reference.
- 4) It produces a distinction between semiology, the study of signs, and semantics, the study of sentences.
- 5) It demands the autonomy of levels within discourse, i.e., phonetics, lexicography, semantics, text interpretation must be viewed as fundamentally unique and autonomous levels.

I have argued that the condition upon which Ricoeur's polemic rests is the redesignation of language as discourse. The advent of meaning, we have seen, lies in the act of speaking since the structuralist definition of the linguistic sign is not an account of the constitution of meanings (a relation of difference is not yet the constitution of meaning). Although Saussure would not employ the notion of dialectics to characterize the relation between speech acts and the production of meaning in language, it is clear that these functions of language belong, rather disparagingly, to his definition of speech. According to Saussure, a linguistics of speech would be troubled by a deficiency which is the result of just

these elements, i.e., the actuality of speech as opposed to the ideality of language meant that speech acts could not be rigorously studied.

Ricoeur's first efforts in a semantics of discourse, is then, to remove the stigma which structuralism has imposed upon the study of speech. The first task,

...must be to rectify this epistemological weakness...proceeding from the fleeting character of the event as opposed to the stability of the system by relating it to the ontological priority of discourse...(my emphasis)⁵

Saussure's account of linguistics could not, of course, accomodate inquiries into the ontological status of discourse. Those criteria which imply a deficiency in a linguistics of speech are just those which, for Ricoeur, imply the ontological priority of discourse over the system, e.g., actuality, temporality, and meaning-productivity of discourse. So the restitution of language through the semantics of discourse is founded on the possibility of explicating a formal structure in the ontology of discourse. This structure is actually the ontological structure of the sentence.⁶

My point is this: what Saussure takes to be an epistemological weakness in discourse, Ricoeur takes to be an epistemological strength. He argues his position by challenging the structuralist hypothesis that discourse is an "irrational

⁵Ibid., p. 9.

⁶Ibid., p. 11.

entity" (implied by the opposition between language and speech). In contrast, Ricoeur argues that the structure of discourse is explicable. We can repeat and reidentify acts of discourse. We can translate sentences from one language to another and retain the sense of the original sentence.⁷ One may say of the speech act that it has a propositional content, i.e., the "said as such". Now this concept of a propositional content presupposes something about one speaks and so introduces the concept of reference into the structure of the sentence.

Ricoeur's definition of semantic theory is:

The most concrete definition of semantics, then, is the theory that relates the inner or immanent constitution of sense to the outer or transcendent intention of the reference.⁸

Semantics is taken by some contemporary linguistic philosophers to mean, roughly, the study of relations between linguistic expressions and those objects to which such expressions refer.⁹ The task of such a study is to provide a satisfactory theory of meaning and this includes a satisfactory ontology. Minimally, this means avoiding a theory of meaning which defends the existence of logically unsound entities, i.e., contradictions. Now this rough definition of semantics,

⁷ Translation is a special problem for a theory of meaning.

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 21.

⁹ Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth", Readings in Semantics, ed. F. Zabeeh, E.D. Klemke, A. Jacobsen, Chicago, 1974, p. 345.

while appropriate to both theoretical semantics and to Ricoeur's use of the term, must be further qualified in order to distinguish Ricoeur's theory from, e.g., Tarski's. Tarski's concept of theoretical semantics applies to just those languages whose formal structure can be specified, i.e., a semantic concept of truth, is unformulated.

The meaning of the problem (a definition of truth) is more or less vague (in natural languages) and its solution can have only an approximate character.¹⁰

So, while theoretical semantics may propose a theory of meaning which must be formulated in a meta-language, Ricoeur's concept of semantics is not restricted to systems of logic, nor to a semantic definition of "truth". Semantics, for Ricoeur, theorizes about natural or spoken languages whose structure is rigorous even if not formal. Meta-linguistic definitions for semantic terms as they occur in an object language satisfy the logician's desire for an unambiguous system of definitions. Ricoeur, on the other hand, is quite attached to the essential polysemy of language. We may say, provisionally, that Ricoeur's concept of semantics is a phenomenological concept and that this is distinct from the theoretical semantics of linguists whose work concerns systems of logic rather than natural languages.

Ricoeur claims that the dialectic of event and meaning must guide any theory of discourse because it is this dia-

¹⁰Ibid., p. 347.

lectic that constitutes the object of semantics: the sentence. As an act, or event of speech, the sentence is also an act of meaning. A speaker means something when he speaks. But this is also something a sentence does quite apart from the speaker's intention, and it does so because of its structure. Consider the meaning or propositional content of a sentence. In expressing a proposition, the sentence can be divided into subject and predicate terms. The functions of identification and predication, and the synthesis of these functions in the sentence, produce the propositional content. The transcendence of the speech act is thus neutralized in the essentially repeatable propositional content. The ideal status of meanings, explicable as the inner element in the structure of discourse, produces the counterpart to the structuralist thesis that the sign is the stable and primitive element in language.

The synthesis of identification and predication formalizes the synthesis of meaning and reference in a sentence. The identification element singles out the proper logical subject of the sentence; something singular, e.g., this desk, this book, London, etc. Grammatical devices such as personal pronouns, demonstratives, "definite descriptions", serve this end. The predicate does not pick out an item, but rather picks out a "quality, a class of things, a type of relation, or a type of action", e.g., 'was the first to climb Mt.

Everest'.¹¹ Because the propositional content of the sentence is essentially repeatable and universal in nature, one can predicate 'the first to climb Mt. Everest' of many subjects, in many contexts and many languages while the logical subject is singular.

According to Ricoeur the intentional component of the speech act annuls the irrational character of discourse which is postulated by structuralism. The thesis of intentionality, which will be developed in connection with the act-character of speech, guarantees the ideality of the propositional content. This is not a return to Saussure's concept of language as a system of potentiality, since ideality and potentiality are not equivalent terms. The structuralist thesis implies that the ontological status of meaning is not fully secured until it is actualized in speech. An ontology would thus be constituted in speech, not in language. As potential, meaning stands-ready for actuality. In contrast, if meanings are ideal, their ontological status is independent of their actuality in sentences. For Ricoeur this distinction is paramount since it lies at the foundation of the distinction between semiotics and semantics, therefore at the foundation of hermeneutic theory. We have seen that the semiological account of meaning repudiates the thesis of intentionality since signs refer and mean only in the limited sense of contrast with other signs in the system. There is no

¹¹Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 10.

intending subject in such a system. For Ricoeur, a "signifying milieu" such as language is, a priori, referential. For this reason the intentional character which Ricoeur attributes to discourse is already committed to an ontology. The ontological priority of the speech act is an achievement based upon this thesis.

The final step of Ricoeur's dialectic of event and meaning will be read as the dialectic of reference and meaning. Thus Ricoeur's understanding of this dialectic passes through four stages. The first stage presents discourse as one pole in the structuralist dialectic of language and speech. Initially the sense of "structure" could be seen as that of traditional structuralism. i.e., the language system per se. So the dichotomy is actually between a hermeneutic of discourse and structuralism, each competing for the status of a science of language. Ricoeur then formulates this dialectic at a level which is internal to discourse and the pole of language disappears. The sense of "structure" must change to accomodate the new position. So we move to the second formulation, and the dialectic becomes speech-event and meaning. The structuralist sense of the term "structure" drops out and is replaced by a new sense which is determined by the intentional structure of the sentence. The conceptual link between the speech-act (event) and the thesis of intentionality permits a third formulation of the dialectic which is reference and meaning.

Ricoeur states that the concept of meaning "allows two interpretations which reflect the main dialectic between event and meaning".¹² Meaning is both noetic and doematic, meaning is the intended meaning of the sentence, i.e., the propositional content. This double-reading of the term "meaning" attests to the intentionality of language missing on the structuralist analysis. Ricoeur's axiom, "...if all discourse is actualized as an event, it is understood as meaning",¹³ must finally reach a fourth formulation: the noetic-noematic correlation. This last step paves the way for an explication of the intentional structure of the sentence, a central thesis in Ricoeur's semantic theory of discourse. Before elaborating, I want to list the pairs of opposition in vertical sequence and according to the conceptual changes they undergo in Ricoeur's analysis:

- 1) event - structure
- 2) event - meaning
- 3) reference - meaning
- 4) noesis - noema

Note that with each transformation the dialectic is driven deeper into the phenomenon of meaning itself. The corresponding list specifying the locus of the dialectic is:

- 1) theoretical (structuralism versus hermeneutics)

¹²Ibid., p. 12.

¹³Ibid., p. 12.

- 2) discourse (language as discourse)
- 3) the sentence (the primitive unit of discourse)
- 4) meaning (the structure of the sentence)

On Husserl's analysis intentional experience admits of a distinction between the components of the intentional experience and those of the correlates of such experience.¹⁴ On the perceptual model, this would mean that the perceptual meaning, i.e., the meaning of a perception, is not identical to the object perceived. In other words, the clarification of intentional experience in general requires a clarification of the opposition between immanence and transcendence; between a perception as such and the perceived. This basic opposition leads Husserl to a distinction between noetic and noematic phases of experience. Every intentional experience, he says, is noetic and has an objective meaning, i.e., an intentional object.¹⁵ In the widest sense, this meaning, e.g., of the perceived as such, the remembered as such, is the noema.¹⁶

Ricoeur's initial formulation of the dialectic of speech-acts and structure (roughly Saussure's *Langue/Parole* opposition) may now be re-cast in the Husserlian distinction between noesis and noema.¹⁶

The noetic, or self-referential function in the sentence

¹⁴Edmund Husserl, Ideas, trans. B. Gibson, New York, 1931, p.237

¹⁵Ibid., p. 240

¹⁶Ibid., p. 253

is controlled by grammatical devices which allow a speaker to point to himself as the logical subject of the speech event, e.g., personal pronouns, demonstratives, time and space designations. According to Ricoeur, the semantic approach to the theory of discourse wins a non-psychological definition because one is able to interpret the utterer's meaning as a purely semantic or grammatical function. The other advantage of the semantic approach is that the speech event may be explicated in terms of a speech-act theory.¹⁷ On the speech-act theory speech-acts may be divided into three categories: locutionary (saying), illocutionary (performative), and perlocutionary (results) acts. Every class of speech-acts has something which is said, something which is accomplished in the saying, e.g., promising, and something which results from the saying. So the speech-act, composed of these three factors, may be assimilated to the event pole of Ricoeur's dialectic between event and meaning. The formal aspects of a language system are again subordinated to the intentional and communicative functions of language.

Interlocution is an aspect of discourse which is emphasized by the dialectic of event and meaning. Communication, says Ricoeur, "is the overcoming of the radical non-communicability of the lived experience as lived".¹⁸ As lived, ex-

¹⁷John Searle, Speech Acts, Cambridge, 1969.

¹⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 16.

perience is non-communicable, i.e., private. But what is communicable is the sense or meaning of the experience which is part of the propositional content of a sentence. This essential communicability is what Ricoeur calls the "self-transcendence" or "opening" of discourse to an other; the connecting of a speaker and a hearer in dialogue. Indeed, Ricoeur will say that "the instance of discourse is the instance of dialogue"¹⁹ because the self-transcending of discourse toward the other, the recipient of a message, parallels the movement in which the speech-act transcends itself in meaning. We get parallel movements of transcendence: one, internal; the other, external. The internal movement is the condition for the external movement. This is to say that dialogue is grounded in the structure of meaning. Dialogue, in producing a possible homogeneity of understanding and meaning, functions as a screening device which reduces the plurality of meanings belonging to words by sharpening the context within which meaning content is to be understood. The development of the role of contextuality shows that it is the function of dialogue to set the context for interpreting meaning. Hence, "the contextual is the dialogical".²⁰

Another link which is relevant to understanding the speech event as a complex act is the link between the inten-

¹⁹Ibid., p. 16.

²⁰Ibid., p. 16.

tions of a speaker and those of a listener. The speaker's intention in an illocutionary act such as making a promise or expressing a wish implies the recognition of the speaker's performance of promising or wishing on the part of the hearer.²¹ The recognition by the other is actually part of the speaker's intention itself. The act of promising is at once an act of binding or committing the speaker. Such an act would be incomplete without the acknowledgement of the other - someone to whom such a promise is made. Similarly, in the expression of a belief or a desire, the speaker's intention includes the presence of an other to whom such expressions are directed and by whom they are noted. Far from being incommunicable "mental acts",²² speech acts imply a reciprocity of intention which is what is meant by dialogue.

The criterion of the noetic is the intention of communicability, the expectation of recognition in the intentional act itself. The noetic is the soul of discourse as dialogue,

And later on in this same passage Ricoeur says,

language is the exteriorization thanks to which an impression is transcended and becomes an expression, or in other words, the transformation of the psychic into the noetic.²³

Returning for the moment to the Husserlian model, the speech act as such, as noetic experience, is dialogue understood in the widest sense of expression. Here Ricoeur pre-

²¹Paul Grice, "Meaning", Philosophical Review, 1957.

²²Peter Geach, Mental Acts, London, 1957.

²³This is Ricoeur's definition of the term "semantics".

supposes the steps which yielded the noetic-noematic distinction in Husserl's theory of perception. On that theory, the thesis of intentionality was explicated progressively through the following main oppositions:

1. Phenomenological - Psychological
2. Perceived as such - Perceived object
3. Immanent - Transcendent
4. Irreal - Real
5. Noema - Noesis

The aim was to isolate the ideal meaning of perception (intentional experience in general). Ricoeur's thesis operates under the phenomenologically reduced experience of discourse, which means that the concept of discourse is already an intentional concept. The event pole of the dialectic between event and meaning is a complex act. Every event of speech is surpassed by meaning or the propositional content of a sentence. In this way, the event itself is not merely a fleeting, transient moment for it is "taken up" in the advent of meaning. One may here recall Husserl's example of the difference between a tree "plain and simple" and the perceived tree as such. The tree, Husserl explains, can burn up or otherwise dissolve. But the meaning of this perception cannot so vanish because it has no real properties. It was, of course, the perceptual meaning that the phenomenological reduction finally revealed. Similarly, Ricoeur's thesis depends upon the ideal status of meanings (as we shall see). The structure of discourse, on

Ricoeur's theory, depends upon a phenomenological account of meaning.

The surpassing of the event in meaning is made possible by the ideal status of meanings and the essentially communicative function of language. This function is placed under the heading of intentionality. The speaker's meaning-intention is "objective" in the sense that the propositional content of a sentence means by way of the sentence, not the speaker. But the speaker's meaning, captured by way of the speech act (in the three-fold sense noted above) and the reciprocity of intention via dialogue is also "subjective". These distinctions are only possible on the basis of the initial distinction between semiotics, the study of the sign, and semantics, the study of the sentence.

Finally, one can see that Ricoeur wants to present the structure of discourse in terms of the sense - reference distinction. The classic form of this distinction goes back to Frege's article, "On Sense and Reference".²⁴ In this article Frege distinguishes the meaning, or propositional content of a sentence from the reference of a sentence and in this way tries to account for the fact that sentences can mean without necessarily referring.

Whether or not Frege's distinction frees us from logical difficulties is a question not appropriate to this context.

²⁴Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference", Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, trans. M. Black, P. Geach, Oxford, 1952.

Ricoeur picks up the distinction for purposes other than the logical and epistemological ones that interest Frege, Russell, and Strawson.²⁵ For Ricoeur, the structure of discourse is not truth-functionality. Its structure comprises a package of terms whose relations and implications distill into a single, fundamental notion: the condition for language lies in an ontology which is more primitive and "originary" than the phenomenon of language itself. Ricoeur says that the drive to express the meaning of this ontological situation is the essential feature of language:

It is because there is first something to say, because we have an experience to bring to language, that...language is not only directed toward ideal meanings but also refers to what is.²⁶

So the use to which Ricoeur puts Frege's distinction is not logical but ontological.

In the following schema the horizontal lines are lines of opposition and the vertical lines are lines of explication.

²⁵P.F. Strawson, "On Referring", Mind, 59, 1950

²⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 21.

Structuralism	Hermeneutics	
language	discourse	
signs	sentences	
signified	signified	
structure	event	
potentiality	event	meaning
	speech acts	propositional content
formal system (logic)	actuality	ideality
	logical subject	world
	intentionality	
	meaning	reference
	dialogue	
	ontology	

Ricoeur's aim in a semantics of discourse is to restore to language an original unity. The entire analysis is the preliminary stage of an interpretation theory, i.e., a hermeneutic, and what it secures is the ontological condition for linguistic meaning. The essentially private experience of being in a world, private in the sense that one's experience cannot be replaced by another's, is expressed in discourse. What comes to be expressed is not the expression per se, but the meaning or sense of an ontological stratum which is itself non-linguistic.

In the context of the methodological opposition between

structuralism and hermeneutics the following assessments may be made. Structuralism requires no essential difference between the world and language. Difference is a concept which pertains solely to the constitutive relations within and between signs. To close the language system Saussure had to eliminate both spoken discourse and the stratum of experience discourse expresses. Structuralism always uses a meta-language since on this theory there is no world other than the world of signs. That is, only the world of signs is relevant to a theory of language. Now there are conceptual parallels between Husserl's theory of perception and the point I am making about Saussure. In order to analyze perceptual meaning Husserl suspended the question of actuality, i.e., the thing itself. The perception as such is a construct of perceptual experience or perception in general, just as, on Saussure's theory, the sign is a construct of the world of signs. Semiological theory of meaning isolates the sign as such and suspends the question of reference except insofar as reference is an intra-systemic phenomenon, i.e., reference to other signs.

Hermeneutics requires an ontological rather than a logical foundation. This foundation is characterized by an essential difference between the world and the experience of the world which is partially reconstituted in language. Following Ricoeur's extensive use of dialectics one might say that a fundamental dialectic between linguistic and non-linguistic

meanings is central to a hermeneutic theory. Ricoeur strives to show that hermeneutics is a presupposition of structuralism and even a formal semantics derived from structuralist presuppositions.²⁷ We would otherwise get a simple opposition between theories of language. But the important reason for Ricoeur's attempt is this: without a primitive stratum of experience which is itself non-linguistic, hermeneutics has no subject matter, i.e., no primitive "understanding" to interpret. An interpretation theory must show that semiotics is an abstraction of semantics if it is to overcome the structuralist position.

The preeminence of a theory of signs results in a forfeiture which hermeneutics seeks to reclaim. The only way to do this is to show that a theory of signs is neither primitive nor without presuppositions. Ricoeur's arguments attempt to do just this. A sign, on Ricoeur's theory presupposes something about which it is a sign and someone who means it as a sign. That is, the sign presupposes the speaking milieu. But on Saussure's analysis the speaking situation is lost. Even if Saussure's separation of language and speaking admits of separate analyses (separate studies of each phenomenon), language is a formalization of speaking and functions as the formal condition for the possibility of speech. The sign is explicated as a sort of "proto-speech"; a first-order, voiceless speech system without meanings,

²⁷ Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth".

reference, identity, difference - without a metaphysic. The reintroduction of meaning into language is simultaneously the reintroduction of a metaphysic and the hermeneutic theory Ricoeur proffers is representative of this move.

CHAPTER III

Interpretation Theory: Hermeneutics as a Transcendental Philosophy and the Theory of the Text

At the close of the last section I suggested that the preeminence of a semantics of discourse implies a subordination of semiotics to semantics and hermeneutics. Ricoeur argues this point by showing that the conditions for spoken discourse are identical to those of the written text. In other words, he argues that discourse "under the conditions of inscription" retains the intentional structure and ontological foundation of spoken discourse. This argument implies some version of a transcendental argument as to the conditions for the language system itself (structuralism). But if the argument is to show that structuralism presupposes a hermeneutic, it is not clear how arguing for the inclusion of a non-linguistic stratum upon which the linguistic is founded will suffice. Ricoeur must be able to show that the structuralist method presupposes a genetic (transcendental) philosophy and that hermeneutics is just such a philosophy. This demonstration should include some defense for the claim that hermeneutics is a transcendental philosophy.

An interpretation theory is primarily about written texts and so must include a theory of writing. Ricoeur argues that a theory of writing has its origins in the semantic theory of discourse just outlined.¹ An examination of this argument will follow an exposition of Ricoeur's analysis of writing.

The first question Ricoeur raises is, what changes in the structure of discourse are entailed by its transformation into writing? Although he will maintain that the central dialectic in discourse, i.e., between event and meaning, is not only preserved but completed in written discourse, the terms acquire new senses in this context. The event pole of the dialectic can no longer be viewed as a simple act of speaking. Inscription replaces "the human element" by detaching the original sense of "event" as a speech act from meaning. This detachment reintroduces the fleeting character of speech which Ricoeur's theory of meaning had countered. But it is also precisely what constitutes one of the more obvious functions of writing: to "fix" discourse in such a way as to overcome the transience of the speech event. Inscription will thus parallel the function of Ricoeur's theory of meaning for spoken discourse.

Just as the speech act could be analysed in terms of a dialectic between its event character and its meaning intention, so written discourse admits of the same analysis. The

¹Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 27.

event character of spoken discourse is replaceable by written discourse because in both cases the event itself is surpassed by its meaning in the form of ideality. The argument for this rests upon the distinction between meaning and reference in a sentence. Ricoeur argues that because the propositional content of a sentence is ideal, because meaning is ideal, discourse has an explicable structure which upgrades its status as a scientific object, i.e., as an object constitutive of a science. Now what is "fixed" by writing is the meaning content of a speech act. To use Husserlian terms, it is the noema that is inscribed by writing. Ricoeur claims that the intentional surpassing and exteriorization of the initial privacy of experiences in both spoken and written discourse is the "destiny" of such experience.

Ricoeur offers a four point analysis of the interlocutionary situation once writing has replaced speaking.

- 1) message - speaker
- 2) message - hearer
- 3) message - code
- 4) message - reference

The message or content of, e.g., a sentence undergoes changes in its relation to the speaker, the hearer, the mode of transmission (style), and its reference once it is written.

Previously I noted Ricoeur's argument that one of the unique features of spoken discourse is the speaker's ability

to refer to himself as the speaker through specialized grammatical devices. This linguistic reflexivity pointed to a referring function which was parallel to but separate from the referring function of the sentence. In this context Ricoeur was able to point out the double directedness of intentionality: the speaker's intention and that of the sentence. Ricoeur's claim that a purely semantic analysis of a speaker's meaning overcomes psychologistic tendencies is based upon this point.

The text, unlike spoken discourse, "breaks its moorings" from the subjectivity of the author so that an interpretation theory could never properly begin with a psychologistic account. The author's meanings are not hereby cancelled, but Ricoeur claims that they are dialectically surpassed in the meanings taken on by the text as an independent entity. Ricoeur argues that the meaning of a sentence surpasses the event character of spoken discourse. But in this case, i.e., spoken discourse, the speaker's intentions coincide with the meaning of his sentences. In written discourse, the author's meanings infuse or inform the text, but become methodologically irrelevant on Ricoeur's thesis.

When writing replaces speaking, the reflexivity of language no longer operates in the fashion just noted. The face-to-face relationship which unites subjective meanings with the sentence meanings relies on the speaker's presence; he is there and can be questioned about his meanings. He can point out

objects in case grammatical devices fail to select them for the listener. His speaking is immediately dialogical and contextual and this helps to screen out faulty interpretation possibilities.

Writing dislodges the direct expression of meaning that we observe in speaking situations. In writing, the author's meanings and the meanings of the text "cease to coincide".² The text becomes autonomous because the horizon of its author's intentions is eclipsed by that of its readers. This is what Ricoeur means when he claims that the text so liberated becomes more important for a theory than the author's meanings; more important because it is semantically autonomous. But this is a slightly misleading formulation because the autonomy of the text eclipses the notion of authorial meaning so that no comparison is actually possible. In writing all we have is the text.

The explication of the structure of spoken discourse yields the object for an interpretation theory: the text. Hermeneutics begins with this notion of autonomy. Because Ricoeur reapplies the semantic theory of discourse at the level of written texts, because the model for an analysis of meaning is the same for both speaking and writing, he is able to isolate the proper object of hermeneutic theory without recourse to the psychologism of romantic hermeneutics.³

²Ibid., p. 29.

³See Ricoeur's analysis of Romantic Hermeneutics, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 22ff.

The concomitant disruption of the speaker-listener relation (dialogue) reinforces the concept of the semantic autonomy of the text and adds a new dimension to both the process of interpretation and the dialectic of meaning and event.

One of the cardinal points for Ricoeur's analysis is that speaking is always addressed to someone. The written text, however, is addressed to an unknown reader, which is to say, it is addressed to anyone who can read. Ricoeur calls this stretching of the concept of addressee a "universalization" of the audience. But a text also "creates" its own audience by partially setting up its potential range of readers. This is true, e.g., of academic works.

The dialogical situation originally connects the speaker and hearer in a double movement of transcendence. Discourse "opens" or transcends itself in a movement toward the other. This inner movement of transcendence occurs at the level of the sentence and is parallel to the first movement in which meaning overcomes the transitoriness of the speech event. The event, we said, transcends itself in meaning. Dialogue and the homogeneity of understanding and meaning are founded upon the ideal structure of meaning. When the written text replaces the speaking situation both ends of the communication chain are disrupted and the dialogical situation no longer obtains in the same form. Breaking the relation between authorial meanings and the meanings of the text results in

the semantic autonomy of the text. Breaking the relation between the speaker and the listener results in the "creation" of a potentially universal reader, i.e., audience. Together, these results transform the dialogical speaking situation. Ricoeur had claimed that dialogue performs a unique function with respect to interpretation. He argued that it serves as a filter through which non-intended meanings or interpretations pass, leaving a residue of intended meanings. This was partly a function of the relative ease with which a speaker can insure the proper understanding of those objects he denotes in his speaking.

In other words, dialogue insured a context wherein various possible interpretations of meanings are eliminated. This is no longer the case in written discourse. The widened sense of audience along with the split between author and text, make way for a plurality of interpretations. Ricoeur's assessment of this situation is that:

It follows that the problem of the appropriation of the meaning of the text becomes as paradoxical as that of the authorship. The right of the reader and the right of the text converge in an important struggle that generates the whole dynamic of interpretation. Hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends.⁴

The first two relations which writing affects are the text-speaker (writer) and the text-hearer (reader). Ricoeur's point is that the dynamic of interpretation does not properly begin until these two relations are disrupted. Writing ter-

⁴Ibid., p. 32.

minates the sense of dialogue which is germane to spoken discourse and initiates a set of problems which are, for the first time, interpretation problems. In short, hermeneutics begins with the written text.

The third disruption, of which writing is the cause, is between the message of the text and its code. The production of discourse as something specific, i.e., a poem or a narrative, etc., parallels the sentential and grammatical notion which Ricoeur brought into his discussion by way of Chomsky. Just as transformational grammar provided a link between syntax and semantics, and thus an account of the production of new meanings in sentences, so does the literary genre produce codes which account for the ways in which written discourse may produce "new entities" of language; and "organic wholes irreducible to a mere addition of sentences".⁵ The analogy between literary genres and Chomsky's notion of generative or transformational grammar works to insure the possibility of accounting for the production of new meanings both at the level of the sentence and the level of the text. This was a difficulty on Saussure's thesis.

In this context Ricoeur argues that the literary genre functions as a tool by which an author shapes his work. The technical rules appropriate to any genre preside over the production of discourse under a specific genre.⁶ Writing is

⁵Ibid., p. 32.

⁶An exception would be Joyce.

thus a production, a shaping of language according to genres. Ricoeur focuses on the combination of inscription and production and will say that the "text means discourse both as inscribed and wrought".⁷ The text just is discourse under the condition of inscription which is itself guided by production codes. The relation, then, between the code and message in writing is much closer to the same relation in spoken discourse than was the case in the previous two situations. This may be due to the fact that once one uses language according to explicitly formal rules, one is already operating at a level comparable to the formalism in writing. Consider, e.g., poetry recitation in which the memory functions in a manner similar to the writing of poetry in that the discourse is fixed. It may be that when we refer to categories of language, either by way of grammatical categories or literary genres, we are at a formal level which would tend to overlap both speaking and writing situations.

The fourth and most important shift occurs at the level of the relation between the message of text and its reference. Ricoeur suggests two ways in which this last relation may take on special significance.

In his discussion on the semantic theory of discourse, Ricoeur brings out progressively deeper levels within discourse itself. Beginning with the dialectic of event and meaning, further analysis showed that this dialectic was itself

⁷Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 33.

founded on a more internal one: the dialectic of sense and reference. In this context the various ways of describing the manner in which language and meaning transcend the finitude and irrationality of their origins were noted. On the one hand, language overcomes the essential privacy and incommunicability of a primitive level of world experience. On the other, the propositional content of a sentence overcomes the transitory character of speech. If the dialectical relation between meaning and reference is the transcendental condition upon which (1) the essential incommunicability of experience is surpassed and (2) the essential communicability of meaning is established, then the same model ought to work in such a way as to provide the condition for communicable meaning in the written text. One assumes, at least provisionally, that the ontological roots of speaking and writing are identical; that the structure of discourse is self-identical whether written or spoken. The conditions for discourse would not change as one shifted from its spoken to written manifestations.⁸

Ricoeur speaks of transcendence as the exteriorization of language, i.e., the exteriorization of meaning which is primordially interior. The dialectic which made the exteriorization of meaning possible at the level of speaking, is repeated at the level of writing; indeed, it makes writing

⁸See Chapter 7.

per se a possibility.⁹ The meaning or sense of a sentence, whether written or spoken, is "externalized as a transcendent reference".¹⁰ Thought is directed beyond itself to extralinguistic entities. One may observe that on Husserl's thesis, the transcendence of the world, the sense of transcendent reference, presupposes a transcendental consciousness.¹¹ The sense "transcendence" would be spurious without the constitutive or intentional acts of consciousness. The intending consciousness is thus transcendentalized by the sense of the world's transcendency.¹²

The semantic autonomy of the text, along with the plurality of interpretations given through the extension of the concept of an audience first gives rise to properly hermeneutic problems. As Ricoeur says, hermeneutics begins with written discourse. But if the sense-reference model clarifies the exteriorization of meaning in spoken and written discourse, designating such meaning as transcendent reference and presupposing a transcendental consciousness, does it follow that a hermenutic, summoned by the written text, must be a transcendental philosophy? If so, transcendental phenomenology - properly a philosophy of consciousness - must itself presuppose

⁹Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 34.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹J.N. Mohanty, p. 13.

¹²Ibid., Chapter 3.

a transcendental hermeneutic. Acknowledging this presupposition is at once a cancellation of transcendental phenomenology's claim to be able to explicate the purified life of consciousness in its essential and ultimate constituting capacities. If Ricoeur is logically committed to this route, he must show that the transcendental conditions of consciousness can only be explicated by a hermeneutic which is itself founded not on the acts of consciousness, but on a primitive ontological stratum of experience. This is the equivalent of showing that all experience is not in fact constituted by consciousness and that it may be just the converse. Strange as this point may seem in the context of phenomenology, i.e., that consciousness is not ultimately founding but founded, it is an implication not only of the foregoing possibility of a transcendental hermeneutic, but also of Ricoeur's claim that neither semiotics nor structuralism is a founding science, but both presuppose an ontology. This founding condition of discourse is, nevertheless, inaccessible to their methods as such. It is a quick step to show that the logical implication of the preceding would include hermeneutics among those presuppositions of structuralism and semiotics.

The first difficulty Ricoeur notes about reference in the written text is that writing dramatizes the sense in which the world is transcendent to consciousness. Secondly, literary genres or modes of writing are themselves capable of

transforming the ordinary sense of referring to objects in the world, to situations and states-of-affairs, by virtue of the referential scope and determinability which is partially defined by a genre. Poetry, for example, can have a wider referential scope than does the recording of, e.g., the weapons used in a specific battle during the Civil War. This is because poetry can make use of multiple innovations, metaphor, etc., which are inappropriate in the other example. Writing per se is, then, only partially responsible for transformations of the referential function in discourse. Responsibility also falls on literary codes. Ricoeur's point here follows from his assumption that writing and speaking rely on identical transcendental conditions. Otherwise one might have to show that a mode of writing has a different foundation than a mode of speaking, even in the difficult case of reciting, e.g., epic poetry. Reliance on the memory, in this case, resembles a reliance on graphies in writing.

In spoken discourse the scope of reference is outlined by the situation that members of a dialogue share. This means that the criteria for deciding what belongs to the discourse relies on a common situation within which members can sort out the objects of the discourse with relative ease. Pointing, gestures, monstrations as well as verbal indicators are used without much deliberation. So Ricoeur claims that singular identifications ultimately rely on the interlocu-

tionary situation. Reference in spoken discourse is ultimately situational.

Writing, Ricoeur argues, breaks up the dialogical situation and so "shatters" the situational foundation of reference in speech. Even if it is possible to make use of certain verbal indicators like "definite descriptions", demonstratives, etc., a distancing is introduced and the previously shared present tense can no longer obtain. Writing introduces temporality. In an ultimate sense, the advent of time and distance marks the advent of the hermeneutic problem of understanding and consequently a hermeneutic theory which addresses this problem. The stretching of reference of reference beyond the immediate scope of ostension means, for Ricoeur a stretching of a shared situation into a shared world. That is, "Thanks to writing man...has a world and not just a situation".¹³ Just as the written text "frees" discourse from the subjective intentions of a speaker by absorbing them into the autonomous meaning intention of a text, so does writing "free" reference from its limited spatial and temporal grounding. Ricoeur says that the world is an "ensemble of reference" opened up through texts. One gets the feeling that for Ricoeur the world is not fully opened or available as such until we consider texts because it is only in the text that nonsituational reference. i.e., descriptions of "worlds" can obtain. If oral history is submitted as a

¹³Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and Surplus of Meaning", p. 36.

counterexample to this position, it should be possible to reply by showing that the structure of, e.g., storytelling, legend, etc., mimics the structure that can be explicated not of speaking per se, but of writing. This does not mean that writing precedes oral history in time, but only that their respective structures bear a closer resemblance than do those of spoken discourse and oral history.

In writing the scope of reference is extended by way of the strategies of various literary modes. Consider fiction and poetry where our ordinary connection between language and the world is suspended by metaphor and what would be dubious portrayals of "reality" in other contexts. Ricoeur states that this extended notion of reference encourages the claim that some literary modes actually fail to be about something; that poetic discourse or, e.g., science fiction exemplify the power of language to abolish reference altogether and take on a new emphasis of the message for its own sake.¹⁴ Ricoeur denies this claim and similarly denies the possibility of an "ideology of absolute texts" which is a concept that stems from the idea that language can be self-referring and self-enclosed. Discourse, Ricoeur argues, cannot fail to be about something.

If we consider the ending pages of monologue in Joyce's Ulysses, we are immediately struck by the discontinuity, the dissonance actually, of "stream of consciousness" writing.

¹⁴e.g., Art for it's own sake.

Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting to that old faggot Mrs. Riordan that he thought he had a great leg of and she never left us a farthing all for masses for herself and her soul greatest miser ever was actually afraid....¹⁵

Or a passage from Kafka's The Castle may strike the same dissonant chord.

'These are the new assistants,' said K. 'No, they are the old ones.' 'They are the new ones and I am the old assistant. I came today after the Land Surveyor.' 'No', was shouted back. 'Then who am I?' asked K. as blandly as before.

And after a pause the same voice with the same defect answered him, yet with a deeper and more authoritative tone, 'You are the old assistance'.¹⁶

One senses that whatever the particular discourse may be about, it is not ordinary. It is neither ostensive nor descriptive. Some philosophers may want to conclude from a rather restrictive concept of reference. i.e., that it must be either ostensive or descriptive in order to be about something, that the samples of discourse above just fail to be about anything other than subjective feelings or portrayals of same. If not merely subjective or emotive, such samples suggest nonsense.

Ricoeur offers a contending theory. He suggests that where literary modes use neither ostensive nor descriptive devices, reference is not abolished but "split" between the

¹⁵James Joyce, Ulysses, p. 738.

¹⁶Franz Kafka, The Castle, p. 28.

world that one may describe or point to, and those aspects of the world which cannot be directly described. Split reference retains both of these possibilities and has the virtue of enlarging one's view of the world. It is in this sense that Ricoeur reiterates his claim that the world is an assembly of reference opened up by texts and, finally, that the destiny of discourse as writing is just its destiny to "project" a world. But such a project is not exhausted by descriptive language.

Although the context is utterly different, Antonin Artaud's work on the language of theater and drama exposes a more extreme version of split reference, this time between language in both its written and spoken forms, and a pre-linguistic expressivity which is vital to the new concept of the theatrical voice which he was expounding.

First, the spoken language.

To make metaphysics out of a spoken language is to make the language express what it does not ordinarily express: to make use of it in a new, exceptional, unaccustomed fashion; to reveal its possibilities for producing physical shock; to divide and distribute it actively in space; to deal with intonations in an absolutely concrete manner, restoring their power to shatter as well as really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one could say alimentary, sources, against its trapped-beast origins; and finally, to consider language as the form of Incantation.¹⁷

Artaud's incessant reproach against the ideology of the written text is a summons to a purified theater in

¹⁷ Antonin Artaud, The Theater and its Double, p. 46.

which gesture, color, sound, etc., replace "fixed" texts.

The curious point that Artaud and Ricoeur share is that the function of language cannot be restricted to demonstration or manifestations of truths; that language and expressions are every bit as shattering of "reality" as they are manifestations of it.

CHAPTER IV

The Postulate of Reference: A Theory of Metaphor

The dialectic of meaning and reference gains a special clarity in the context of metaphorical discourse. The use of metaphor poses formidable difficulties for meaning analyses and because hermeneutics has often been linked or even identified with the deciphering of indirect language, a theory of metaphor strong enough to handle the specialized problems of meaning and reference should deliver the "blueprints" of an interpretation theory equally competent. A theory that eschews both the reduction to naive subjectivism and consequent "irrationalism" may fit such a bill. In either reductive instance, the failure to achieve reference beyond the closed system of signs or closed world of texts, subverts the notion of objective meaning by limiting meaning to subjective immanency. The viability of a hermeneutic weakens in either of these circumstances.

Ricoeur begins his analysis of metaphor by reviewing traditional accounts which originate in Aristotle's theory of metaphor.¹ The main lines of interpreting metaphor are

¹Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, trans. r. Czerny, Toronto, 1975, study 1, p. 9ff.

summarized by Ricoeur in the following six propositions.

- 1) Metaphor is seen as a figure of speech, i.e., a trope, and this figure substitutes for ordinary terms. A theory of replacement or substitution follows from this view. Sometimes this theory is referred to as a theory of tropes.
- 2) Metaphor is seen as a deviation from literal meaning. The theory of replacement thus includes the notion of deviation as part of its meaning.
- 3) Deviation from literal meaning is made possible by a resemblance between the literal and "new" meaning. The replacement term must bear some conceptual (or other) resemblance to the "proper" term in order to function as a replacement.
- 4) Resemblance thus grounds metaphorical meaning on the proper or literal meaning.
- 5) Replacement or substitution theory expounds metaphor in terms of a proper meaning which is original.
- 6) Metaphor can therefore add no genuinely new

information about the world or experience since the meaning content it proffers is already present in the original term. The surfeit of meaning in poetic or metaphorical discourse can then be construed as emotive and private.

Together these six propositions represent what Ricoeur claims is the naive view that metaphor is non-cognitive and therefore dispensable in the context of a theory of meaning.² Ricoeur argues that this view presupposes a semiotic approach to metaphor because it is a theory of terminological rather than sentence values. It is this view that Ricoeur's thesis reverses.

The first point of opposition is between a semiotic and semantic approach to metaphor. The theory of replacement requires the supposition that figurative discourse applies to single terms. Ricoeur argues that metaphor results from a tension between terms because it is the product of opposing or conflicting interpretations. It makes no sense to speak of a metaphor since a single term is neither literal nor metaphorical until it is used and interpreted in one or the other mode. Instead, one must speak of metaphorical utterances and these are produced in sentences - not single terms.

²Ibid., pp. 20-24, study 4, p. 101.

Ricoeur's theory of tension, sometimes referred to as "controversion", is a concept of metaphorical truth based upon the predicative function of metaphor.³ It is a concept of metaphorical reference. Now the question of reference has been raised progressively at the levels of semiotics, semantics and texts. In the context of semiotics, signs refer to other signs intrasystemically. Reference is a matter of simple opposition (this sign is not that sign) and the introduction of a non-semantic component is unnecessary. At the level of the sentence a non-semantic component was, ipso facto, introduced. On a semantic theory the sentence becomes the primary meaning-bearing unit. The ideal structure of the sentence, i.e., its propositional content, can be explicated in terms of intentional acts. On Husserl's thesis, the ideal content of an expression is not founded on objective reference, but rather it is founded on intentional acts. An objective correlate cannot be the requirement of meaning, while meaning can be the requirement of consummating objective reference. Whether Ricoeur re-introduces the role of objective reference as a criterion of meaningfulness, or whether he reformulates the concept of reference so that the non-semantic component introduced by the sentence can include metaphorical reference, is a question I will soon pose. In contrast, semiotics operates with a remarkably weaker concept of difference so that the

³Ibid., pp. 67, 68, 247.

dissymmetry between meaning and reference cannot be usefully formulated.

A cursory review of specific phenomenological themes in the first of Husserl's Logical Investigations⁴ will help clarify Ricoeur's theory of metaphorical reference.

According to Husserl all signs indicate in the sense that all signs serve as markers or pointers. But the functions of indicating and meaning are distinct. An expression is a sign which, in addition to its indicating function, has a meaning function.⁵

What is expressed as a meaning requires certain acts which Husserl calls "meaning-conferring acts", or intentions. These acts may join additional acts which complete the expression, i.e., consummate reference, and these acts are called "meaning-fulfilling acts".⁶ Husserl's thesis is that the latter are not requirements of the former. This position results from the distinction between the sense or meaning of an expression and an expression's reference. The object meant and the meaning expressed are not, according to Husserl, identical, but each belongs to an expression "in virtue of the mental acts which give it sense".⁷

⁴Edmund Husserl, Logical Investigations, vol. 1, trans. J.N. Findley, New York, 1970.

⁵Ibid., p. 275.

⁶Ibid., p. 281.

⁷Ibid., p. 287.

Evidence for this distinction is given in familiar examples where a single object may be named by more than one name. In such a case, e.g., "The victor at Jena - The Vanguished at Waterloo", the meanings of each expression differ while the referent is the same. Conversely, a single name can name more than one object. Husserl argues that it is only on the basis of a sense-giving act that objective reference is possible. The essence of an expression lies in act rather than the fulfillment of the act. Thus an expression qua expression is meaningful because it is constituted by a meaning intention. An expression lacking in concrete or verificatory fulfillment does not thereby become meaningless. Husserl claims that such expressions are merely symbolic and can therefore only be meant symbolically.⁸ Accordingly, changes in meaning, ambiguities, equivocations, fictions, are subtleties which pertain to the act-character of meaning and not to some essential capacity within meaning as such. Meanings are not sometimes fixed and sometimes in fluctuation, but are ideal unities. The only cogent sense one may give to the ease with which meanings shift is to ascribe such shifts to the meaning-intentions.^{9, 10}

The important point is that both sense and reference

⁸Ibid., p. 289.

⁹John Searle, Speech Acts, p. 79.

¹⁰Edmund Husserl, Logical Investigations, vol. 1, p. 322.

The important point is that both sense and reference (and their unity in a fulfilling act) are founded on intentional acts and so require the thesis of a constituting consciousness. Both meaning and reference are linguistic concepts which rely on the thesis of intentionality for the securing of their ideal, objective status. But whether this essential linguisticity of meaning and reference determines or is determined by the phenomenology of perception is perhaps undecideable. The point that is relevant for Ricoeur's theory is that reference is an achievement of intentional acts and because these acts are constituting acts, they may be said to be pre-linguistic.

In a sense, because meanings are modes of referring, one might say that for Husserl, all expressive acts both mean and refer even if the object referred to is imaginary or logically impossible. The reduction of actual, objective reference to intended reference suggests that the essence of meaning is the ideal unity of sense and reference which can be fully achieved in the speech act per se. The speech act is itself reduced to soliloquy so that neither vocalization nor the particular word formation (grapheme) figure into the constitution of meaning.¹¹ It may be that the fulfilling sense, the actual presentation of the object referred to, is a second or additional act, while the primitive sense of the speech act per se, is the ideal possibility it contains of

¹¹Ibid., p. 280.

realizing, in articulate form, the sense of the domain of pre-linguistic constituting acts.

Ricoeur's theory of metaphorical reference stems from this phenomenological thesis. Like the theory of discourse, the theory of metaphor will claim a transcendency of reference. For Husserl, the transcendency of reference called for a phenomenology of conscious acts rather than analysis of the objects of such acts. The acts Husserl called "transcendental" because they make possible the sense of transcendency of the objects. The theoretical importance of this distinction cannot be overemphasized and Ricoeur's thesis also presupposes transcendental acts of consciousness. In this context, Ricoeur's affinity for the Speech-Act Theory of, e.g., Searle, assumes a positive relevance which may otherwise be obtunded.¹² It is not so much a question of accepting Searle's expositions of meaning and reference as it is re-enforcing the link between the meaning of a sentence and the performance of a speech act.¹³

Frege's theory of sense and reference provides additional clarification of Ricoeur's position. Recalling Frege's distinction between sense and reference, sense is what a name or sentence says and reference is that which is named, or that about which a sentence is uttered.¹⁴ To the linguistic

¹²John Searle, Speech Acts

¹³Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference".

sign there always corresponds a definite sense, while more than one sense may have one and the same referent. It is possible, on Frege's view, that a sense may have no definite reference. Reference is not a condition for meaning.

Consider, for example, the grammatically well-formed sentence, "Pegasus is a flying horse". The statement has a sense, i.e., native speakers understand what is said. But the statement has no concrete reference. A statement can function as a proper name: a proper name designates, or fails to designate an object but in either case it has a sense. The proper name confers referential function upon the entire state of affairs it designates and it is thus designation that is affirmed or denied, not the corresponding sense.¹⁵ Ricoeur's view retains Frege's thesis as well as Frege's claim that we are not satisfied with mere sense, but presuppose reference as well - and so are driven from sense to reference.

In the context of hermeneutics, the role of reference needs a broader formulation. It may be that texts constitute a difficulty for the Fregean position. Just as the sentence is irreducible to discreet signs, so is a text irreducible to discreet sentences, or even the sum of its sentences.

The text, Ricoeur argues, is a production; a work wrought of language and regulated, in part, by literary genres. Her-

¹⁵Searle's objection to Frege's thesis, Speech Acts, p. 164ff.

hermeneutics approaches the text as a work of discourse. If an attempt was made to transpose Frege's terms in order to retain his theory of reference, it may go something like this: the world of the text is presupposed by the text's intentional structure just as one is "driven" from sense to reference on Frege's view.¹⁶ Ricoeur's transposition fails because if reference were presupposed by sense Frege's thesis would collapse. Ricoeur takes Frege's remark about being driven from sense to reference in the strongest possible way and this supports his claim that hermeneutics is "the theory that regulates the transition from the structure of the work to the world of the work".¹⁷ That is, hermeneutics would be the interpretation of the world which a text displays by virtue of its intentional structure, its genre, arrangement and style. But the passage from sense to reference cannot be achieved by a simple transposition of Frege's terms for those of hermeneutics without sacrificing the theory. The phenomenological caution against object analyses in preference of act analyses must be reaffirmed. It is not the object of the text that hermeneutics expounds but rather the acts of meaning which constitute this object (or world).

Ricoeur asks, "If language were not fundamentally refer-

¹⁶Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 220.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 220.

ential would or could it be meaningful?"¹⁸ It appears that Ricoeur wants to say that reference is a criterion for meaning while accepting both the Fregean and Husserlian positions on meaning and reference which argue the converse, i.e., that sense is presupposed by reference. This inconsistency may stem from the application of the theory of discourse in Ricoeur's analysis of written texts and interpretation theory. But even on his theory of spoken discourse Ricoeur claims that discourse is always about something, i.e., it cannot fail to refer. If hermeneutics is phenomenologically based it must separate act-analyses from object-analyses. If the structure of discourse is analysed in terms of its intentional character, a phenomenological commitment is made. If the phenomenological concept of reference is rejected, Ricoeur must demonstrate the continued advantage of whatever remains of the intentionality thesis. He does not do so.

Ricoeur's thesis gains some corroboration from Frege's thesis in spite of itself. Frege considers briefly a sample of poetry and claims that in poetry "we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused",¹⁹ not, that is, in the referent of the poetic statement. On Frege's view, poetic statements are

¹⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning", p. 21.

¹⁹Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference".

non-referential so his theory of reference is restricted to an object language, i.e., a truth-functional language. Poetry would seem to be an exception to this formula. Ricoeur takes this remark in the wide sense so that literature in general falls under the heading of "poetic statement". On Frege's view the relation between sense and reference is suspended in literature. Ricoeur reformulates the postulate of reference in order to "do away with" Frege's restrictive theory.

The second formulation is stated as follows: the literary work through the structure proper to it displays a world only under the condition that the reference of descriptive discourse is suspended. Or to put it another way, discourse in the literary work sets out its denotation as a second-level denotation, by means of the suspension of the first-level denotation of discourse.²⁰

A paradigm case of second-level denotation is metaphor, with the provision that metaphor is not seen as a case of naming or, actually, mis-naming. Metaphor achieves meaning on the condition that a literal meaning is suspended and it achieves reference on the condition that literal or descriptive reference is suspended. But the opposition between literal and metaphorical is itself possible only through conflicting interpretations. It follows that division between first and second level denotation presupposes interpretation and so the written text. Ricoeur wins from Frege just the tools he needs to exact a theory of reference for

²⁰Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 221.

those cases which appear exempt, i.e., literature and poetry. In this sense he capitalizes on Frege's restrictive concept of reference. Ricoeur argues that truth claims are not restricted to scientific or logical discourse but are also made in literature and poetry. Doing away with Frege's restrictions is at the same time a universalizing of Frege's theory since Ricoeur integrates the counter-example into the theory itself.

Metaphorical reference is, Ricoeur says, "set free" by the suspension of literal reference. Such a description implies that the second level denotation is equiprimordial to the first level. If equiprimordial, metaphorical reference (second level reference) is neither parasitic upon literal reference nor a disguise for the ruins of literal reference. The freeing of a world suggests that such a world stands ready for release - not that it is a linguistic construction.

It is important to consider the argument that metaphor does not simply replace or stand-in for literal reference, but transforms literal reference, in part by creating ambiguity and competitive interpretations. Ricoeur's eclectic and sometimes inconsistent use of different theories of meanings may be seen as an attempt to reformulate the concept of reference altogether, and this begins to come into view in his theory of metaphorical reference.

The possibility of interpreting a work literally must

be maintained alongside of the possibility of a non-literal reading in order to produce a metaphorical reading. It is thus the oscillation between the two possibilities that creates metaphorical interpretation of a text. The oscillation is itself founded upon the possibility of "split-reference".²¹ The tensions between possible meanings and those between intended references are possibilities delivered to language through reading and so they presuppose the written text.

Ricoeur proposes an argument by analogy which helps to clarify his concept of split reference. A metaphorical statement precludes literal interpretation by rendering it absurd or impossible. One cannot "wear life like a loose robe" if a robe is a garment made of cloth and life is a biological phenomenon. The literal interpretation founders while a new interpretation emerges. The four term analogy, then: "A metaphorical reference would correspond to the metaphorical meaning just as an impossible literal reference corresponds to the impossible literal meaning".²²

Ricoeur uses the terms "suspension" and "epoche" to characterize the relation between competing meanings and interpretations. But his use of the terms differs from Husserl in important respects. Husserl's use of the term "epoche" signifies a methodogenic attitude; a cessation of belief in

²¹Ibid., p. 230.

²²Ibid., p. 280.

the natural world for methodological gain. Ricoeur uses these terms to point to an essential capacity within language, or perhaps within meaning itself, to founder.

...the meaning of a metaphorical statement rises up from the blockage of any literal interpretation of the statement. Next, because of this self-destruction of the meaning, the primary reference founders. The entire strategy of poetic discourse plays on this point: it seeks the abolition of the reference by means of self-destruction of the meaning of metaphorical statements...made manifest by an impossible literal interpretation.²³

Ricoeur notes that this self-effacement of meaning is countered by a positive strategy: the possibility of innovation.²⁴ At this point Ricoeur's concept of reference gets tied back into the Frege-Husserl line of interpretation because the strategies for new referential possibilities depends upon new meaning possibilities. But both of these possibilities are ultimately tied to interpretation, specifically, the conflict of interpretations. So the tension between what is suspended, the literal or primary reference, and what is active, metaphorical reference, is crucial to Ricoeur's argument. It is this tension that outlines a theory of reference that goes beyond the theories of reference expounded by Frege or Husserl. The purification and continuity of a field of inquiry is not Ricoeur's special aim, though perhaps it is the aim of Husserl. It is the

²³Ibid., p. 230.

²⁴Ibid., p. 230.

discontinuity between possible meanings and interpretations Ricoeur aims to thematize and preserve by re-examining the roles of ambiguity, category-mistakes, and the anti-emotionalism that prevails in the claim that non-descriptive or non-factual discourse cannot meet any truth-conditions.

Implied by the theory of split reference is the supposition that metaphor succeeds in referring to extra-linguistics facts. The positivist argument against this assumption distinguishes between descriptive and emotive language and forecloses any epistemologically sound concept of metaphorical reference. Language, on this view, if it is not descriptive of facts, appeals to an "inner" or subjective state of affairs. Truth conditions (verifiability, falsifiability) are inapplicable to emotive language because it has no "outside", i.e., no intended reference or fact.

The subsequent epistemological weakness of metaphor which is attributed to its alleged emotionalism is reminiscent of Saussure's worries over a linguistics of spoken discourse. But the thesis of the intentional structure of discourse proposed by Ricoeur argued for the ideal status of meanings and so quelled the structuralist fears over the irrational qualities of speech. Ricoeur denies the alleged irrationality of metaphorical discourse on the same grounds that he denied it of spoken discourse.

The conflict between Ricoeur's theory of metaphorical reference, a theory which applies to all discourse actually,

and Husserl's views becomes apparent again when one tries to square the thesis of intentionality with Ricoeur's notion of a splitting of reference. It appears that Ricoeur wants to argue that all discourse refers and some discourse refers metaphorically. The latter mode of reference is thus a species of the former generality - but it requires the foundering of primary reference in order to display a new reference. Working backwards, if reference presupposes meaning, Ricoeur's argument would hold that metaphorical meaning is a species of meaning in general and that it likewise requires the foundering of a primary meaning in order to display a new, metaphorical meaning. This process would in turn rely upon meaning-constituting acts, i.e., intentional acts. On Husserl's analysis, reference is not a criterion for meaning. On Ricoeur's thesis, the postulate of reference is a criterion for meaning once we get to an analysis of metaphor. This is so because metaphor, like the theory of the written text, must finally sustain the implicit hermeneutic which is at work in all discourse. It is a curious point that even in a theory which argues that reference does not determine meaning, to say that texts, and specifically metaphorical texts merely mean, or can mean only symbolically (Husserl), is hopelessly inadequate. Ricoeur's thesis may end up conflating meaning and reference as language functions. If this is so, it is because the thesis of intentionality belongs properly to the

work of interpretation - not as an autonomous operation within discourse itself. Because Ricoeur contends that hermeneutics is already at work in the ways one experiences the world, interpretive acts are actually the meaning-constituting acts and discourse, under its various manifestations, e.g., written, spoken, consummates such acts. The question of reference is, in part, already answered by the assumption that experience is hermeneutic, since experience just is the reference of all discourse. It is important to keep in mind the point that discourse, for Ricoeur, is essentially expressive. This is in contrast to, e.g., truth-functional language. Even if the meanings in discourse are ideal, the actual dialectic of meaning and reference occurs at a pre-linguistic level. The application of this dialectic at the sentence level, the level of the text and to metaphor is a derived application and it suffers inconsistencies as a result.

The assumption that experience, or "feelings", are merely subjective states and not properties of objects or facts is an assumption that is questioned by both Heidegger and Ricoeur. For these two thinkers, the expressivity of things rivals that of an object language. Both Heidegger and Ricoeur argue that an object language is only possible on the basis of the quasi-linguisticity of experience.²⁵ On Ricoeur's view, the suspension of primary reference in metaphor frees up the

²⁵Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. J. Macquarrie, E. Robinson, New York, 1962, sections 21-32.

essential expressivity of things and the interpretive way in which this expressivity finds discourse.

Epistemologically formidable though it may be, the positivist theory rests on the assumption that poetic destruction of reality, a condition for poetic meaning, is at once the destruction of truth conditions. It follows that poetic discourse aspires to no truth per se. Ricoeur's tensional theory acknowledges a portion of this condition for poetic meaning, i.e., effacement of primary reference, but suggests that the primary reference is split rather than eliminated through this effacement. Consequently both meanings and so both references are preserved and sustained in interpretation. If reference can be split, it seems that truth can be split. On this line of reasoning, Ricoeur can establish metaphorical claims to truth.

Meanings which are proximal in metaphor while otherwise remote contain a clue to explicating this new sense of metaphorical truth. Here the Aristotelian notion of resemblance comes into play. Aristotle says that "to see the similar is to metaphorize well".²⁶ Ricoeur raises the question, if remote meanings can be brought into proximity through metaphor and poetry, can things themselves be brought into proximity through metaphor and poetry? Indeed, does the fragment, "to wear life like a loose robe" bring the phen-

²⁶Aristotle, Poetics, 1459, a 3-8.

omenon of life and clothing into a proximity both in terms of meaning and in their respective thinghood? The vision of contiguity and resemblance may itself be called "metaphorical vision" according to Aristotle's remark. But for Ricoeur this is not just one form of seeing among others. It is a seeing which brings the remote into proximity in its very thinghood. As such it is, to use Heideggerian terms, a hermeneutic seeing. Heidegger distinguishes between the apophantic seeing of assertion (essentially proclination or judgement) and hermeneutic seeing which is "the primordial 'as' of interpretation".²⁷ Metaphor, for Ricoeur, is thus a re-description of reality which appeals to a primordial situation upon which it is founded, i.e., interpretation. Ricoeur's thesis is that because metaphor re-describes things in their primordially, the theory of metaphorical reference abandons the concept of poetry as merely subjective. It is not mere feeling the poet implores us to share, but rather textures and meanings as are constituents of the things themselves.

Through the notions of proximity and resemblance Ricoeur introduces a tension between identity and difference in the copula. As Ricoeur puts it, "in the most radical terms possible, tension must be introduced into metaphorically affirmed being",²⁸ into the copula. In his exposition of

²⁷Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 200.

²⁸Ibid., p. 201.

this application of the tension theory of metaphor, Ricoeur focuses on the implicit negation, the "is not", which occurs in the denial of literal interpretation and is preserved within the contrary metaphorical affirmation. Metaphor comprises both the denial and affirmation of the copula. Along with the relational function of the copula, i.e., connecting subject and predicate in a unique relation, Ricoeur argues that there is an "existential" function which can be expounded in terms of the tension between the denial and affirmation of the copula in metaphor.²⁹ Ricoeur's concept of metaphorical truth (and by implication, his concept of metaphorical reference), relies upon the possibility of demonstrating this existential function of metaphor. It is at this point that the non-semantic moment which has trailed along through Ricoeur's semantic theory of discourse can be flushed out.

²⁹Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 247.

CHAPTER V

A Theory of Metaphorical Truth

Ricoeur's theory of metaphorical truth advocates a conjunction between the fictive and redescriptive powers of poetic discourse.¹ It is a conjunction which emphasizes the tension between the conjuncts. Three applications of this tension have been noted. These are:

1. Tension within interpretation: literal reading opposes non-literal reading of text.
2. Tension within the statement: literal subject opposes non-literal subject.
3. Tension within the copula: denial and affirmation of link between subject and predicate, i.e., tension between the "is" and the "is not" of the copula.

In each case the tension is set into motion by suspending a literal reading of a text. Thus, e.g., a metaphorical reading of a statement or text does not resolve a pre-existing tension, but generates this tension by polarizing possible readings. In contrast, Husserl's use of the epoche did not polarize, e.g., the natural and transcendental attitudes, but rather neutralized polarity by placing one of the two terms

¹Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 246.

in brackets. Heidegger's revision of the epoche in Being and Time² may prove closer to Ricoeur's use of the term. In that text Heidegger appears to draw a conceptual link between the phenomenological epoche and the historical epochs in which Being determines itself. Heidegger reminds the reader of an essential absence of Being in its temporal determinations; a self-withholding.

Although Being "holds sway" over each historical epoch, it does so in a manner that is fundamentally ambiguous. It both yields and withdraws itself. This is the duplicity and paradox of Being. The determination of Being as beings is given to consciousness, i.e., to reflection, but the origin of this determinateness is concealed.

The complicity of time and history designates a horizon upon which the task of raising the question of the meaning of Being is possible. It is the determinateness of Being in time that initiates the difference between Being and beings, and so makes the question possible. It is true that, for Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being first arises as a fundamental possibility of dasein's mode of being, but this casting of the question is provisional.

Heidegger's concept of the epoche transfers what is otherwise a strict function of subjective consciousness, an egological function, to a transcendental concept. The history of Being in time is a history of self performed

²Martin Heidegger, Being and Time.

reductions. What is yielded in these reductions is the object of metaphysics and historiography. Heidegger says that the granting which temporalizes (gives time) is determined in "the proximity which denies and withholds".³ Perhaps this strange formulation is itself the essence of Being in time. In any case, because Being disappears as that which grants itself, the beginning is always concealed as such.

Ricoeur seems to make the concept of tension a function of the particular manifestation of language. The idea that a literal meaning founders or self-destructs is based upon this function. But the role of the subject is preserved and this distinguishes Ricoeur's use of the epoche from Heidegger's.

The concept of split-reference is the result of a polarity that originates in metaphor, or more precisely, in the metaphorical interpretation of a statement. But the argument for this concept of reference must be traced to Ricoeur's semantic theory of discourse. The essential point to be won by the theory is this: Discourse, whether spoken or written, affirms and intends an extra-linguistic reality as its referent.⁴ Meaning and reference are tied into the structure of discourse by way of the thesis of intentionality which postulates an irreducible link between meaning conferring acts of

³Ibid., sect. 21-32.

⁴Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 216.

consciousness and meanings so constituted. This relation is applicable to both the speaker-hearer and the text-reader situations. Accordingly, intentionality may also characterize the structure of interpretation.

If discourse is characterized by intentionality, and if this thesis is qualified by the supposition that what is intended by discourse (*l'intente*) is always an extralinguistic reality, it follows that discourse is always referential.⁵

A counter-example to this conclusion is poetic discourse, actually literature in general if taken in the wide sense. We know that Frege denied a referential function to literary works. Ricoeur's theory of metaphor counters this limiting principle of Frege's theory by arguing that the suspension of a literal or proper meaning is the condition for the release of metaphorical reference rather than the annihilation of reference. But the suspension of literal reference is only possible in the context of a split or tension between possible interpretations. From this it follows that reference may itself be polarized in metaphorical discourse. One way of considering this point is to see that the intentional structure of interpretation is flexible enough to endorse competing meaning-intentions within a single meaning-constituting act. That is, conflicting meaning-intentions can comprise the full interpretive act which

⁵Ibid., p. 216.

is an ideal possibility between a text and reader.

Ricoeur's position is that just so many conflicts within constituted meanings, i.e., reference, can be thematized and are, in fact, constitutive of literary works as such.

In his discussion of literary works, Ricoeur postulates a second level referential function which is achieved through the suspension of the first level. The strategy of metaphor is to produce a tension between these two levels of reference.⁶ The task of interpretation is "to elaborate the design of a world liberated, by suspension, from descriptive reference".⁷

Ricoeur's exposition of the sense of a text, the object of interpretation, is guided by the thesis that the text is a work wrought of discourse: "The creation of a concrete object",⁸ which delivers access to reality according to specific modes, i.e., poetry, fiction, etc. The text's meaning is constituted by intentional acts and this meaning is different in kind, i.e., a uniquely constituted act each time the text is read. Because the text breaks away from its author, textual meaning is autonomous and can become part of another unique intentional relationship between text and

⁶Ibid., p. 221.

⁷Ibid., p. 229.

⁸Ibid., p. 229.

reader. In this sense Ricoeur suggests that the text invites a reader to inhabit the world it portrays. Ricoeur's theory of reference provides access to such modes or worlds as can be inhabited by suspending the proper sense of inhabitation, i.e., the proper sense of a text or statement.

Is not the function of poetry to establish another world that corresponds to other possibilities of existence, possibilities that would be most deeply our own?⁹

The thesis argues for a link between poetic discourse and a primitive, perhaps more authentic sense of being or dwelling. Reminiscent of Heidegger's studies of poetry and dwelling,¹⁰ Ricoeur's explication of metaphorical reference carries with it an implicit commitment to a mode of discourse that frees up a primordial experience of dwelling.

The concept of split-reference introduces a parallel between metaphorization of reference and metaphorization of meaning.¹¹ Just as Ricoeur proposes the tensional concept of metaphorical reference, he proposes a tensional concept of meaning. To "see" new proximities between formerly disparate things is to intend, or mean, new proximities, i.e., new relationships of identity and difference. So that active re-description or perhaps reconstruction of

⁹Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁰Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language and Thought, trans. A. Hofstadter, New York, 1971.

¹¹Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 231.

reality through metaphor is a possibility that can only be realized as former intentions or meanings founder. The proper description of reality thus admits a range of internal possibilities which disrupt this description. Accordingly, the tension between proper and metaphorical meanings can be said to commence with metaphorical interpretation, i.e., seeing new proximities.

Again, one can draw parallels between this thesis and Heidegger. Heidegger characterizes understanding as a kind of sight which is a preliminary or provisional disclosure of *dasein's* encounters in the world. The mere seeing of something is already a kind of understanding and interpretation in Heidegger's scheme, though it is only in the latter, i.e., interpretation, that something comes to be seen as this or that entity. That is, sight has to do with the way in which entities are encountered and so it has to do with the accessibility of Being in a most general sense. In interpretation, the world that is already understood in terms of this "pre-view" (the fore-structure of understanding) comes to be made explicit. Interpretation is thus an appropriation of what is held in advance in understanding. For both Heidegger and Ricoeur, seeing something as this or that entity is a function of interpretation. Because meaning is constituted at the level of interpretation rather than at that of understanding, which is pre-predicative, metaphorical meanings require the demise of literal or established

meanings. In a sense this means a return to an unspoiled understanding-interpretation.

It is important to avoid construing the demise of primary meanings as a process of eliminating proper meanings only to replace them by improper meanings. Indeed, the very concept of propriety is under review. This is because the link between proper meaning, i.e., an appropriate meaning, and truth militates against the expanded theory of meaning Ricoeur advances. In short, the foundering of literal meaning is not equivalent to the foundering of truth. Ricoeur's theory of tension is an attempt to expound the sense in which the concepts of propriety and truth may be retained in a theory of metaphor.

Tension constituted by competing interpretations and tension between a proper and improper subject term within a statement are two formulations of the tension theory. A third formulation, noted at the beginning of this section, is the simultaneous affirmation and denial residing in the copula in metaphor. This third formulation plays a key role in Ricoeur's exposition of metaphorical truth.

The copula in metaphor has a relational function which consists of linking disparate entities in a kind of symmetry, i.e., conceptual symmetry. Ricoeur argues that symmetrical meaning-intentions may affect reference as well.

The copula is not only relational. It implies besides, by means of the predicative relationship, that what is is redescribed. It says

that things really are this way. (my emphasis)¹²

An "existential" or ontological function in the copula is thus introduced by the term "redescription". But recalling the initial formulation of the sense of tension in the copula, one notes that such redescription carries with it an essential denial. It says that things both are and are not this way! In, e.g., "The future is a faded song",¹³ the future both is and is not a faded song. The sense in which the future is a faded song, i.e., the sense in which this metaphor is true, is just the question motivating Ricoeur's thesis. What ontological commitments reside in metaphor? Does the unusual predication characteristic of metaphor, e.g., "The future is a faded song", determine a new sense of the subject term? If so, does this new sense determine a new reference?

Equipped with the preceding formulations of the concept of tension, Ricoeur argues his theory of metaphorical truth by examining its dialectical extremes. The first position "gives in to ontological naivete"¹⁴ by neutralizing the implicit negation in the metaphor. The converse position is similarly naive, this time by neutralizing the affirmation in metaphor. Ricoeur's own thesis is the resolution of this dialectical conflict.

¹³T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, New York, 1943, p. 240.

¹⁴Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor p. 249.

What does it mean to submit to ontological naivete?¹⁵

Ricoeur states that the elimination of the negative aspect of the copula in metaphor forces an exaggerated concept of the affirmative aspect. That is, the implicit negation in the metaphorical statement is ignored by this position and the result is an overemphasis on the identity claim that metaphor makes. Ricoeur's brief remarks on this issue indicate that his difficulty rests with its tendency to view metaphor as a vital part of some primitive stratum of experience which is also symbolized by metaphor. Metaphor both resides in and reveals this stratum. But the vitalistic quality of metaphor is not simply a function of perceptual fecundity. The supposition that metaphor figures in as part of the very reality it can express makes it possible to assert a correspondence or symmetry between language and nature. The life of metaphor on this view corresponds to the life of nature undisturbed by reflective or predicative thought. The thesis, according to Ricoeur, is an "intuitionist" thesis which transforms metaphor into a "metapoetics".¹⁶

This cursory view of ontological naivete may be summed up in the following way. By removing the implicit denial in metaphor, e.g., the difference between subject terms which

¹⁵Philip Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain, Indiana, 1968.

¹⁶Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 251.

precludes a strict identity, language and nature merge. The relational function of the copula in metaphor, i.e., bringing peculiar entities into proximity, is mistaken for identity statements since no fundamental distinction between language and nature need be assumed or postulated. Consequently the thesis over-determines the ontological affirmation in metaphor.

The converse thesis winds up in a similarly over-determined position by taking metaphor literally.¹⁷ This involves a number of steps moving from initial pretense or make-believe to intention. Metaphor, on this view, induces a belief in the myth it fosters and once this has occurred the metaphor vanishes.

The molecular theory of gases emerged as an ingenious metaphor: a gas was likened to a vast swarm of absurdly small bodies. So pat was the metaphor that it was declared literally true and thus became straightway a dead metaphor; the fancied miniature bodies were declared real....¹⁸

The critical response, according to Ricoeur's assessment of this position, must be to "defuse" or "demythologize" the myth by resisting the turn from pretense to intention, i.e., refusing to declare the metaphor real. If the dissimulative aspect of metaphor must be brought to critical

¹⁷Ibid., p. 251.

¹⁸W.O. Quine, "On Metaphor", On Metaphor, ed. S. Sacks, Chicago, 1978, p. 159.

consciousness, conventions and systems of belief, i.e., myth, must be unmasked.¹⁹ In a sense one may see this position as an overcompensation for the former position. Demythologization replaces mythologization. Ricoeur argues that such activity ends up in one of two difficulties: it either re-mythologizes or seeks verification of metaphorical claims. In either case the metaphorical character of a statement is eliminated since both tendencies aim for the transformation of metaphor into fact. The critical attitude of constant vigilance against metaphorical guile fails to distinguish between language and reality by taking metaphor as a literal truth which must be verified as such.

Ricoeur's concept of split reference eliminates the need for either extreme by arguing that the existential function of the copula in metaphor is comprised of both a denial and an affirmation. The introduction of the concept of a split in reference permits Ricoeur to correct the naive position by introducing the denial of the copula in metaphor and with it the essential difference between language and nature. This latter distinction allows for a reintroduction of the concept of truth which had been rendered trivial by giving it such extension.

The introduction of the concept of a split in reference corrects the alternative extreme position by introducing the positive determination peculiar to metaphor, i.e.,

¹⁹Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 253.

the proximity which is constituted by metaphor between otherwise distant entities is an affirmation both at the level of meaning and at that of reference. The inadequacies of the activity of de-mythologization²⁰ leave us in a position of a constant flushing out of the pretense in language and one wonders just what lies behind such pretense. What remains of a de-mythologized myth? But Ricoeur's thesis seeks a reconciliation of these two positions - not abandonment.

The question is precisely whether poetic language does not break through to a pre-scientific, ante-predicative level, where the very notions of fact, object, reality and truth, as delimited by epistemology, are called into question by this very means of the vacillation of literal reference.²¹

The objection, then, is not to "intuitionism" per se any more than it is to de-mythologization. The difficulty lies in the impossibility of raising the question noted in the passage above and the subsequent failure to question the stronghold of an epistemology that renders metaphor spurious. The concept of a vacillating literal reference is actually committed to the thesis that at some level, metaphor delivers truth.

In his essay, "What Metaphor Means",²² Davidson challenges a widely held consequence of the view that metaphor

²⁰Rudolph Bultmann uses this term, Keygma and Myth, trans. H.W. Bartsche, New York, 1961.

²¹Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 254.

²²Donald Davison, "What Metaphors Mean", On Metaphor, ed. S. Sacks, Chicago, 1978.

delivers more, and in this 'more', something special, than ordinary or literal meanings. He claims that metaphor means nothing more than "the words in their most literal interpretation mean",²³ so the alleged distinction between metaphorical and literal truth appears to be mistaken. Metaphor gives us no special meaning in addition to literal meaning and this claim Davidson bases on the assumption that metaphor pertains to language use rather than to intended meanings. Metaphor, on this theory, is a performative in much the same manner as promising or wishing, and none provides us with a special instance of meaning construction. One uses metaphor to say something - but what is said is "only what shows on its face (the face of metaphor) - usually a patent falsehood or absurd truth".²⁴ The dispute is over precisely what is the face of metaphor!

Davidson wants to say that while metaphor calls our attention to limitless associative possibilities, it does not do so by way of hidden meanings or special contents since no such things exist. Metaphorical statements are used in such a way as to draw our attention by inspiration or insight, but this function does not command a special theory of meaning since literal statements perform the same task even if the strategy by which our attention is gained may be poorer.

Davidson's quarrel is not with the various descriptions

²³Ibid., p. 29.

²⁴Ibid., p. 41.

of metaphor's effect, indeed fecundity, but with some views as to how such effect is produced. So even if Davidson says that metaphor is "the dreamwork of language", he will also say that this "dreamwork" relies upon identical semantic resources as ordinary discourse.²⁵ The claim that metaphor is productive of new or extended meanings amounts to a cancellation of the metaphor because no distinction between introducing a new term into a vocabulary and introducing a metaphor would be possible. Furthermore Davidson claims that learning a new use for ordinary words is a phenomenon about language, while using a familiar word metaphorically is a phenomenon about the world. For metaphor to retain its identity it must reside in the latter case and so direct our attention to what language is about rather than to language itself.

In Davidson's example of this argument we are asked to imagine a visitor from Saturn to whom we attempt to teach the word "floor". The visitor masters the use of this term. Accompanying him back to Saturn we look at the distant earth and say "floor" with metaphorical intent. Davidson argues that the current views on metaphor would hold that the visitor had just learned a new meaning of the term "floor", which on Davison's thesis ordinary discourse can accomplish. But if the current views are correct, it would not matter

²⁵Ibid., p. 29.

whether the visitor takes the utterance metaphorically or literally since his impression of the metaphor is simply an extension of all the other literal uses by which he came to learn the original term, "floor". Davidson argues that the variety of tension theories either transform metaphor into a metalinguistic phenomenon, or collapse all language into metaphor. The visitor from Saturn will think he has learned a new use of the term without understanding that this use is metaphorical.

If the story's ending changed and the Saturian rather than the earthling uttered the term "floor" while gazing at the earth, would this alter the persuasiveness of Davidson's argument? Isn't the problem just that we do not have grammatical markers that indicate when a term is being used metaphorically and so we depend on context mastery in order to recognize such a use? Humor and irony are also dependent upon context which is why such subtleties are often the most formidable problems in translation. Davidson's argument denies any special cognitive content to metaphor and so purposefully leaves the question of the visitor's mastery vague while interpreting the understanding of the metaphor as an extension of literal mastery. The purpose of the example is to demonstrate the failure of current theories of metaphor to account for the difference between linguistic and extralinguistic facts. We simply cannot tell what it is that the Saturian has learned so long as we rely upon current theories.

Davidson makes this point and then assumes that the Saturian has just learned a new use for an old word.

But if metaphor is a phenomenon having to do with the application of language to the world rather than a phenomenon about language itself, it is not easy to see how Davidson's example improves our ability to make the necessary distinctions between these two phenomena. The Saturian example is supposed to contrast "learning a new use for an old word" with "using a word already understood",²⁶ the latter being the proper context for metaphor. The example shows us that there is no sound way of inferring a mastery of metaphor if metaphor is understood as an example of the former case. Does this help us contrast learning a new use with learning a new word?

Ricoeur's theory of metaphorical truth has the appearance of sharp conflict with Davidson's. Ricoeur's efforts at expounding a concept such as metaphorical truth along the lines of split reference present a clear departure from anything like an exposition of literal truth. Ricoeur argues that metaphorical truth is the result of the erosion of literal truth - an event which is instigated by conflicting interpretations. Metaphor is not constituted solely by use, but by interpretation as well.

The two theses are not, however, lacking conciliatory

²⁶Ibid., p. 35.

points. Basic agreement on the assertion that metaphor is improperly construed as a metalinguistic phenomenon is evident. One of the two dialectical extremes that Ricoeur combats, i.e., that of demythologization, hazards this construal.

Davidson claims that because metaphor relies on identical semantic resources as literal statements means that a special theory of meaning for metaphor is superfluous. Ricoeur's theory of metaphor is an extension of his theory of discourse which relies on a phenomenological account of metaphor are identical to those of literal statements does it follow that the ontological significance of metaphor is identical to that of literal statements? Ricoeur argues that metaphor produces unusual views of experience which are, in fact, "liberated" from the constraints of proper reference. A consequence of his views on metaphorical meaning is that reference is split. From this it follows that a tensional theory of truth is required to account for the sense in which the metaphorical statement makes truth claims.

On Davidson's theory metaphor may be "dreamwork" but this does not entitle us to the claim that this "dreamwork" tells a special kind of truth which is in need of explication. Indeed, metaphor is unconcerned with truth.

CHAPTER VI

Phenomenology and Deconstruction

The preceding discussion should demonstrate an unmistakable link between phenomenology and hermeneutics. This is not entirely the result of Ricoeur's "grafting" of phenomenological theses onto hermeneutics. The meaning-conferring acts in phenomenology may be both acts of perception and acts of interpretation.¹ That is, meaning-conferring acts are ideal acts of consciousness and are therefore structurally identical whether examined in the context of perception or that of linguistic meaning. Ricoeur's studies on language, interpretation and meaning may be viewed as an attempt to explicate the hermeneutical or interpretive elements of the phenomenological account of language and meaning. Heidegger's understanding of his own efforts in Being and Time is similar even if stated in broader terms.

I was concerned neither with a new direction in phenomenology, nor, indeed, with anything new. Quite the reverse, I was trying to think the nature of phenomenology in a more origin-

¹J.N. Mohanty, Edmund Husserl's Theory of Meaning, The Hague, 1976, p. xxiii.

ary manner....²

But Ricoeur is also critical of some of the ways in which phenomenological hermeneutics has been formulated, particularly Heideggerian influenced formulations. In this chapter I want to discuss one of these, i.e., deconstruction or "grammatological" hermeneutics.³

Husserlian phenomenology takes as its "sole task" the clarification of meanings.⁴ It is a philosophy which aspires to foundations free of metaphysical prejudice. Such a foundation must itself be purified in the reflective self-analyses of phenomenology. This latter task poses formidable exegetical difficulties for post-Husserlian phenomenology.

The clarification of meanings, and therewith the securing of a philosophical foundation, proceeds by way of respect, or perhaps trust, in what is given to consciousness.⁵ The phenomenological epoche does not signify mistrust of the natural attitude, but seeks the proper foundation for it.⁶ It is this commitment to what is given that forms an important bond between phenomenology and the hermeneutic theory Ricoeur espouses.

³Jacques Derrida, Grammatology, trans. G. Spivak, Baltimore, 1974.

⁴Edmund Husserl, Ideas, introduction.

⁵J.N. Mohanty, Edmund Husserl's Theory of Meaning.

⁶Edmund Husserl, Ideas, preface.

In an early essay, Ricoeur distinguishes between the methodological functions of the attitudes of suspicion and faith.⁷ "Masters" of the former method, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud (later Heidegger and Derrida may be included), "cooperate in a general exegesis of false-consciousness".⁸ Ricoeur calls this enterprise a negative theory of interpretation.⁹ The latter attitude, i.e., faith, will characterize both phenomenology and Ricoeur's stance.

Each of the writers mentioned in connection with a negative hermeneutic seeks to disclose something that is covered up or masked by alleged false appearances; each seeks a "truth" residing a falsity, even if this truth is yet another falsity as Nietzsche would have it. The prevailing assumption in a negative hermeneutic is that consciousness is always deceptive in its first appearance.¹⁰

Ricoeur's theories of discourse, interpretation and metaphor aim for a recovery of faith in what is given to consciousness. This aim carries with it a commitment to a specific view of consciousness, in this case the Husserlian view, and a commitment to the autonomy of philosophical

⁷Paul Ricoeur,

⁸Paul Ricoeur, "The Critique of Religion", The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, p. 213.

⁹Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁰G.W.G. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J.B. Baillie, New York, 1962.

discourse, i.e., its truth claims. Recalling that the primary task of Ricoeur's theory of discourse was to restore the original unity of language and speech, we may now make two additions so that the overall aim is threefold.

1. Restore primordial unity to language through a phenomenologically based theory of discourse.
2. Restore a philosophy of consciousness through a phenomenological account of meaning.
3. Restore the autonomy of philosophical discourse through a phenomenological account of reference, especially in the context of metaphor.

Phenomenological hermeneutics, as opposed to a negative hermeneutics, is concerned with the discourse of meaning in so far as this discourse attests to the life of consciousness. Because it begins with consciousness and asserts the primacy of conscious acts, it is a philosophy of consciousness.

The text that has been central to the discussion on metaphor concludes with a critique of the methods of deconstruction which are significant in the works of Derrida.¹¹ The method of deconstruction and the negative hermeneutic attributed to Nietzsche, Freud and Marx, share suppositions regarding the status of language, meaning and consciousness.

The lineage from Marxian and Freudian critiques to Heidegger and Derrida poses rather fundamental questions to a phenomenology even if there are also points of sympathy, e.g., psychoanalytic theory may be viewed as a phenomenology of the unconscious. In very general terms, the challenge

¹¹Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, pp. 257-280.

posed by these writers has to do with the autonomy of philosophical discourse. Ricoeur's studies on metaphor are of particular interest in this context because Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida have drawn links between metaphor and metaphysics such that metaphor becomes an accomplice in the deception of metaphysics. It is to this link that I now turn in order to expound the contrasting approaches of Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics and the deconstruction hermeneutics of Heidegger and Derrida.

Heidegger, as is well known, rejects the Husserlian quest for a presuppositionless philosophical beginning.¹² This would mean that phenomenology is unable to fulfill its aim and cannot meet the requirements for securing its own foundation. The rejection is based, in part, on the irreducible circularity of understanding, i.e., the hermeneutical circle. To reflect to an absolute beginning is only possible if the working assumption is that the condition for an absolute knowledge of such a beginning is given once and for all.¹³ This assumption would be consistent with the Socratic doctrine of recollection which is, however, incommensurable with the temporal as such and cannot, therefore, make sense of the temporal-historical determination of Being. The alternative to this supposition would be an "infiniti-

¹²Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, introduction.

¹³Soren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. D. Swenson, H. Hong, Princeton, 1936.

zation" of the reflective process since there could be no discernable breaking point that is non-relative, i.e., no beginning. Either the search defeats its own aim in this latter alternative, or it comes to an end in the recollection of some pre-given truth.

The reflective process for Heidegger, has a sense of this "infiniteizing" to it and this is where the link between metaphor and metaphysics becomes interesting. For Heidegger, the essential metaphoricity of philosophical discourse (concepts) renders conceptual thinking outside of metaphysics impossible. All traditional philosophical reflection occurs within the framework of metaphor. A second circularity is thus constituted. Not only do understanding and interpretation presuppose one another, but so do metaphor and metaphysics.

Heidegger remarks that "the metaphorical exists only within the metaphysical".¹⁴ In a peculiar way this remark summarizes so much of Heidegger's criticisms of the history of Western metaphysics which he designates a "metaphysics of presence".¹⁵ For our purpose it is sufficient to say that this phrase points to the consistent recurrence of an assumption about the presence and immediacy of Being to consciousness and so it points to the privileged position of

¹⁴Martin Heidegger, Der Satz Vom Grund, Pfullingen, Neske, 1957, lesson 6, pp. 77-90.

¹⁵Martin Hediegger, Being and Time , introduction

consciousness within the tradition. Derrida draws out this criticism and shows a conceptual link between the metaphysics of presence and the thesis of the ideality of meanings in phenomenology. The transition from the sensible to the non-sensible, which is the transition to metaphysics, requires the epistemological condition met by the thesis of ideality and so the suppositions of metaphysics include presence and ideality.

Armed with these criticisms, deconstruction hermeneutics infinitizes philosophical reflection as reflection on the play of metaphor in philosophical discourse. The process is itself constituted in the metaphoricity of metaphysics and so does not profess freedom from the liabilities it depicts.¹⁶ Nor does it profess semantic neutrality, i.e., a discourse which is neither metaphorical nor metaphysical. Deconstruction challenges the very possibility of a semantic neutrality in metaphysics because it assumes that metaphysical concepts retain the efficacy of metaphor even if the metaphor is "worn-out" or "dead". This means that there can be no philosophical concept which may be taken as literal. Ricoeur's concern about the autonomy of philosophical discourse springs from this supposition of deconstruction. If philosophy is reducible to metaphor, and if the philosopher cannot find a neutral, critical discourse, truth claims are rendered trivial.

¹⁶Jacques Derrida, Grammatology, pp. 62, 94.

Heidegger says that language defines a hermeneutic relation whose relata are Being and Man.¹⁷ By the term "hermeneutic" Heidegger does not mean principally acts of interpretation since interpretation presupposes the structure of understanding. The principle meaning of "hermeneutic" is understanding and this phenomenon always occurs within the context of language.

Language, as sense that is sounded and written, is in itself suprasensuous, something that constantly transcends the merely sensible. So understood, language is in itself metaphysical.¹⁸

Hermeneutics is therefore already metaphysics for Heidegger so that reading and writing become a contrast which is acted upon in this enigmatic way called "deconstruction".

But language makes its appearance in this metaphysical nature only insofar as it is beforehand understood to be expression.¹⁹ Expression is simultaneously utterance.

Husserl's reduction of language to sense is here repeated by Heidegger (in these passages). But the interesting twist in Heidegger's writings is that the very possibility of such a reduction presupposes the essential metaphysical nature of language. Its sense is suprasensible and therefore metaphysical. Heidegger's use of the term "hermeneutic" introduces a sense of language which is prior

¹⁷Martin Heidegger, On The Way to Language, p. 30.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 35.

to the distinction between the sensible and the non-sensible and so outside of the domain of metaphysics. The passages noted above must be read in this context. The Husserlian reduction of language is then further reduced by Heidegger so that language, as expression, with the constituting acts presupposed, is itself reduced to the fragile relation between Being and Man. The fragility of this relation lies in the autonomy of language which nevertheless "entrusts" itself to the human voice.

Ricoeur's criticisms of Heidegger center on an explication of Heidegger's remark "the metaphorical exists only within the metaphysical". The chief difficulty in this remark is what Ricoeur takes to be the full reversal of a hard won separation of philosophical and metaphorical or poetic discourse. Ricoeur claims that for Heidegger, the "unthought" in philosophy is the equivalent of the "unsaid" in metaphor.²⁰ According to Heidegger the move from the sensible to the non-sensible is implicit. Metaphysics moves from the sensible to the non-sensible, and metaphor moves from the literal to the figurative. In each case the move is toward the suprasensuous. Ricoeur argues that the distinction between the literal and the figurative is "an obsolete semantic notion" which can be overthrown by an improved semantics along the lines we have previously discussed, i.e., along Husserlian lines. Betrayed in this dis-

²⁰Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, p. 280.

tion is the dubious assumption of a primitive or proper meaning for words. The subversive methods stemming from this assumption Ricoeur calls "hermeneutics of suspicion".

Such a hermeneutic may be characterized by the following points:

- 1) The move from sensible to non-sensible defines both metaphor and metaphysics.
- 2) The concealment in the first move, of a primitive metaphor is given in (1).
- 3) The repression of and subsequent fading away of the metaphor within the metaphysical concept is given in (1).
- 4) The aim of hermeneutics must be to unmask the faded metaphor.
- 5) The principle aim of deconstruction is given in (4).

Consider the following table of relations which may illustrate this link between metaphor and metaphysics.

inner:	outer
visible:	invisible
mundane:	transcendental
real:	ideal
difference:	identity

Deconstruction hermeneutics claims that in each case the transfer from, e.g., the visible to the invisible cancels the relation per se, and constrains philosophical thought to the concepts falling on the righthand side of the column. But the transfer is not perfectly linear. The terms on the lefthand side of the column do not vanish. They continue to

reside in the concepts to which they are transferred. The origin of the metaphysical concept is effaced in the philosophical "drift" towards idealization. Nietzsche remarks that "truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions".²¹ This passage from Nietzsche, Heidegger's text on metaphor and metaphysics and Derrida's expansion of the text, from a summary statement of Ricoeur's adversary.

The hypothesis to the effect that worn-out metaphor possesses a specific fecundity is strongly contested by the semantic analysis developed in the preceding studies.²²

The position implied by deconstruction is that dead metaphors are still efficacious. Ricoeur's position is that a dead metaphor is no longer a metaphor. It becomes literal or lexicalized once it loses its metaphorical character. To suppose otherwise is to retain the questionable distinction between the proper meaning of a term and metaphorical impropriety. This distinction makes two errors. One, it invokes primitive meanings which do not rely upon use and two, it fails to provide a foundation for the status of such meanings, i.e., intentionality. According to Ricoeur's theory the revival of a worn or dead metaphor requires a new and distinct act since lexicalized meanings have lost innovative power. To release the power of a dead metaphor a de-lexicalization

²¹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, ed. W. Kaufmann, New York, 1959, pp. 42-47.

²²Paul Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p. 280.

is required and this is a new act of meaning.²³

The difference between dead and live metaphor, with authentic fecundity restricted to live metaphor, accounts for the very possibility of reviving a dead metaphor, which is not a process of unmasking or unconcealing a faded metaphor within a metaphysical concept. That is, the genesis of a concept is not the equivalent of suppressed metaphor which is precisely what the Heidegger-Derrida position suggests. Indeed, the wearing away of metaphor is the condition upon which a second act of meaning, i.e., conceptualization, is founded. On Ricoeur's thesis, the important point is that each process, metaphor and metaphysics, requires separate constituting acts. Without such distinctions, Ricoeur argues, philosophical discourse, including the discourse of deconstruction, would be quite impossible.

...if we ceased to assume what Derrida justly holds to be the 'sole thesis of philosophy', namely, 'that the meaning aimed at through these figures is an escape rigorously independent of that which carries it over' - we would cease to have philosophical discourse.²⁴

Derrida acknowledges this claim which is why the language of deconstruction still operates within the closure of metaphysics; and why there is no semantic neutrality. About deconstruction Derrida has this to say:

...the task is...to dismantle (deconstruire) the metaphysical and rhetorical structures

²³Ibid., p. 291.

²⁴Ibid., p. 291.

which are at work (in the text), not in order to discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way.²⁵

What is it to deconstruct a text? What sort of reading produces an expose of the grammatological structure of a text? Ricoeur offers a dialectical reading of Husserl and Heidegger which produces specialized theories of interpretation, language and meaning. This dialectical reading is a two-fold explication which relies upon an unacknowledged bond between the texts of Heidegger and Husserl. Derrida's position breaks out of this dialectical reading.

In the Grammatology Derrida focuses upon the semiological concept of the sign structure alleging that within this structure there is already a trace of mark of another sign which is, in principle, unavailable as such. To the trace of the unavailable sign structure Derrida gives the name "writing", or "gramme" - a sort of photo-writing which comprises the structure and limits of the text qua text. This trace dismantles the traditional metaphysical concept of the linguistic sign (we may consider Saussure's definition of the sign paradigmatic).

Derrida alleges that "the age of the sign is essentially theological".²⁶ This appellation calls to mind an adjunct metaphysics; an "onto-theology" which outlines an

²⁵Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. A. Bloom, Chicago, 1978, p. 256.

²⁶Jacques Derrida, Grammatology, p. 14.

epoch whose closure has been announced by both Nietzsche and Heidegger, Heidegger to varying degrees and under specialized readings of the Nietzsche texts. The various concepts which determine the metaphysical-theological heritage of the sign Derrida rather sweepingly reduces to the concept of a pure intelligibility or presence as is the well-known strategy in Heidegger's writings. But Heidegger's strategy retains a suspect moment. Derrida places this moment between Heidegger's critique of the essential naivete involved in the transcendental role played by the concept of Being in metaphysics, and the sense in which Heidegger himself cannot avoid rendering Being "the final signified to which all signifiers refer".²⁷ Heidegger's "Being" thus transcends signification and this is the moment to which Derrida's strategy attaches. It is a sample of the moment any deconstructive reading looks for. A more radical strategy would have to be employed to dislodge this uncritical moment on Heidegger's text and such a strategy Derrida calls "deconstruction". The subtle contrast between Heidegger's term "destruction" and Derrida's reformulation, "deconstruction", is however, less indicative of a strategic difference than it is a mark of a difference in what is assumed available to the reader prior to acts of deconstruction in a text.

²⁷Ibid., p. xvi, 20, 21.

There is a sense in which Derrida must say that the complicity between a forever absent trace and an equally endless repression of this absence is a primitive aspect of any reading of a text, whether the reading is fully deconstructive or not. Actually, all reading is essentially deconstructive for Derrida. But deconstruction is not a method for overcoming this complicity as it may have been for Heidegger. Rather, it is a method which reveals an interminable process because it operates on the assumption that the complicity between absence and repression; between the trace (and in some sense the presence of what is absent) and a metaphysical drift toward an ideal presence, may never be removed. Heidegger seems to reach some ending point, perhaps silence.

Of course, it is not a question of 'rejecting' these notions (of metaphysics); they are necessary and, at least at present, nothing is conceivable for us without them.... The age of the sign is essentially theological. Perhaps it will never end. Its historical closure is, however, outlined.

Within the closure, by an oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back on what is being deconstructed it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse - to mark the conditions they permit' and, in the same process, designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed.²⁸

A lengthy quote, but worth the ponderous moment to see that

²⁸Ibid., p. 14.

deconstruction is not geared toward disclosing an anterior truth. For Derrida, it is not a hidden truth that lies behind or within the sign. Again, this supposition may be closer to Heidegger for whom listening to the "unspoken" thematizations of Being is the important task for interpretation. In Derrida's texts, the truth, if anything at all, may be a repressed historical determination or genealogy of the concept of the truth of the sign qua sign; ultimately qua metaphysics. No other sense of truth is available given the closure of the "age of the sign", i.e., the confinements of "truths" which comprise our epoch. One may speak of the closure of this epoch in the sense that the decisive conceptual limitations can be outlined or circumscribed, even if the critic must borrow from this very storehouse of concepts and language.

Derrida suggests that the language of deconstruction is an immanent possibility of philosophical language in general. "Language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique."²⁹ There is a double-bind to every deconstruction. Accordingly, determinative philosophical concepts, as well as those we have been discussing in this text, e.g., interpretation, meaning and truth, require a certain form of erasure or bracketing which preserves their heritage while opposing it. Crossing out a word while permitting

²⁹Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 14.

its legibility reminds us that all of our reading carries this double bind. What, then, is the sense of Derrida's polemical readings; his elliptical charges and proposals?

The negative or mistrustful procedures of deconstruction to which Ricoeur opposes his own version of hermeneutics, takes as its task the deciphering of legends - not truths. The legends are not themselves held suspect as such, as if posing for a "forgotten" truth. Of course Nietzsche argued that what is true is the forgotten illusion and charade of our philosophical truths!

Truths are the illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions.³⁰

"Truth" is chiefly dissimulation and forgetfulness; compounded metaphors and interpretations which include the acts of deconstruction. To telescope the moment of dissemblance, i.e., the moment of truth, which is always the "blindspot" in a philosophical discourse, is to undermine the autonomy with which language institutes truth. It is thus a specific undermining of the autonomy of philosophical discourse. In the Grammatology (and other essays) this undermining focuses on the privilege of the voice, of the spoken word, as the "blindspot" in a long tradition of metaphysical assumptions which collectively determine truth as "presence" - a sort of philosophical construal of Divine Revelation. But once the concept of truth is put under

³⁰Fredrich Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, p. 42.

erasure, the concept of "presence" must also be put under erasure since it poses as the condition for truth. What is absent from the still active concept of "presence" is the initial deception involved in its very formation and Derrida's point is that this initial deception still plays a determinative role in the concept.

There is a writing - a script - of dissemblance which therefore precedes the voice. This script is perhaps the truth of truth. The voice constructs and regulates the relations between thinking and reality, e.g., identities, similtudes, equalities. But the regulative power of thought omits the converse terms, i.e., difference, non-simultude, inequality, from its truth designations. The advent of truth conceals the advent of its own deception. Indeed, one might claim that the advent of, e.g., the concept of identity is precisely the act which constitutes the metaphorical sense of the philosophical voice. An expanded notion of metaphor includes virtually all utterance since utterance strives endlessly to unify experience at the expense of, or representation of difference.

We could thus take up all the coupled oppositions upon which philosophy is constructed, and from which our language lives, not in order to see opposition vanish but to see the emergence of a necessity such that one of the terms appears as the difference of the other, the other as 'differed' within the systematic ordering (l' *economie*) of the same....³¹

³¹Jacques Derrida, Speech and Phenomenon, trans. D. Allison, Evanston, 1973, p. 256.

Thus the origin, the founding concept of truth to which our being in the world has privilege (Heidegger) must be seen as a figurative or metaphorical construct which, as such, is already inhabited by another structure. This structure which Derrida calls a "trace", or "writing", is the structure of alterity, of difference, which effaces the presence of a thing while keeping it legible. The structure of the trace maintains the necessity of dissemblance in all interpretation while it notices such deception through the strategy of erasure. The sign, in order to function as such, must repress the "absence of meaning" which belongs to its very structure. In this sense, absence and presence are accomplices in the formation of philosophical concepts and so there is always a metaphoricity within metaphysics. The trace-structure, the pre-text or "writing", is the structure which de-constructs precisely because it is an immanent possibility of conceptual discourse.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

Ricoeur advances a theory of metaphorical truth based upon the phenomenological theory of reference discussed earlier. The leading distinction Ricoeur needs for his own theory of reference is that which can be made between literal and non-literal meanings. The proximity between a theory of meaning and a theory of reference is plain. Ricoeur argues that the possibility for metaphorical reference rests on the suspension of literal reference.

But this suspension does not have the full force of the Husserlian epoche since the tension between literal and figurative is maintained as such. This means that while literal meanings may be bracketed, they retain efficacy, i.e., a constitutive force, even if in the weak sense of definition by privation. Metaphor and the problem of interpretation require the contrast or difference between lexicalized and non-lexicalized meanings. The concept of split-reference which Ricoeur notes implies a concept of split-meaning, is remarkably the bearer of its own partial demise, i.e., the self-effacement of reference through metaphor.

The concept of split-reference is, however, a significant element of Ricoeur's attempt to countermand the errors of a hermeneutics of suspicion. If the concept of difference, already a difficult if not faulty locution, is one of those errors, it nevertheless passes into a phenomenological hermeneutics without reprisal. This allegation may be made in connection with other theses, e.g., the phenomenological epoche. In the methods of deconstruction the concept of "erasure" (sous rature), while not exactly consonant with the epoche, serves a similar purpose. Thus Ricoeur makes use of some of the very concepts which in a different context he faults. The premise for the concepts of split reference and the subsequent splitting of meaning and truth, are no more beyond cavil than that of the efficacy of "difference" or "worn metaphor". Ricoeur's position is defended by an oblique argument which places the autonomy of speculative discourse in the menacing grip of deconstruction hermeneutics. Consider another passage from Derrida.

The history of metaphysics...is the history of...metaphors and metonomies. Its matrix ...is the determination of being as presence in all the senses of this word. It would be possible to show that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center, have always designated the constant of presence - eidos, arche, telos, energeia, ousia.....God, man, and so forth.¹

If the central and decisive texts of philosophy are controlled by the "constant of presence", if essence, exis-

¹Derrida, *Grammatology*, p. 47

tence, transcendentality, consciousness are all part of the scheme in which being is determined as presence, what is the task of philosophy? For Derrida, it must be, in part, the stripping of this metaphysical-metaphorical structure to expose the moment of dissemblance in each formulation. In a sense, this is still a commitment to truth, albeit a peculiar sense of truth. Ricoeur's arguments for the autonomy of speculative discourse are committed to maintaining the absolute separation of poetry and philosophy.

The vexing quality of a "suspicious" hermeneutic is its intransigence. It is perhaps undecideable whether suspicion or trust in what is given to consciousness is pre-emptory in philosophical discourse, but the escalation of the sort of scepticism which deconstruction hermeneutics proffers is no more exotic than the escalation of a faithful hermeneutic. In either case, the presumed divisibility of faith and suspicion seems artifice. Heidegger remarks that "unquestioned faith is a mere convenience".² The alleged regain of the autonomy of speculative discourse may rest upon such a convenience.

However pallid (and suspect from another angle) a phenomenologically based hermeneutic may appear in comparison with the "Masters of suspicion", Ricoeur's caveat may leave room for negotiation. The demise of the concept of truth,

²Heidegger, What is Metaphysics, p. 92

so prominent in the writings of Nietzsche, is really a philosophical mutiny. To this extent Ricoeur is right to say that the autonomy of philosophy, i.e., its independence or transcendence of its metaphorical roots, is irreconcilable with the methods and assumptions of deconstruction. Unfortunately the nature of this debate makes it quite impossible to appeal to truth in order to settle the course upon which a philosopher must navigate. I leave this problem as is. The question I would pose is this: Does the tensional theory of truth, specifically metaphorical truth, address the recondite problems that Heidegger and Derrida pose, both to the philosophical tradition as a whole and to phenomenology as a paradigm? If we applied the tensional theory to, e.g., Heidegger's statement that the metaphorical exists only within the metaphysical, would it be a case of simply adding grist to the mill? The tension within the copula, i.e., the "is" and the "is not" of metaphorical reference is itself possible only on the basis of a metaphysics that separates the sensible from the non-sensible. Heidegger employs a series of this tension in his review of the phenomenological epoche. Being both withholds and yields itself; Being both is and is not!

Taking the generalization that metaphysics just is "dead metaphor", however indispensable, couldn't Ricoeur's tensional theory survive the procedures of deconstruction? It appears that this theory is already at work, at least in the texts

of Heidegger.

My point is that the debate may be less methodological than appearance would have it. The question of the autonomy of philosophical discourse is actually a question about the autonomy of truth. Deconstruction is, of course, a menace. Ricoeur's strategy is to relocate a sense of truth within the structure of metaphysics by reintroducing the role of metaphor in philosophical discourse.

But this reintroduction is also a reinterpretation of metaphor. The phenomenological analysis of the acts of consciousness facilitate, perhaps determine, Ricoeur's thesis. With a theory of acts Ricoeur is able to make philosophical discourse the transcendental condition for conceptualization, i.e., philosophical concepts such as those noted in the Derrida passages, though these concepts are rooted in metaphor. Each mode of discourse stands clear by virtue of the distinct acts which constitute them as such. The theory of tension together with the restitution of subjectivity permits an overcoming of the notion that concepts are merely figuration whose essence we have forgotten or concealed. The role of the thesis of intentionality supports Ricoeur's instrumental argument that there are no "dead" metaphors as such - but only live metaphor constituted by intentional acts and lexicalized, ordinary locutions which are constituted by separate meaning-conferring acts. This distinction holds whether or not the initial

meaning-conferring act presented a metaphor and then later declared the metaphor "true", in which case it becomes literal. The intention to mean is behind every instance of discourse, and this thesis is behind each of Ricoeur's arguments: his theory of spoken discourse, his theory of writing, his theory of interpretation, metaphor and truth.

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