IN or AFTER EDEN?

Creation, Fall, and Interpretation

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In or After Eden?
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by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Degree
Master of Philosophical Foundations
Institute for Christian Studies
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
August 1995
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In 1927, when Sein und Zeit was published, Martin Heidegger dedicated his landmark book to his "friend and teacher," Edmund Husserl. In the 1930s, however, in the midst of Nazi Germany and in the shadow of Heidegger’s rectorship, the prefatory dedication to the Jewish Husserl was dropped from the edition. When asked about this after the war, Heidegger replied that, though the dedication was dropped, an extensive footnote citing his indebtedness to Husserl was retained. But somehow the missing dedication spoke more loudly than the included footnote. And because a footnote fails to properly convey gratitude, I must acknowledge here, at the front and in regular type, my indebtedness to a number of individuals and communities. Some, of course, will get their footnote, but others, to whom I owe an inexpressible debt, will never be cited. Thus, I take the opportunity to acknowledge my debts before proceeding.

As Derrida has noted, the "Time of a Thesis" is indeed one of "Punctuations"—a time of pausing to reflect. My life is shaped by three predominant communities. The first I will mention is the academic community which stands as the immediate impetus for this work. I would not be on this path if it were not for my first professors in theology—David MacLeod, Jack Fish and Ken Daughters—all from Emmaus Bible College, my alma mater. While they may not be excited about my path, I hope they will nevertheless accept my thanks for setting me on this road I now travel. F.F. Centore at St. Jerome’s College had more impact on me than he perhaps is aware of (thank you for "Thomas"). But most emphatically, I want to say thank you to the community of scholars that we affectionately call ICS. Thanks to Bob Sweetman who has cared enough to criticize my work. I have also profited greatly from two years as George Vandervelde’s research assistant, whom I would like to thank for allowing so much flexibility in pursuing research. Henk Hart and Brian Walsh have both challenged me and encouraged me and have also been models of Christian scholarship. I have also been blessed with the opportunity to be a part of an exciting and promising group of young scholars who all have very important contributions to make to the academy, but who have already had an impact on my own thinking: Jeff Dudiak, Jan Wesselius, and Ron Kuipers have all been an encouragement to me and have a great deal to offer to the world of philosophy.

Within my academic family, three people deserve special mention. Thanks to Richard Middleton for taking his faith seriously and encouraging me to take mine seriously as well. I have profited immeasurably from our "annual" talks. Jim Olthuis has been everything I have needed and wanted in a mentor: one who grants me freedom to be creative and who has ‘been there’ for me through a period of academic growth with deep existential roots. And finally, Shane Cudney, fellow father and husband, has been a co-traveller with me on this journey. I can’t express how thankful I am for his listening ear and wise advice which helped me to become a better father and husband, a crucial lesson I needed to learn.

A second community to which I owe my gratitude is our church home. Bethel Pentecostal Tabernacle has been a wonderful place of healing for our family and a constant source of encouragement in my academic endeavours. Special mention goes to Pastor Charles Swartwood, Patrick & Dorothy St. Pierre, and Scott & Wendy-Lynn Couper. In the course of my ministry, I have also been blessed with the prayers and support of friends in Gorrie. I would
especially thank the 'other' Smiths: Joe, Linda, Kevin, Phillip & Heather-Lynn, who have supported and provided for my work in more ways than one. Art & Jenny Versteeg also have a very special place in my heart.

Without my family this work would never have been accomplished. Thanks to my parents, Pat and Dale, and my wife's parents, Gary and Gerry, for their constant support and understanding and for being such wonderful grandparents. Jenny and Jessica have been there for us whenever we have needed and I hope they know how much they are appreciated. If they don't, I'm sure it is my fault. My brother and best friend, Scott, has made my dreams come true and has made being a Christian exciting again.

Finally, a special debt is owed to my wife and children. Deanna, your love and support is nothing short of astonishing. When I think of all that you give for me, I stand as Gomer before Hosea: "a fool to love someone like me, a fool to suffer silently; but sometimes through your eyes I see I'd rather be a fool" (Michael Card). Grayson and Coleson, you boys are everything to me: it is in your smiles that I find God every single day. It was a hard lesson to learn, hardest for you, but I would drop everything for that smile: "yes, I would wander weary miles, would welcome ridicule, my child, to simply see the sunrise of your smile."
ABBREVIATIONS


However one wants to characterize it—whether as finitude, limit, mortality, opinion, partiality, mutability, or immanence—the first topic of philosophy has generally been taken to be something to be overcome.¹

Interpretation has long been a sin, a post-lapsarian Verfallphenomen (GA 63:17) from which humanity must be redeemed; as such, hermeneutics is linked with the curse and banishment from the Garden. Interpretation, in short, is a result of the Fall, is itself a fall: from the intelligible to the sensible, from immediacy to mediation, from reading to hermeneutics. As the medieval poet Dante (following Augustine) tells the story, the nature of the Fall itself was the transgression of the sign (il trapassar del segno²), a lawless semiotic act which initiated the tragic history of interpretation and corrupted the previous immediacy Adam enjoyed in Eden. Hermeneutics is something to be overcome by redemption, whereby the curse of interpretation


will be removed in a hermeneutical paradise where interpretation is absent. Having been banished from the Garden, Adam and his progeny were plagued by the curse of interpretation and the interpolation of a hermeneutical space; but when paradise is regained it is hermeneutics itself that is banished. Thus Adam in Paradise can proclaim to Dante: "Even if thou tell it not to me, I can discern thy wish, with greater ease than thou canst know what seems to be most sure. For I can see it in the Glass\(^3\) of Truth, which is Itself reflector of all things, but which itself can never be reflected."\(^4\) The redeemed Adam stands as the towering master hermeneut who is, in fact, no hermeneut at all precisely because his knowledge is not vexed by the mediation of interpretation, but is rather an immediate access.\(^5\)

Or so the story goes. It should be noted, however, that this comedic tale does not only unfold in medieval philosophers and poets. In many ways it is much older than Augustine and can be traced to the very beginnings of Western philosophy. Further, it continues to be told in our own era, by traditions as diverse as evangelical theology and contemporary continental philosophy. In both of these traditions, I will argue, interpretation remains inextricably linked to the Fall and fallenness; interpretation arrives upon the scene after Eden as a curse, a postlapsarian disease (or perhaps an originary lapse). The task of this thesis is to explore

\(^3\) Or "mirror" (spieglio), likely an allusion to 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a mirror (esoptrou) enigmatically, but then we shall see face to face." I turn my attention to "Dim-Mirror Hermeneutics" in chapters one and two below.


various understandings of interpretation in light of these common categories of creation and fall.

Two initial points in this regard should be noted.

MODELS OF INTERPRETATIONS OF INTERPRETATION

First of all, I must emphasize that my task is not to examine how various authors or traditions interpret; that is, I am not interested primarily in their hermeneutics. My focus is how these authors and traditions understand interpretation itself. What status do they accord to the 'act' of interpretation, if you will? What does an author understand to be happening in the process of reading? What valuation is accorded to interpretation? In brief, my question is not 'How does a philosophical and theological tradition interpret this text?' but rather 'How does the tradition interpret interpretation?' As such, my goal is not to disclose the hermeneutical processes of the authors below, but rather their construal of interpretation as a human activity—their "interpretations of interpretation." The project of this thesis is, then (if I may use such a prodigious prefix), meta-hermeneutical—which, of course, remains hermeneutical.

In a sense, my goal is to expound each author or tradition (corresponding to chapters below) as models of how interpretation is understood. This notion of models is now

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commonplace, particularly in theology\(^7\), and specifically in discussions regarding hermeneutics. A now classic work is David Kelsey’s *The Use of Scripture in Recent Theology*\(^8\) which describes how the Bible is read or functions in various authors by encapsulating them in seven models. In a similar vein, John Goldingay proposed four *Models for Scripture*\(^9\) and more recently has attempted to outline similar *Models for the Interpretation of Scripture*\(^10\). The work of Kelsey and Goldingay, however, remains at the level of hermeneutical principles, constructing models of how various traditions and theologians interpret and employ Scripture in theology. Neither of them really addresses how interpretation is construed in these contexts. My goal, then, is to take one further step back and analyze how various philosophers and theologians understand the role of interpretation in ‘knowing’, what status is accorded to the result of interpretation, and how they conceive of the relationship between hermeneutics and human be-ing\(^11\). These matters will be uncovered, for instance, in considering the scope which each author attributes


\(^9\) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989). His focus here is actually a doctrine of Scripture and not hermeneutics *per se*.

\(^10\) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

\(^11\) The neologism "be-ing" is employed in attempts to avoid essentialist language such as human "nature". By 'be-ing' I mean human life or existence, being human. It may be considered a rough translation of *Dasein*.
to interpretation, or how someone understands the relationship between reading and interpretation. What I am attempting to uncover remains largely unthought in most theologians and, I will contend, a number of philosophers. Constructing models of such will require work at a level of assumptions that are unveiled indirectly. This method should become clearer as I move into the chapters themselves.

A further word about my use of models: each chapter below considers one or two theologians and philosophers and attempts to piece together how they understand the role and status of interpretation. I have chosen to focus on representative works that flesh out several models that I see operating in much of traditional and contemporary thought. Each part, then, represents a model and each chapter depicts a variation of that model—a model within a model, if you will. Chapter one considers Rex Koivisto and Richard Lints as representatives of contemporary evangelical theology where hermeneutics is understood as originating in the Fall. Interpretation, for them, is a mediation that is overcome, restoring a prelapsarian immediacy. Eden, which was lost (but now regained), was a paradise of perpetual connection: a hermeneutical paradise because of the absence of hermeneutics. Koivisto and Lints, then, represent what I will call a present immediacy model, which is something of a realized eschatology. The curse of interpretation is lifted here and now (for the evangelical Christian, that is). Though I focus on Koivisto and Lints, many others could be located in this model; these will often be referred to in footnotes but will not be discussed extensively.

In chapter two, I focus on the work of German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg as a representative of a "dim-mirror hermeneutic" or an eschatological immediacy model. For Pannenberg also, interpretation is a state of affairs from which humanity must be redeemed.
However, this overcoming does not occur until the eschaton, until the end of time, at which time immediacy will be restored. In this model, I will also refer to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Habermas' critical theory as further examples.

In both of these chapters (which comprise Part 1), we see theologians and philosophers who consider hermeneutics to be a result of the Fall and understand interpretation as fallen. In addition, both models posit a time when this state of affairs is overcome. These thinkers express the confident hope of overcoming and escaping human finitude and represent yet another chapter in a long philosophical story of ascent to the Absolute and Unconditioned. In Part 2, however, we will engage two philosophers who also understand hermeneutics as fallen but who have no desire or dream of overcoming or escaping this condition. They have no illusions of a prelapsarian Paradise nor an eschatological Heavenly City. Thus for Heidegger (chapter 3), hermeneutics is always violent because it constantly struggles against the pull to everydayness. Further human being-in-the-world is 'essentially' fallen and characterized by a concern which St. Paul (whom Heidegger is drawing on) connects with absorption in the world; "but I," continues Paul, "would have you without carefulness" (which, of course, when translated into German is Sorge).

Derrida, I will contend in chapter 4, operates within a similar model. Interpretation, according to him, is always a violent act, an incision, a cut, which necessarily excludes and amputates. The fall is not from presence but always already within presence. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation are built-into the structure of the sign and system of signifiers. Every interpretation is a decision; every decision is 'structurally finite' and as such

12 For a helpful discussion of this point, see Hart, *Trespass of the Sign*, pp. 14ff.
'structurally violent'. Hermeneutics, which is constitutive of human be-ing, is always already violent and a violation, and thus to be human is to do violence.

Both Heidegger and Derrida represent a model which I may describe as a violent mediation model. Again, many others could be situated in this description, particularly Levinas, whom I will discuss only briefly. In contrast to these models above, my goal in Part 3 is to propose a creational-pneumatic model of interpretation. Briefly intimated, this model understands interpretation and hermeneutical mediation as constitutive aspects of human being-in-the-world. As such it contrasts with the immediacy models above, which contend that the space of interpretation can be closed. I will argue that this is a vain hope which attempts to overcome fundamental aspects of being a human being (and being a creature), such as the finitude and locality of human existence. But further, in contrast to Heidegger and Derrida, a creational-pneumatic hermeneutic does not understand this necessity and inescapability of interpretation as a violent state of affairs, but rather as an aspect of a good, peaceful creation. Hermeneutics is not a post-lapsarian phenomenon, coming upon the scene 'after Eden'; instead, interpretation is found 'in Eden' and is thus included in the pronouncement of goodness (Gen. 1:31). Hermeneutics, then, is not an evil to be overcome (or, in the case of Derrida, a violent state of affairs which is inescapable), but rather an aspect of creation and human life which ought to be affirmed as 'good'.

I have outlined the four models explored in this thesis in order to indicate my direction, but also to demonstrate how I understand these models to function. They must not be
understood as definitive air-tight boxes which encapsulate and enframe each thinker. They are intended to function as heuristic devices which are not definitive but are nevertheless helpful in ascertaining differences and contrasts. These models are necessarily constructions—fictions, but useful fictions which attempt to describe how interpretation is understood by several different thinkers and traditions. They also provide the opportunity to uncover similarities which, throughout this thesis, will also be a fundamental point of critique, viz., the connection between interpretation and the violence of fallenness. Finally, I think these models will prove useful inasmuch as they help to situate other philosophers and theologians in the spectrum (which I will to some extent attempt to do, largely in footnotes).

When it is emphasized that these models are simply heuristic devices, then it is not expected that individuals will 'fit' into these descriptions. My use of models is in fact an exercise in what I am theoretically arguing for in this thesis: that description and interpretation are violent only if they operate against an expectation of full presence. Because I have no

13 I have reservations about such postal operations, which attempt to get everything and everyone in the proper Brieffach (post-office box, pigeonhole).

14 Stephen Bevans provides a very helpful discussion on "The Notion and Use of Models" in Models of Contextual Theology, pp. 23-29. He understands models as notions related to "critical realism": "While the critical realist realizes that one can never fully know a reality as it is in itself, at the same time she or he realizes that what is known is truly known" (p. 25). While Bevans' relativization of models is welcomed, my sense is that even a 'critical' realism claims too much inasmuch it asserts that the thing is known partially 'in itself.' I would rather speak of a "hermeneutical realism" (Dreyfus) or a "phenomenological connection" which never claims to know something 'in itself' but does gain access to 'the things themselves.' However, such connection with die Sachen selbst is always understood 'as' something, 'as' I construe it. On "hermeneutical realism", see Hubert Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991): 253-265.

15 I think my project is akin to Caputo's "Three Interpretations of Interpretation," where he discusses 'left' and 'right' sides of the Heideggerian heritage. See Radical Hermeneutics, pp. 95-119.
pretensions of 'categorization', I have no difficulty in employing these descriptive devices. Contemporary continental philosophy would insist that these models 'fail' to define each thinker and thereby do violence to her or him. But I will contend that this is a failure and violent only if we remain haunted by a ghost of full presence.16

ON THE CATEGORIES 'CREATION' AND 'FALL'

Above (p. 3), I stated that the task of this thesis is to explore various understandings of interpretation in light of the common categories of creation and fall. So far, I have addressed the issue of models as an attempt to uncover the status and role of interpretation in the philosophers and theologians that will be considered. A second point that must be addressed is the usefulness or legitimacy of the categories 'creation' and 'fall'. This is an issue only because this thesis spills over the disciplinary boundaries of theology and philosophy.17 Creation and


17 A methodological note: I understand this thesis to be a philosophical exploration which touches on Christian themes. For me, just because philosophy engages religious or theological motifs does not mean that it has lapsed into theology. As I understand it (and have formulated elsewhere), theology is a special science (eine positive Wissenschaft) which explores the experience or modality of faith. It investigates a particular aspect of human existence, just as biology explores the biotic, mathematics the numeric, etc. Philosophy is directed towards the foundations of these special sciences and the coherence and inter-connection of the diverse aspects of human experience. Given this distinction, the focus of this thesis is philosophical, not (strictly speaking) theological. Nevertheless, it is an exercise is the scandalous project of Christian philosophy. On the possibility of a Christian philosophy, which rejects Heidegger's philosophical atheism, Plantinga's theistic philosophy, and Gilson's proposal, see my essay, "The
fall are common parlance in theology; but can this terminology be transported into philosophical discourse? Is this not faith language and therefore inadmissible in philosophy?

If this is the case, Heidegger and Derrida are not aware of it. The notion of the Fall and fallenness occupy important theoretical places in the early work of both, although both are insistent and persistent in denying that such has any connection with theology. The analysis of fallenness in his early period, Heidegger contends, "has nothing to do with any doctrine of the corruption of human nature or any theory of original sin." Nevertheless, the fall remains a live category for both of these philosophers and others, even if creation does not. My goal is to take up this discourse and to understand why Heidegger, Derrida and others retain such terminology, particularly given its theological roots.

The categories of creation and fall, then, lend themselves as helpful tools or points of contact in the ensuing discussion. They function, despite all of Heidegger's protests to the contrary, as "evaluative indicators" with regard to interpretation and hermeneutics—and more generally, with regard to human existence in general. My constructive proposal in Part 3

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Art of Christian Atheism: Faith and Philosophy in Early Heidegger", presented to the Tri-regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Boston, April 1, 1995). I have further discussed the relationship between philosophy and theology in "Living in Jerusalem, Commuting to Athens," Nuances 3.1 (Spring 1995); and "Fire From Heaven: The Hermeneutics of Heresy," presented to the Canadian Theological Society (Montreal, June 1, 1995). My work in this area, which will receive more attention in the future, is dependent on Martin Heidegger's Phanomenologie und Theologie (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1970) and Herman Dooyeweerd, In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960): 113-172.

18 Martin Heidegger, History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985): 283. In Being and Time he is adamant that 'falling' must not be construed as a "negative 'evaluation'." (BT,265) It is precisely these disclaimers which I will contest in chapter 3.
attempts to make creation a live philosophical category for understanding the nature of hermeneutics as constitutive of human be-ing. Interpretation, as I will argue, is creational: an inescapable state of affairs that accompanies the finitude of creaturehood, and which, since it is an aspect of creation, is thereby 'good'. While this will be unfolded in more detail in chapter 5, here I would like to open a space for these categories to be heard and not dismissed out of hand as simply another naive appropriation of a very old metaphysic.

In some respects, any attempt to translate these categories of creation and fall into 'philosophical' language always ends up implicating them in a side of the Western tradition which I am attempting to avoid. However, I am willing to briefly take that risk in order to indicate my understanding of these terms. When I speak of interpretation as creational, I mean that the need to interpret is 'essential' to human being; hermeneutics is 'by nature' part of human existence. I am, in a certain sense, saying that interpretation is a 'normative' state of affairs, "constitutional" of human life, an "existentiale". This would be in contrast to Lints and Pannenberg who, when they link interpretation to the fall, are basically saying that hermeneutics is 'accidental' or 'anormative' and not a constitutive aspect of human experience. That is very different from Heidegger and Derrida, who by no means understand interpretation as something that can be eradicated; that is, Heidegger, Derrida and I are agreed about the inescapability of interpretation for human beings. However, we diverge when they relate this to fallenness--albeit a fallenness without creation (a fall within not a fall from)--as "essentially fallen" (BT,264-265).

For Heidegger and Derrida, fallenness does not describe the anormativity of interpretation but

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19 I am not, however, proposing a renewal of essentialism or even 'closet essentialism.' Even Derrida (FL,5,7,14) and Heidegger (BT,264-265) speak "essentially" and of essences.
rather the violence of interpretation. In contrast, my creational hermeneutic contends that, if interpretation is constitutive of human be-ing and creaturehood, then it must be 'good' and not necessarily or essentially violent. If to interpret is *ipso facto* violent, and if interpretation is constitutive of human existence or creaturehood, then to be a human would be necessarily violent. But if human life as created is 'good', then this cannot be the case. (This last issue will be taken up again momentarily.)

My proposal, then, is "simultaneously very far from and very near to Heidegger's [and Derrida's]' (PC,66). The state of affairs that Heidegger and Derrida are describing as fallen and violent, I am portraying as creational and good. We all agree, however, that this state of affairs is a necessary aspect of human experience, in contrast to Lints and Pannenberg. On the other hand, along with Lints and evangelicals, I believe in the goodness of creation and the hope for restoration. But again in contrast, I do not identify this with immediacy or full presence; instead hermeneutical mediation is the necessary accompaniment of the finitude of human life.

I have not yet addressed a significant issue: my belief in the goodness of creation. I will leave an explication of this until chapter 5. Let me note here, however, that I am not unaware of the problematics of this assumption. It is precisely this point that lies at the heart of my disagreement with Derrida. I am opting, it may be said, for what John Caputo describes as the "religious" construal of the world (as exemplified in Kierkegaard) over against the "tragic" of Nietzsche. I must remind myself, however, that Zarathustra's laughter echoes in Abraham's ears, haunting Abraham's decision. However (and I must leave a more extended discussion of

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20 In both chapters 3 and 4, I will argue that this is construed as violent precisely because both Heidegger and Derrida remain haunted by a ghost of full presence, a *Geist* nowhere to be found in Eden as I understand it.
this until chapter 5), I would also remind Caputo and Derrida that, given the 'fact' of undecidability, Zarathustra must sometimes lie awake at night wondering if Abraham is right; that is, if my faith in the goodness of creation is a "construal", Heidegger and Derrida's "belief" in the violence of human existence is no less a construal.

It is my hope that the usefulness of these categories will demonstrate itself in the following chapters. My goal in this brief introduction was to open a space for these categories to be used without being initially dismissed as simple neo-scholastic retrievals.

A NOTE ON A NOTE FROM AGAINST ETHICS

But isn't it a little late for creation? Have we not arrived on the scene long after such an idea (let alone event) has been relegated to a history that is better forgotten—a history of 'violence and metaphysics'. Is not this proposal of speaking of interpretation 'in' or 'after' Eden rather quaint and perhaps even a little humorous? And is it not also horrifying, or at least horrifyingly irresponsible? For who could responsibly speak of Eden after Auschwitz? Are we not everywhere encompassed only by the tragedy of fallenness and a ruptured world? Creation, at this time (in history)—or at least talk of creation—would seem both philosophically and ethically problematic.

The first kind of criticism locates creation in a metaphysical tradition tied to the Infinite and thereby implicated in a story which purportedly ended with Hegel. To speak, as I will, of creation and finitude in this 'postmetaphysical' age is to lapse into a naive epoch of onto-
As John Caputo notes,

"The language of limit and finitude—like the word "creature"—belongs to the most traditional metaphysics of infinity; it suggests that it is to be followed up by a philosophy of the unlimited. (The old Jesuit curriculum used to have two courses: metaphysics of finite being [creatures]; metaphysics of infinite being [God].)...That is why Derrida writes that "the return to finitude" does not take "a single step outside of metaphysics.""^{21}

If this is the case, then to speak of finitude and creation is to once again succumb to the "erotic pull" of the unconditioned, a love affair that is played out in the history of Western philosophy since Plato.^{22} And here I agree with Caputo and Derrida that this quest for the unconditioned, unmediated, absolute, Infinite is a dangerous and impossible dream—a vision given to metaphysical violence. But must language of creation and finitude necessarily be followed by talk of the Infinite? Traditionally such discourse has certainly taken that route, and inasmuch as the categories are inherited from that tradition, there is certainly a sense in which terms like creation and finitude "suggest" a discourse on the Infinite, i.e. a metaphysical discourse. But is it necessarily the case?

By employing the notion of finitude, I run the risk of being identified with, on the one hand a "Gadamerian conservatism,"^{23} and on the other the Habermasian tradition of critical


theory. In the end, I think both of these traditions deny the very finitude which they purport to honour. In fact, despite his protests to the contrary, I do think that Derrida is a philosopher of finitude par excellence. As Caputo mentions, however, Derrida avoids such categories as neo-ontotheological:

it would not mean a single step outside of metaphysics if nothing more than a new motif of "return to finitude," of "God’s death," etc., were the result of this move. It is that conceptuality and that problematics that must be deconstructed. They belong to the onto-theology they fight against. Differance is something other than finitude. (OG, 68)

Does this mean that Derrida has a language and set of conceptual categories up his sleeve that are not part of the onto-theological tradition? Can we step outside of metaphysics? Are conceptualities deconstructed from outside? I ask these questions, not as one intent on neo-scholastically rehabilitating metaphysics, but rather upon Derrida’s suggestion. For is not the 'task' of deconstruction precisely to inhabit that which is insufficient, despite the risk—gladly facing the challenge as un beau risque? Before the passage above, Derrida is insistent that "one

and Locality and Practical Judgement: Charity and Sacrifice (1994). I am not saying that there are no affinities between my proposals and that of this conservative Gadamerian tradition; however, there are some fundamental differences which will be addressed as they arise in the following chapters.

For instance, Thomas McCarthy remarks that the challenge for philosophy today "is to rethink the idea of reason in line with our essential finitude." McCarthy, "Introduction" to Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987): x.

I would also agree with Habermas that for Michel Foucault, "the experience of finiteness became a philosophical stimulus." Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present: On Foucault’s Lecture on Kant’s What is Enlightenment?," in Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate, ed. Michael Kelly (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994): 149. In addition, Ronald Kuipers suggests Rorty as another philosopher of finitude, in a qualified sense. See Kuipers, A Dream That Begins in Responsibility (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, forthcoming).
must *accentuate* the 'naivete' of a breakthrough which cannot attempt a step outside of metaphysics, which cannot *criticize* metaphysics radically without still utilizing in a certain way, in a certain type or a certain style of *text*, propositions that...have always been and will always be 'naivetes,' incoherent signs of an absolute appurtenance."(OG, 19) It is difficult to see, then, how Derrida and Caputo can critique every discourse concerning finitude as ontotheological if it is impossible to step outside of that tradition.

That is not to say that the language of creation and finitude is always postmetaphysically aware and vigilant (which is precisely the problem I have with Smith's "Gadamerian conservatism" and Habermas' "embodied rationality"). It does mean, however, that it is possible to inhabit this discourse differently, 'in a certain way,' so as to deconstruct the tradition from within while at the same time describing a state of affairs in a new manner. In a sense, to speak of finitude is 'good deconstruction' and an instance where Derrida's text deconstructs itself, for my project is precisely what Derrida outlines as the project of deconstruction.

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work.(OG, 24)

I maintain the use of a word such as "finite" inasmuch as I am forced to inhabit a discourse and socio-linguistic tradition. However, by doing so I constantly risk "falling back within what is being deconstructed." Therefore,

it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse--to mark the conditions, the medium, and the limits of their effectiveness and to designate rigorously their intimate relationship to the machine
whose deconstruction they permit; and, in the same process, designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed. (OG, 14)

My use of finitude would be an example. When I speak of finitude, I am not thinking of the finite as limited against the Infinite; I am thinking of situationality—being human, being here. "Finite," unfortunately, seems to describe something in terms of lack or deficiency—precisely the paradigm which I am attempting to critique. It will be evident, then, that mine is a finitude without the Infinite; for me, finitude is differance without the ghost of full presence continuing to haunt it.

Two other terms that I will employ need to be marked and surrounded with a discourse to designate their conditions simply in order to signal that my use of them is not oblivious to difficulties and risks (and all of these notions will be further explored in the following chapters). The first is "mediation": the state of affairs that I am denoting by the term is described as mediation only against a horizon of immediacy—again, precisely what I am attempting to avoid. To naively employ the notion would be to remain enclosed by the dialectical poles of identity and difference, same and other. I am attempting to describe this state of affairs with existing vocabulary, and so I use the term mediation 'in a certain way' to indicate that human experience of other people and things is fundamentally interconnected, but nevertheless always experienced 'as' something, always experienced hermeneutically. A second term is "traditionality", which would seem to initially connect me with a more Gadamerian train of thought—the Great Train of Being. While my use is not completely divorced from Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, I am not interested in rehabilitating the Tradition; further, my sense is (and here I agree with Habermas) that for Gadamer I am delivered over to the tradition without any recourse for
critique of its violence. In contrast, when I speak of traditionality or "traditionedness," I am emphasizing that we belong to a host of traditions and that such a state of affairs is constitutive of human existence, of finitude. In fact, finitude and traditionality will be seen to be almost interchangeable in what follows.

IN THE BEGINNING

At this juncture I should say a brief word about the idea of creation, which again will be further developed in chapter 5. First, no connection should be drawn between my use of creation as a philosophical category and "creationism" or "creation science." Nor am I once again attempting to construe being as *ens creatum.* I am not proposing it as an ontological theory of origins, not even as an-archic or pre-originary; mine is, if you will, a present creation. It is creation as a metaphor for what phenomenology describes as the given or the gift—the *es gibt.* Creation is a way of construing the state of affairs that is described in phenomenology as "world," And as a construal, its status is both undecidable but also one on par with every

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27 In response to Joseph O'Leary's concerns. I disagree with him, however, that creation is a concept that must remain foreign to philosophy and that by the employment of creation in phenomenology "we override the plurality and opacity of the world as phenomenologically accessible." Joseph Stephen O'Leary, *Questioning Back: The Overcoming of Metaphysics in Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985): 15, 17. This is due to O'Leary's assumption regarding the exclusion of faith from philosophy, which I do not share and further, think is impossible. See my "Art of Christian Atheism."

28 Dooyeweerd describes creation as an analogical concept in *In Twilight,* pp. 149ff.
Further, a discourse on creation ought not be understood as inherently conservative or legitimating the status quo. As Richard Middleton has argued, rather than serving as a legitimating framework, creation provides the sources for critique and liberation in the midst of the tradition. It is a post-exilic myth told not by those in power, but rather by those deprived of power, crushed by the dominant power and exiled to the margins. To speak of the goodness of creation is not to invoke the Good, which Plato and Allan Bloom have the corner on. Creation is, as Caputo argues, a pluralist idea. The hermeneutical structure of creation is good; it produces goods: a plurality of interpretations and a diversity of readings. The sin of Babel was its quest for unity—one interpretation, one reading, one people—which was an abandonment of creational diversity and plurality in favour of exclusion and violence; and "the ravages of hatred have an ominous sameness." Plurality in interpretation is not the original sin; it is, on the contrary, the original goodness of creation: a creation where many flowers bloom and many voices are heard, where God is praised by a multitude from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:9), singing songs in a diversity of tongues, even


30 Against Ethics, pp. 39-40.

31 Ibid., p. 33.

worshipping through a diversity of theologies.\textsuperscript{33}

So once again, as with the terms finitude, mediation and traditionality, creation is utilized 'in a certain way,' as a way of inhabiting a discourse and attempting to uncover and describe a state of affairs which might also be portrayed as "the human condition".

My goal in this introduction has been twofold: to indicate the direction of the thesis and to mark some key terms and categories that will be utilized. I have focused largely on the second aspect precisely because I recognize that I will be implementing nomenclature that could be easily dismissed as part of an uncritical and naive tradition of metaphysics. In this introduction, I have only made brief remarks about this terminology to create an initial opening for them to be heard. They will be further unfolded in the critique and proposals that follow.

\textsuperscript{33} Even though I disagree with him at key points, I very much appreciate James Brownson's emphasis on a plurality of interpretation in his essay, "Speaking the Truth in Love: Elements of a Missional Hermeneutic," \textit{International Review of Mission} 83 (July 1994): 479-504. Brownson makes a crucial contribution to evangelical theology in this essay; it is my hope that it may be heard.
Part One

THE FALLENNESS OF
HERMENEUTICS
CHAPTER ONE
PARADISE REGAINED

For evangelical theology, the Fall was a fall from immediacy to mediation, from understanding to distortion, from reading to interpretation. Eden, for evangelical theologians, was a paradise of perpetual connection: a hermeneutical paradise precisely because of the absence of hermeneutics. As Richard Lints tells the story,

In the beginning, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect clarity in their comprehension of the purposes and presence of God. The creatures and the Creator understood each other. But the fall destroyed this clarity and Adam and Eve immediately sought to cover their nakedness, to find shelter from God, to hide from him. (FT, 71, emphasis added)

The fall, then, destroyed the pristine perspicuity of Edenic immediacy, where 'knowing' was not hindered by the space of interpretation. Of course, the story doesn’t end there; redemption is

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1 This notion of 'clarity' is not unrelated to the roots of modern philosophy and Descartes' "clear and distinct ideas," which marked a new requirement of knowledge in modernity—a stipulation which evangelical theology inherited precisely because of its own modernity. Lints' "clarity" and Descartes' "clear and distinct ideas" fall within a tradition of immediacy which claims to have unmediated access to the world and God. It is, as Lints offers, a clarity of "comprehension"—a knowing which is a definitive grasping (comprehendere). It is this tradition of immediacy—of comprehension and definition—which Jean-Luc Marion describes as the domain of the idol. Concepts, Marion argues, need not necessarily be idolatrous and violent (they may be "icons"), but when they make claims to comprehension and immediacy, they become idols.
a restoration of this interpretive paradise (at least for evangelical readers). Hermeneutics is a curse, but one from which we can be redeemed in the here and now, a return from mediation to immediacy, from distortion to 'perfect clarity,' and from interpretation to 'pure reading.'

Issues of a general hermeneutical nature have finally come to the fore in recent evangelical discussions, along with a number of new contributions on theological method. As attempts to engage recent philosophical and theological developments such as existentialism, philosophical hermeneutics and deconstruction, evangelicals are increasingly attentive to questions of tradition, historicality, contextuality and cultural conditioning. However, all of these elements and conditions are construed as inextricably linked with hermeneutics and, further, as conditions which must somehow be overcome. While many pay heed to the influence of socio-linguistic and historical conditioning, in the end, evangelical theology asserts that it is somehow possible to surmount these conditions and attain a pure reading which delivers the 'explicit teaching of Scripture.'

In looking at two of these proposals in this chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate that this penchant for overcoming historical and linguistic conditioning unwittingly ends up being an attempt to overcome our humanity and as such, is a devaluing of creation, which evangelicals

"The concept," he continues, "when it knows the divine in its hold, and hence names 'God,' defines it. It defines it, and therefore also measures it to the dimension of its hold. Thus the concept on its part can take up again the essential characteristics of the 'aesthetic' idol." See Marion, God Without Being, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 29.

The works by Donald Bloesch (A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority & Method in Theology [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992]) and Lints were two of the more significant contributions on theological method. I would also mention Stanley Grenz's Revisioning Evangelical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), which I will not deal with extensively; however, of the recent evangelical projects, I would find Grenz's to be the most promising.
seek to honour. I am suspicious that underlying this claim to immediacy and 'objectivity,' there is an unconscious (and perhaps, unintended) drive to escape interpretation and to overcome creaturehood, a drive which is itself reminiscent of the Edenic fall and the trespass of the sign, for it is fundamentally a striving to be like God (Gen. 3:5). It seems to be but another ('Christian') chapter in a long history of metaphysics, seduced by the erotic pull of the Infinite and determined to ascend to such pristine heights. In much the same way that Dennis Schmidt describes the history of philosophy, evangelical theology is resolute in its quest "to see beyond the captivity of finite perspectives and prejudices of every sort—national, historical, egoistic, linguistic, physical—to a perceived or simply promised metaphysical region of free and abstract generality which is said to first grant thought its mandate to speak intelligibly about the world in which we find ourselves."3 (As such, modern philosophers such as Descartes and Locke could be included in the immediacy model explored in this chapter, inasmuch as both posit a model of knowing which claims to deliver the world as it "really" is in a correspondence theory of truth.)4

I have chosen to consider two recent evangelical proposals from Rex Koivisto and Richard Lints as paradigmatic examples of evangelical interpretations of interpretation because they provide very explicit examples of my thesis; further, they range across the evangelical

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3 Schmidt, *Ubiquity of the Finite*, p. 1. See also the epigraph to the Introduction above, p. 1.

4 As Kevin Hart notes, Derrida takes Husserl to be inhabiting this same model, offering an account of meaning similar to Dante's Adam (*Trespass of the Sign*, p. 11). While I would admit that in some respects Husserl remains very Cartesian, I also think that he is a transitional figure with regard to questions of immediacy and mediation. Caputo offers a helpful re-reading in *Radical Hermeneutics*, pp. 36-59.
spectrum: Koivisto representing a low-ecclesiology, Baptistic-revivalist tradition and Lints coming from a Presbyterian, classical Reformed paradigm. My project is to show the continuity and critique the base assumption of both regarding the fallenness of hermeneutics.

READING WITH DANTE'S ADAM: KOIVISTO

Rex Koivisto's interpretation of interpretation is uncovered in his recent book One Lord, One Faith, which is a sustained call for restoration of Christian unity in a manner rarely heard from evangelicals. In many ways, I appreciate his attempt to forge a "theology for cross-denominational renewal" (the subtitle of the book). However, I think this project is marred by a hermeneutical framework which centres around immediacy. To demonstrate this, I must first outline his proposal for renewed "catholicity".

Koivisto sees denominational distinctives which are understood as divine imperatives as the main barrier to Christian unity. To overcome this situation, Christians must be able to distinguish between "the core orthodoxy which they warmly share with other believers and their own peculiar distinctives." (OL, 123) These denominational distinctives are what he describes as "tradition," or more specifically, "micro-tradition." By doing so, he is trying to point out to evangelicals that much of what they considered to be "explicit biblical teaching" is only "tradition," that is (for Koivisto), interpretation, a kind of "style"(OL,135). Much of what evangelicals of differing stripes consider to be a divine imperative is actually a highly mediated

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5 Koivisto is professor of Bible and Theology at Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, Oregon. Incidentally, he also associates himself with the Plymouth Brethren, my former denominational home.
interpretation. On one level, Koivisto is exposing the myth of unbiased interpretation; "None of us," he argues, "interprets the Bible in a vacuum. We interpret out of a cultural, historical context, through an ecclesiastical context, looking for the Bible's relevance to cultural problems." (OL, 136) He explicitly rejects any "leapfrog" model of interpretation which claims to go directly to the Bible, uninfluenced by tradition; instead, interpretive traditions are unavoidable.

However, Koivisto's text deconstructs itself in the next paragraph where he restores just such a model of bias-free interpretation on another level; that is, we must distinguish our (micro-) traditions from "the clear teachings of Scripture." Our denominational distinctives are interpretations, tradition, and as such must be stated with a "hermeneutical humility." In order for Christians to be united (which is Koivisto's overall project), micro-tradition must be relativized, which is to say that these distinctives must be seen as interpretations and therefore fallible. But the constructive part of Koivisto's proposal is found in his notion of "core orthodoxy", which is what all (true) Christians share in common. It is this core orthodoxy which is the "explicit teaching of Scripture"--explicit because it is not interpreted but simply read.

Thus, micro-tradition is composed of "those traditions which make up the unique interpretive distinctives of a congregation, denomination or stream within the whole church." (OL, 342n.6) It can further be classified as "interpretive" or "external": as external, tradition involves practices and doctrines which are not based on "explicit biblical support," but rather ancient or denominational founding practice (OL, 146-147). Macro-tradition, on the other hand, "is the interpretive tradition of the church as a whole" (342n.6) and is to be identified with
the core orthodoxy that is shared by the entire church (OL, 182). In order to construct a cross-denominational theology, then, it is imperative that these two levels be distinguished, Koivisto argues: those beliefs which are explicit biblical teaching (macro-tradition) and those beliefs which are the result of interpretation (micro-tradition). "Only when we have separated out what is traditional," he continues, "can we be allowed to hear the crisp, unadorned voice of God ringing out from Scripture alone." (OL, 140) But here we stumble upon an interesting aporia in Koivisto’s text: denominational distinctives are interpretations influenced by tradition, thus Koivisto categorizes them as micro-tradition. Core orthodoxy, or macro-tradition, however, represents the 'clear teaching of Scripture.' May we not legitimately ask, at this juncture, whether Koivisto’s core-orthodoxy—the clear teachings of Scripture—is not also influenced by tradition? Does not Koivisto himself concede such when he describes this core orthodoxy as "macro-tradition"? As macro-tradition, can it ever deliver the crisp, unadorned voice of God?

In this framework, interpretation is relegated to the level of denominational distinctives and secondary matters. Too many Christians have proclaimed their denominational practices as the "clear teaching of Scripture," whereas Koivisto is unveiling the fact that these matters are "clear" only because of the coloured glasses of one’s interpretive tradition. But Koivisto fails to recognize that interpretive glasses are "cemented to our face" (Kuyper); that is, he is still holding out a group of teachings which are "clear teachings of Scripture," delivered immediately, unhampered by the space of hermeneutics. But do we ever possess the "crisp, unadorned voice of God"? If, as Koivisto asserts, we never interpret the Bible in a vacuum but always through the lens of a cultural, historical and linguistic context (136), can there be any
such thing as "explicit biblical teaching"?\textsuperscript{6}

In a conservative critique of Koivisto's proposal, Jack Fish hits upon precisely this point (though he takes a different direction than I will).\textsuperscript{7} Fish, offering criticism of Koivisto from a Brethren standpoint, correctly perceives the implications of the relativization of micro-tradition. But it is precisely for this reason that he rejects the interpreted status of these denominational distinctives. What Koivisto is describing as matters of interpretation and tradition, Fish understands to be "New Testament Church Truth"—as though uninterpreted, simply uncovered by reading. When Koivisto concludes that these distinctives are "tradition," he means to say that they are without 'clear Scriptural mandate'—which for him means that they are matters of interpretation. But such a distinction cuts at the very heart of Brethren theology, as Fish realizes: "For those in the assemblies of Christian Brethren (sometimes called Plymouth Brethren) the subject of church truth has always meant those truths concerning the church which are taught and practised in the New Testament and are normative for today."\textsuperscript{8} Fish's project is to demonstrate that these distinctives are not matters of "preference, practicality, or

\textsuperscript{6} When Koivisto speaks of "explicit" teaching, he means "objective" teaching, doctrine delivered apart from interpretation. Interpretation happens in areas of "lesser Scriptural clarity" where the Bible is not "crystal clear."(OL,132) Again, the notion of "clarity" is inextricably linked to the notion of pure reading \textit{sans interpretation}. While Koivisto is constantly (and justifiably) delimiting the status of denominational distinctives as traditioned interpretations based on 'less clear' passages, behind the whole discussion is the assumption of a collection of readings which \textit{are} crystal clear. He refers at this point to a note jotted in the flyleaf of his first Bible: "What is clear in this book is vital; what is not clear in this book is not vital."(OL,133) The question is, however: clear \textit{to whom}?

\textsuperscript{7} Fish is professor of Bible and Theology at Emmaus Bible College, the leading Plymouth Brethren denominational college (and my own \textit{alma mater}). Fish's criticism represents an in-house dispute, but it is one that is instructive for my purposes here.

expediency"—that is, not matters of interpretation—but rather "essentials" from Scripture.⁹

Commenting on Koivisto's notion of interpretive tradition, Fish rightly perceives (while Koivisto does not) that "we now shift the neutral attitude toward tradition in the earlier sense [of external tradition] toward anything which is a matter of interpretation." But, he continues,

Are we not in danger here of nullifying the Word of God by what we are calling tradition? Once everything which is disputed becomes a matter of interpretive tradition, then the Bible is unclear in every area because every teaching of the Bible has been disputed. Everything is a matter of tradition and therefore may not be held as intrinsically biblical. Everything is simply a matter of "perspective" or "preference." In fact, we will not even be able to protect what Koivisto calls our core orthodoxy.¹⁰

Indeed! Fish has appreciated the implications of Koivisto's project better than Koivisto has himself. Koivisto affirms the tradition-influenced nature of interpretation in the realm of micro-tradition, but macro-tradition or core orthodoxy somehow escapes this historicity and falls pure from the mind of God. Fish takes this as indicating the problem with Koivisto's work, which is correct; Fish's response, however, is to therefore reject the conditioning of tradition and context in interpretation and affirm reading over interpretation.¹¹ In contrast to both, I am arguing that everything is 'a matter of interpretation,' including those interpretations that are

⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 127, emphasis added. Here, the traditionedness of interpretation is linked to subjectivism and arbitrariness. If everything is interpretation, Fish worries, then everything is up for grabs. In chapter 5, I counter this all-too-common linking of hermeneutics and arbitrariness with a reconsideration of criteria in interpretation.

¹¹ Fish does, however, pay lip service to this conditioning: "We would not question the fact that we all may have prejudices, blindesses, and a lack of knowledge which affect and even distort our interpretation of Scripture." (p. 126) But it is this "may" which reveals his interpretation of interpretation. I will argue below that we always have prejudices and presuppositions that we bring to our reading, and that these are conditions of human be-ing which are inescapable.
described as core-orthodoxy. We never have the "crisp, unadorned voice of God" because it is always heard and read through the lens of our finitude and situationality. Whenever someone purports to deliver to us the unadorned voice of God, or "what God meant" (OL, 162), we always only receive someone’s interpretation wearing the badge of divinity.

This is seen very clearly in Koivisto’s ensuing discussion of just what constitutes core-orthodoxy. After rejecting earlier options such as the Fundamentals of the early twenties, the creeds of the undivided church, and the Vincentian view ("what all men have at all times believed"), he finally delivers to us that which unites all Christians: the Gospel message. He is even kind enough to summarize for us just what the Gospel is (italicized, of course): "God sent His Son into the world to die as an atonement for sin, and God raised Him from the dead, so that anyone who places faith in Him receives the free gift of salvation." (OL, 197) But that, I would contend, is only one interpretation of the gospel and cannot claim divine status. For instance, his interpretation of the atonement already excludes the Wesleyan interpretation which rejects the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement "as a forensic and unreal 'credit card' theology". As he expounds his definition, it becomes clear that what is delivered to us as the Gospel is really only the traditional evangelical interpretation of the Gospel (OL, 193), which thereby excludes Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Pentecostal and mainline Protestant interpretations.

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12 This would include the doctrines of the Trinity, the atonement, justification by faith, etc. To describe these as interpretations is not necessarily to reject them; the point is to relativize their status as interpretations and not divinely given 'readings' (which is precisely what Koivisto emphasizes with regard to micro-tradition). I have pushed these points in relation to questions of heresy and orthodoxy in my "Fire From Heaven: The Hermeneutics of Heresy."

13 Donald Dayton, "Rejoinder to Historiography Discussion," Christian Scholar’s Review 23 (1993): 70. For Koivisto’s adherence to the traditional Calvinistic doctrine, see OL, 203-204.
Evangelical interpretations are sent to us as God's interpretations; in fact, they are not interpretations at all, but only readings of the crisp, unadorned voice of God. Koivisto becomes a veritable facteur de la verite (PC,413-496).\(^{14}\)

**KOIVISTO MEETS DERRIDA**

This claim to hear God's unadulterated and unmediated Word appears to be a contemporary instantiation of the traditional Protestant doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture, which is really a claim to immediacy, to an absence of (subjective) interpretation and a pure reading and unalloyed reception of truth (OL,154-155). Evangelical theology, thoroughly shaped by modern notions of science and epistemology, reduces faith as trust to faith as belief in propositions. As such, the Bible is reduced to Hodge's notorious "storehouse of facts" and its contents--propositions--yield themselves immediately to the mind;\(^{15}\) thus, what the Reformers described as perspicuity is reduced to a lingual-analytic clarity accessible to reason. This is part of what Jacques Derrida describes as a postal desire, the claim to hear God's word "without courrier" (PC,23). But I would agree with Derrida that this is a myth, a postal story of the sort that Cliff Claven would tell: a tall tale about Being's love notes that never get lost in the mail. Derrida's love notes and post cards point out the mythology in Being's epistles:

\(^{14}\) The French word facteur means both postman and factor. For a discussion of this double sense, see the translator's note, PC,413.

If the post (technology, position, "metaphysics") is announced at the "first" envoi, then there is no longer a metaphysics, etc. ..., nor even an envoi, but envois without destination. For to coordinate the different epochs, halts, determinations, in a word the entire history of Being with a destination of Being is perhaps the most outlandish postal lure. There is not even the post or the envoi...In a word,...as soon as there is, there is difference...and there is postal maneuvering, relays, delay, anticipation, destination, telecommunicating, network, the possibility, and therefore the fatal necessity of going astray, etc. (PC,66)

Communication between lovers is left in the hands of an unreliable postal system. As soon as I drop the letter in the box (as soon as I seal the envelope!), my expression of love is subject to the whim of the postal gods, of whom Hermes is in charge. But this is true for more than love letters, or post cards, or even junk mail. It is the case of language and communication itself. Derrida’s point is that "within every sign already, every mark or every trait, there is distancing, the post, what there has to be so that it is legible for another, another other than you or me." (PC,29) The post "has to be": we cannot escape the postal system, the hermeneutical space of interpretation. This distancing, creating a space of difference and deferral, is necessary for enabling others to read the envelope and direct the correspondence to the proper destination. We are always already posted and postal: we can never destroy or "overcome" the postal system. But the inescapable interpolation of the postal system means that there is a possibility that letters can be lost.

For Western metaphysics, and evangelical theology (which is, ironically, very modern), the letter is not able not to arrive; that is, the letter always arrives. Metaphysics and

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16 While I am agreeing with Derrida regarding the interpolation of the postal space of interpretation, it should be noted that the burden of my essay "How to Avoid Not Speaking" was precisely to contest his final remark, that letters "necessarily go astray." This will be taken up once again in chapter four below. See James K.A. Smith, "How to Avoid Not Speaking: Attestations," in James H. Olthuis, ed., Knowing Other-wise: The Plurality of Postmodernism (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press: forthcoming).
fundamentalism have an extremely reliable—I should say "infallible"—postal system. It is a telecommunications network equipped with unbreakable lines, virus-proof computers, and the latest in technological advances. Acquiring this inerrant technology meant always receiving God's word unmediated, in no way affected by the postal/telecommunication system. God's word and the reading of that text received a privileged place outside of the tangled chain of signifiers, and evangelical theology, which speaks for God, communicated this God to us, itself immune to linguistic and historical conditioning. The letter always arrives, "without courrier": right on time, perfectly intact, never torn or lost or delayed by postal strikes.

It is this impeccable postal service that frightens Derrida, for such a theological system, built on a flawless telecommunications network, knows God and speaks for God without mediation. But this, I would contend with Derrida, is impossible, because there is nothing outside of the text (OG,158). As John Caputo has so clearly pointed out, this should not be understood as "a sort of linguistic Berkleyianism," as if "Derrida thinks there is nothing other than words and texts."\footnote{John D. Caputo, "The Good News About Alterity: Derrida and Theology," \textit{Faith and Philosophy} 10 (1993): 454. Unfortunately, this is precisely how many evangelicals hear Derrida.} Instead, Derrida is insisting "that there is no reference without difference, no reference (il n'y a pas) outside of a textual chain (hors-texte)."\footnote{Caputo, "Good News," p. 455.} This is not to say, then, that texts lack reference but only that there is no reference that can escape the influence of textuality; there is no reading that bypasses the hermeneutical space of interpretation. Thus, when Koivisto delivers us the Gospel, italicized and evangelicalized, it has already traversed this postal space and has been appropriated by one reading from within a
certain tradition, or rather a plurality of traditions: a linguistic tradition, a theological tradition, a sociological and cultural context, etc. Koivisto’s analysis of interpretation with regards to micro-tradition emphasizes precisely this point; what he misses, however, is the ubiquity of interpretation.

Such a desire for immediacy is not only impossible, it is dangerous, because those who have such privileged access speak for God and consider themselves God’s private police force (and postal crimes are always a federal offence, like original sin). The rest of us should cringe in terror whenever someone claims to have an unconditioned revelation or reading, Caputo warns,

[...]or what we always get--it never fails--in the name of the Unmediated is someone’s highly mediated Absolute: their Jealous Jahweh, their righteous Allah, their infallible church, their absolute Geist that inevitably speaks German. In the name of the Unmediated we are buried in an avalanche of mediations, and sometimes just buried, period. Somehow this absolutely absolute always ends up with a particular attachment to some historical, natural language, a particular nation, a particular religion. To disagree with someone who speaks in the name of God always means disagreeing with God. Be prepared to beat a hasty retreat. The unmediated is never delivered without massive mediation. 19

Koivisto’s Gospel, as "saving orthodoxy" (OL,197), excludes many from the kingdom: that is the danger, which ironically he alludes to: "there is the ever-present danger...to confuse the authority of Scripture with a given line of interpretation." (OL,201) Is that not precisely what Koivisto has done? Has he not conflated his evangelical interpretation with Gospel, with God’s meaning? Is not his delivery of Scripture "unalloyed" (OL,193) in fact a remarkable piece of metallurgy, and the production of a highly alloyed 'Gospel'? Does not his "unadorned voice of

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God" have a distinctively American fundamentalist accent? Is not his saving orthodoxy very dangerous for those who disagree, who are not privy to his interpretation, which is alleged to be God’s?²⁰

OVERCOMING (THE) TRADITION: LINTS

While Koivisto laments the disunity of the Christian Church, Richard Lints offers a "jeremiad"²¹ lamenting the state of evangelical theology and particularly its contamination by American culture and popular religion.²² This brings to the fore the relationship between theology and culture and as such provides a helpful arena to uncover Lints' interpretation of interpretation. Lints, unlike classical evangelical theologians, argues that the impact of culture on theologizing must be recognized. As he summarizes the problem,

²⁰ We have heard something like this before, that "in the danger, the saving grows." Perhaps Koivisto is a good Heideggerian?


²² As such, Lints' book is part of a recent spate of works on the theme, including Noll's book noted above. The two most influential (and most frightening, I would add—particularly for those who aren't Presbyterian) are David Wells, No Place For Truth, or What Ever Happened to Evangelical Theology? (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) and God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). Lints, Noll and Wells are all party to what I would describe as a 'theological elitism' which would have every Christian to be a Presbyterian theologian if they really love God. A welcome counter­movement can be found in Richard J. Mouw, Consulting the Faithful: What Christian Intellectuals Can Learn From Popular Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
Ours is not a simple distillation of the pure gospel. Nor can we lay claim to a Christian America as much as we can to a Americanized Christianity. As evangelical theology approaches the twenty-first century, it must take these trends seriously. It is not feasible any longer to argue that only our opponents are biased in their theologizing. Evangelical theology must not only engage a culture that is largely resistant to claims of absolute truth but must also recognize the influence which that culture has exercised upon it. Evangelicals must acknowledge the reality of cultural influence and cultural bias in their own community. (FT,25-26)

Such an evaluation would seem to place Lints closer to Gadamer than Koivisto and the evangelical tradition; that is, he would appear to appreciate the situationality of all interpretation and the conditions of hermeneutics described by Gadamer as "historically effected consciousness." But in the end, he urges evangelicals to recognize the influence of culture only so that they can overcome it. He is critical of evangelical theology for thinking it was culturally neutral when it was really Americanized; but he does so only to then deliver us a biblical, un-American, a-historical theology (which, in the end, is really God's theology, "his interpretation" [FT,79]). Thus, "a genuine biblical theology will strongly affirm that humans (Christian and non-Christian) are inevitably influenced by their own culture, tradition, experience. Until and unless the evangelical community wrestles more seriously with this fact, they will not overcome the unreflective biases that characterize the evangelical appropriation of the Bible" (FT,27, emphasis added). What he describes as the "bias principle" is eventually overcome by the "realism principle," whereby the influences of culture, tradition and experience--which distort and interfere--are purged from our interpretations so that we can hear the "speech of God...His very voice" (FT,58-59). Though we ourselves cannot "jump out of our skins and become bias-free" by mental effort, "God breaks through to us" (FT,281). Either way, Lints sees our skin, our humanity, our being-here, as a distorting limitation which prevents us from
really hearing God.

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the link made by evangelical thought between interpretation and the fall, and Lints' proposal provides ample opportunity. As a loyal disciple of biblical theologian Geerhardus Vos, he loves to tell a story, spin a yarn about the 'history of redemption.' "In the beginning," he recounts, "Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect clarity in their comprehension of the purposes and presence of God. The creatures and the Creator understood each other. But the fall destroyed this clarity and Adam and Eve immediately sought to cover their nakedness, to find shelter from God, to hide from him."(FT,71) It seems that I have heard something like this before, in Italian perhaps? Nevertheless, it will be recognized that the Fall, for Lints, resulted in a loss of "perfect clarity" and the interruption of understanding. It is in this postlapsarian world that we are plagued by mediation and misunderstandings which result in distortion. More specifically, it is after the Fall that humanity becomes plagued by "expectations" and presuppositions which act as "filters" and condition how we hear and read, especially God's Voice and Word. God's speech is "often misunderstood and misinterpreted, because those who listen to the speech come with expectations about it....Do we all do this to some degree?" he asks. "Yes. Must it happen all the time? No. We all participate in the fallenness of creation. If we want to be able to listen to the conversation with God, we have to be able to see how our own expectations colour our understanding of the conversation" (FT,60,emphasis added). My difficulty is not with Lints' discussion of fallenness, but rather with what he links to fallenness: viz., presuppositions and horizons of expectation. As he later notes, "we hear the divine conversation only after it has passed through several filters--our culture, our religious tradition, our personal history, and so on. If we take these filters
seriously, we may be able to decrease the distortion with which we hear the conversation." (FT, 61)

But are not culture, traditionality and personal history constitutive aspects of simply being human, of being a creature? Is not the finitude of creaturehood inextricably linked to conditionality and situationality? Am I not, as a human being, limited to this space where I stand, with these horizons, which move with me but nevertheless remain my horizons? Are not the "filters" or "presuppositions" which I inherit from a multitude of traditions (religious, socio-linguistic, familial) an inescapable aspect of human experience as created by God? And if so, is not Lints in fact devaluing creation by linking such conditions of finitude to the Fall and sin? If being human necessarily entails having expectations and presuppositions, and if being human means being God's creature, then why should such expectations and filters be described as "distortions" which "colour" our understanding? Is that not to make being human a sin?

Lints takes up a more extended discussion of the filters of tradition, culture and reason in the fourth chapter on "The Trajectory of Theology." Evangelical theology, he urges, needs to take into account how these filters influence interpretation and the reception of an authority. "The goal of theology," then, "is to bring the biblical revelation into a position of judgement on all of life, including the filters, and thereby bring the cleansing power of God's redemption into all of life" (FT, 82, emphasis added). We stand in need of redemption--from history, tradition and culture; we must be cleansed of these filters. And God's redemption accomplishes that restoration of immediacy in the here and now.23 Our problem is that "we concede a

23 This is why I have described this as a present immediacy model: immediacy is restored in the present, and thus the grievous effects of the Fall and the interpolation of an interpretive space is banished.
disproportionate influence to our filters in our efforts to understand the biblical revelation. We force the message of redemption into a cultural package that distorts its actual intentions."(FT,82) Lints points to the example of Nicodemus, who misunderstood Jesus' discussion of the new birth as speaking of a second physical birth (John 3).

Nicodemus and the Pharisees stood in a tradition, were conditioned by a culture, and applied certain principles of rationality to their conversations with Jesus. We do the same today. It is part of the theologian's task to bring the people of God to an awareness of their historical, cultural, and rational filters so that they will not be ruled by them.(FT,83)

Nicodemus' sinful misunderstanding is to be blamed on the fact that he stood in a tradition and was part of a culture—in short, I would argue, because he was a human being! Apparently Lints, as a theologian and evangelical, is not part of a tradition or a culture, or can somehow step outside of such distorting influences to hear the 'crisp, unadorned voice of God'.

But does he? As with Koivisto, doesn't Lints' God speak a rather traditional language? Does not his God have a special fondness for Princeton and a particular attachment to Presbyterians?

Like Koivisto, Lints seems to miss the ubiquity of interpretation: the inescapability of conditions of knowing which are described as "distortions" or "colourings" only against the mythical horizon of "perfect clarity". Lints has a dream: a dream of immediacy and pure reading/listening. But his dream quickly turns to a nightmare for any who lie outside of the parameters of his "people of God", people on the margins like Pentecostals, Catholics24 and homosexuals. Despite all of his talk of filters, presuppositions, and expectations, in the end he

24 See for instance the curious note on p. 87, where Lints describes Cardinal John Henry Newman as one who "experienced an evangelical conversion early in life but later in life moved toward a high Anglo-Catholic view of church tradition, converted to Roman Catholicism, and was appointed a cardinal" (emphasis added)—as though his move to the Catholic Church were a denial of his "evangelical conversion."
believes that these are all necessarily distortions which must be overcome in order to hear God's unadorned voice. He operates with a peculiar volitional model\(^2\) with regard to tradition, history and culture; that is, he thinks (dreams) that humanity chooses to be influenced by tradition and history, and therefore can also choose not to be, can choose to read without these lenses. Thus, "the validity of any particular theological conviction ought finally and ultimately to be judged by its fidelity to the Scriptures rather than its fidelity to any given tradition."\(^2\) But Lints fails to realize we never have simply "the Scriptures" pure and uninterpreted; every appeal to 'what the Bible says' is an appeal to an interpretation of the Bible. Whenever someone promises to deliver 'the Scriptures alone,' they are always already delivered as an interpretation which is carried out within an interpretive tradition.\(^2\) Fidelity to the Scriptures is always fidelity to an interpretation of the Scriptures and thus operates only within an interpretive tradition, a way of reading which one cannot step outside of (though one may participate in a different interpretive tradition). Further, the New Testament writings are

\(^2\) For instance, in discussing the "bias principle" and the "realism principle", Lints speaks of "employing" bias (23). What does it mean to employ bias? Are we not rather caught by it, enveloped by it? Is it not rather a question of recognition--recognizing our biases and the impossibility of realism? This kind of language will signal that for him, bias is accidental.

\(^2\) On p. 291, he insists that the "authority of the Scriptures is integrally connected with a proper understanding of those Scriptures, and the final court of appeals in interpretive matters must be the Scriptures themselves." Scripture is "the final interpretive lens" (292).

\(^2\) As James Olthuis has observed, "our submission to the Scriptures as the Word of God never takes place apart from concrete embodiment in a view of biblical authority through which and in which we articulate our submission." Not only do we submit ourselves to an interpretation of Scripture, we are also conditioned by an interpretation of Scriptural authority. See James H. Olthuis, "Proposal for a Hermeneutics of Ultimacy," in James H. Olthuis, et al., \textit{A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy: Peril or Promise?} (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987): 11.
themselves interpretations of a person and event. As a result we never 'have' *sola Scriptura* but only interpretations of interpretations.

The cultural lens is said to operate in a similar manner; that is, Lints can ask to what degree culture "ought" to influence theology. But such language again betrays his notion of the accidental relationship between theology and culture and that one can separate the two, in order to then later "contextualize" it. God can "break through our cultural blinders and thereby enable us to see ourselves more clearly by the radiance of his glory."(FT, 106) This happens when the biblical revelation challenges and transforms our "culture-bound experience," disclosing its "meaning" (FT, 115). Because culture is opposed to truth (FT, 114, 116), the influence of culture must be overcome; after all, "It is truth we are after."(FT, 95) (Unfortunately and all too often, it is someone's Truth who is after us, ready to pounce on us at any moment.) As we interpret the Bible, we need to become aware of these cultural predispositions, otherwise our theology will be distorted by these parameters. The only way that we can really read the Bible is if we are delivered (by God) from culture, are cleansed of the distorting influence of being human.

One final point with regard to Lints' framework and his interpretation of interpretation: throughout the book, he insists that the final interpretive lens must be "the Scriptures themselves." The Bible is the final authority for our interpretations and stands over-against our hermeneutical ventures. In discussing the movement from text to theology, he describes the criteria for interpretation:

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Protestantism has managed to preserve a sense that Scripture is the final authority for the life of the believer; it has simply failed to affirm the hermeneutical parameters that are properly implicit in the principle of *sola Scriptura*. If Scripture is the final authority, then in some important sense Scripture must be allowed to interpret Scripture—which entails another fundamental principle of the Reformers, the *analogia fidei* (the analogy of faith). The faith defined in any given scriptural passage is to be interpreted by the faith defined in the whole of the Scriptures. The authority of the Scriptures is integrally connected with a proper understanding of those Scriptures, and the final court of appeals in interpretive matters must be the Scriptures themselves. (FT, 291)

This means that "our interpretive matrix should be the interpretive matrix of the Scriptures" (FT, 269) which mediate to us "the divine and apostolic interpretation" (FT, 279). On the pages of Scripture we find "divine interpretations" (FT, 264). The interpretive matrix of the Scriptures turns out to be God's interpretive matrix (=the apostles' interpretation=Luther's interpretation) which has fallen from heaven into Lints' hands.29

This is a common evangelical construction, reiterated, for instance, in the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" (1982). There a collection of evangelical scholars made the following profession:

**Article XIX.** We affirm that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it. We deny that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.30

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29 In a practical manner, this is seen in Lints' privileging of the Pauline interpretation of justification by faith (as re-interpreted by Luther) as uncovering the "essence" of Christianity. Unfortunately, no one told the Apostle John. See Lints, "A Chasm of Difference: Understanding the Protestant and Roman Views of Salvation," *Tabletalk* 18 (December 1994): 9-10, 53.

But first of all, is it not simply begging the question to assert that the criterion for interpreting the Bible is the Bible itself? How can we bring our preunderstandings under the judgement of "scriptural teaching" if we never have "scriptural teaching" apart from those preunderstandings? Is there not lodged in Lints' appeal to "the Scriptures themselves" an implicit notion of pure reading, of simply reading the Bible apart from interpretation? As soon as we appeal to sola Scriptura, do we not only and always have interpretations and readings, what "my" Bible "clearly" says? The problem with the Reformational parameter of "Scripture interprets Scripture" is that the interpreting Scripture must be interpreted; there is no "pure" (i.e., non-interpreted) Scripture. Further, to privilege the interpretive matrix of the Scriptures and apostles is simply to posit one interpretation over-against another, one culture over another. His appeal to Scripture as the final interpretive lens fails to recognize this double effect of the ubiquity of interpretation: that we only "have" Scripture as interpreted and further, the Scriptures themselves are interpretations. Theology, then, is the translation of a translation—the Scriptures—which are themselves translations.

DES TOURS DE BABEL:
ON INTERPRETATION/TRANSLATION

This penchant for pure reading, sans courrier and without interpretation, is integrally connected to a belief in one true interpretation: an interpretation which is not an interpretation but a delivery of the Truth from the hands of a veritable facteur de la verite who in the end turns out to be God. This is rooted in what Mark Taylor describes as "monologic", an understanding
of truth where "the true is never plural, multiple, and complex but always unified, single, and simple." This "monologism of truth is pre-scribed to ease the distress induced by the uncertainty that arises from the polymorphous play of appearances." Against this horizon of immediacy and unity, plurality is a sin, yet another curse of the original sin in Eden; pluralism is something endemic to a postlapsarian world. In contrast, the 'perfect clarity' of Eden was accompanied by an unchallenged unity and uniformity. It is this underlying belief in and quest for unity which lies at the heart of Lints' critique of 'postmodern' theology. Theology, because of this plurality, is "intractably fragmented," and this all owes to the fact that "we have gradually abandoned the goal of attempting to establish an 'objective' reading of the Bible and have as a result stranded theology in the quagmire of a thousand different frameworks."(FT,194) Even though Lints calls for a "principled pluralism," this plurality is linked to individual biases which must be overcome in order to appropriate the "unifying theology of the Scriptures....We cannot find our way to truth unless we are willing to recognize our own biases."(FT,98)

If interpretation was the result of an Edenic trespass, this plurality is the heritage of the Babelian revolt and the attempt to ascend to God by human effort. According to traditional evangelical thought, the multiplication of languages was a punishment which initiated the need

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32 I cannot, at this time, go into the horrendous misreadings of postmodernism which Lints presents. Suffice is to say that when someone takes David Tracy "to be both representative of postmodern theology and influential in setting its agenda" (FT,223n.72), misrepresentations are inevitable.

33 Lints is particularly disappointed with liberation and feminist theologies, FT,194ff.
for translation, which is closely linked to the need for interpretation. Just as interpretation is linked to the Fall and an anormative state of affairs, the 'origins' of plurality are cast against the horizon of a sinful rebellion; hence Lints' and the general evangelical disdain with regards to pluralist frameworks.

A closer reading of the Babel story, however, will point to unity as the original sin and impetus for violence which God prevents precisely by multiplication of languages, a *restoration* of plurality. It was a lack of difference which occasioned God’s intervention in what was destined to be a violent story of oppression in the name of unity. This is precisely the point emphasized in Derrida’s illuminating essay on translation (which is, of course and necessarily, an essay on interpretation), signalling both the ubiquity of interpretation and the violence of unity. For instance, with regards to 'Babel,' there is already confusion: Is this a proper name? Could this be translated "confusion"? Or does it rather mean the City of God, the City of the Father, as Voltaire suggested? Here, always and already, there is a confusion about confusion, a hermeneutical decision which must precede every translation (TB,245). Even further, when the people used brick as stone and tar as cement, there is already a traversing of a hermeneutical space, a field of construal. "That already resembles a translation," Derrida observes: "a translation of translation." (TB,247)

Derrida pushes this point by discussing Roman Jakobson’s essay "On Linguistic Aspects

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35 "And the Lord said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (Genesis 11:6-7)
of Translation," which, in a subtle way, offers a framework similar to Lints'. In the essay, Jakobson distinguishes between three kinds of translation: (1) intralingual translation, which interprets linguistic signs by means of other signs from the same language; (2) interlingual translation, which interprets by means of another language; and (3) intersemiotic translation, which interprets linguistic signs by means of nonlinguistic signs. Jakobson goes on to translate the first and third kinds of translation: intralingual translation is described as rewording, the third as transmutation. But the second, interlingual translation, is not given such a "definitional interpretation"; it is, simply and clearly, "translation proper." As Derrida uncovers,

in the case of translation "proper," translation in the ordinary sense, interlinguistic and post-Babelian, Jakobson does not translate; he repeats the same word: "interlingual translation or translation proper." He supposes that it is not necessary to translate; everyone understands what that means because everyone has experienced it, everyone is expected to know what a language is, the relation of one language to another and especially identity or difference in fact of language. If there is a transparency that Babel would not have impaired, this is surely it, the experience of multiplicity of tongues and the "proper" sense of the word translation. (TB,252)

Jakobson "presupposes that one can know in the final analysis how to determine rigorously the unity and identity of a language, the decidable form of its limits." (TB,252) But it is precisely this 'determination,' this interpretation of the boundaries of a language, which is problematized by the Babel story. "Very quickly: at the very moment when pronouncing 'Babel' we sense the impossibility of deciding whether this name belongs, properly and simply, to one tongue." (TB,252-253) It is this undecidability which precedes every decision and determination which I am describing as the ubiquity of interpretation. Both Jakobson and Lints suppose that there is a reading which escapes this, "a transparency that Babel would not have impaired" and which offers a pure reading sans (with-out, outside) interpretation. But as Derrida has pointed
out, and as I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, such a vestige of immediacy is both impossible and dangerous.

It is this danger of immediacy and unity that occasions Yahweh’s intervention, on behalf of the others who do not speak the "one language" or the language of the One. In the name of unity we are often faced with the most horrifying universals which are intent on excluding or executing those on the margins, the particulars which never quite fit into such grand schemes.

In seeking to "make a name for themselves," to found at the same time a universal tongue and a unique genealogy, the Semites want to bring the world to reason, and this reason can signify simultaneously a colonial violence (since they would thus universalize their idiom) and a peaceful transparency of the human community. Inversely, when God imposes and opposes his name, he ruptures the rational transparency but interrupts also the colonial violence or the linguistic imperialism. (TB,253)

Yahweh, then, turns out to be a pluralist, one on the side of diversity and the multiplicity of others. And that is why creation is a pluralist idea and a creational hermeneutic attempts to honour this diversity not as the original sin but rather as primordially good. Further, as a creational-pneumatic hermeneutic, my model relates the multiplicity of tongues not to the Babelian trespass but rather to the experience of Pentecost, where Yahweh’s pneuma affirms the multiplicity of creation and the post-Babelian era, in direct contrast to the quest for unity which initiated the construction of the tower (Acts 2:1-11). It opens the door for an understanding of truth divorced from monologism, which in itself opens the door to those who have been shut out of the kingdom, excluded because their interpretation was different. The truth, in creation, is plural. (This theme is further explored in chapter six.)

In this chapter, I have attempted to sketch the implicit relationship between hermeneutics
and the Fall as construed in two representative evangelical interpretations of interpretation. Though there are differences in their theories, both Koivisto and Lints posit of model of immediacy, at least in certain aspects: for Koivisto, core orthodoxy stands outside of interpretation; for Lints, the Scriptures themselves can be read apart from interpretation and thus function as a standard for our interpretations. Further, the conditions of hermeneutics—tradition, culture, history—are construed as distortions, barriers and results of the Fall.

But if (as I will argue below) being human means be necessarily located—situated in a tradition, as part of a culture, and having a history—then these conditions are inescapable aspects of human existence. More specifically, hermeneutics will be seen as a constitutive element of human being-in-the-world as finite existence, in direct contrast to the evangelical dream of immediacy. But further, if traditionality is a fundamental and inescapable element of being human, and is such as created by God, then to construe such conditions as barriers and distortions is to devalue a creatural way of being which, if created by God, should be understood as primordially good. Hermeneutics, then, is not a postlapsarian curse coming upon the scene after Eden, but is instead part of the original goodness of creation, found in Eden as well.

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36 A note of clarification: I am not denying the effects of a broken world on interpretation, that in a fallen creation there is distortion and deception and painful misunderstanding. My point here, however, is that if hermeneutics is constitutive of human creatureliness (i.e., is an aspect of God’s creation), and if we believe in the primordial goodness of creation as coming from God (as I am sure Lints and Koivisto would), then the state of affairs which occasions interpretation must also be ‘good’.
CHAPTER TWO

THROUGH A MIRROR DARKLY

O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!

Exsultet, an ancient Latin liturgy

The quest for a primal immediacy which animates evangelical hermeneutical theories has been exposed by many as a search for a Holy Grail which cannot be found, which eludes its seekers and, in the end, turns into little more than a wild goose chase or fuel for yet another Monty Python film. But while claims to such pure, uninterpreted readings are typical in evangelical contexts, the hope of immediacy remains operative in a number of decidedly non-evangelical and sophisticated engagements in philosophical hermeneutics. The advent of historicism, particularly as it unfolded in Dilthey and was transformed into "historicity" in Heidegger,¹ has impacted all ensuing discussions in this century, by and large excising any vestiges of realism, or at least pushing later thinkers to focus much more attention on the

influence of history, tradition and context on knowing. The situationality and locality of human existence as emphasized by Heidegger has also uncovered the perspectivalism of being-in-the-world. In short, it has emphasized that life is hermeneutical, that we survive by construal and interpretation and that these are inescapable aspects of being human.

Thus, the figures addressed in this chapter—Wolfhart Pannenberg, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jurgen Habermas—make no present claims to immediacy or pure reading as encountered in Koivisto or Lints. They all emphasize the provisionality and limits of human knowing based on the finitude of existence, the finitude of being human. However, as I will attempt to demonstrate, there remains in their thought a latent penchant for the unmediated, for a reading apart from interpretation, but because they recognize and honour the conditions of being-in-the-world they project this immediacy into the future, into a future eschaton which will restore the hermeneutical paradise of Eden. That is, they find a way to both honour the conditionedness of human knowing and at the same time continue to posit a 'knowledge' which overcomes this situationality. This, of course, is a very Pauline idea, or at least an idea that the tradition has claimed as such (for Paul seems to be a rather duplicitous character): "For now we see through a mirror darkly (en ainigmati), but then we shall see face to face." (1 Corinthians 13:12) One day, they tell us, we will see face to face, without mediation, in a fusion of horizons, and we will no longer need to interpret: the curse (of hermeneutics) will be removed in this hermeneutical paradise from which interpretation is banished. They read Paul's "now" as defining the ontological status of finitude: now, to be a creature and to live in the world is to
see darkly, but then, in the future, we will no longer see darkly, we will see face to face.\(^2\)

Thus, in the work of Pannenberg, Gadamer and Habermas, we will uncover what I have described as an eschatological immediacy model. John Caputo is pointing to the same framework when he (following Joseph Margolis) describes Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics as a "closet essentialism": "'Closet'--because up front there is a lot of brave talk in Gadamer about history and change, time and becoming--but still 'essentialist'--because when the truth is told, that is all just a front for a theology of lasting essences."\(^3\) In the end, in the eschaton and the consummation of history, this turns out to be a version of foundationalism and a veiled claim to immediacy,

but of a more discrete, less obnoxious form, because it has done its best to accommodate the demands of history and finitude and to keep its distance from an outright transcendentalism. This is a theory of deep truth, which means that tradition--the tradition? a tradition? any tradition? what if there are many traditions, or many traditions within the tradition?--has the goods, both the ousia and the agathon.\(^4\)

In the end, the difference between Koivisto and Pannenberg or between Lints and Gadamer is simply a disagreement as to when this mythical immediacy is restored and not a fundamental difference in kind. Evangelicals adhere to something of a realized eschatology whereby we can presently step outside of our human situation/ality and overcome the conditions of history and finitude. Pannenberg, Gadamer and Habermas offer a more nuanced reading, where the

\(^2\) I would offer another gloss on this passage. As I hear it, we now see darkly not because of our finitude but because of the Fall. Seeing "face to face" does not promise the elimination of hermeneutics, for even the face to face relation happens across the space of interpretation.


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 258.
conditions of finitude are precisely the conditions for the possibility of overcoming finitude. The framework is always one of "both/and", where things are happening at the same time. While on the one hand that is an important concession, on the other it remains rather dangerous; further, it still results in a basic devaluing of being human and a construal of the finitude of human existence as something of a fall, a barrier which must be overcome.

THE FALLENNESS OF CREATION: PANNENBERG

That Wolfhart Pannenberg has become one of the theological giants of the late twentieth century is an inescapable fact. Nevertheless, I am concerned about Pannenberg’s future, about his eschatological redemption, about his position in/on eternity. My concern is that this giant is destined to become too gigantic: im-mense, without measure, to the point of infinity. In Pannenberg’s future, humanity is destined to become a race of Gigas larger than (human) life, no longer human, beyond finitude, perhaps even infinite, "in transcedence of their finitude."(ST 2:174) Of course, I have misread him. Pannenberg indefatigably insists that in the consummation of time, the participation of creatures in God is by no means a "violation of the distinction between God and creature."(ST 2:33) The "finitude of creatures, their distinction from God and one another, will continue in the eschatological consummation."(ST 2:95) But I will insist in this chapter that this, if indeed it is finitude, is a very strange finitude: a finitude that transcends finitude and escapes the temporal experience of time. It is an infinite finitude--the finitude of giants--and is destined to end in gigantomachy.

For Pannenberg, finitude itself is something of a fall, a fault, but a happy fault, for it was
the only means to redemption. This portrayal of human existence results in a devaluing of creation inasmuch as humanity is always already fallen, finite, and in need of redemption; that is, creation is the first moment of redemption and the beginning of the process whereby humanity is destined to participation in the deity of God (ST 2:33,176). Further, Pannenberg's portrayal makes evil a necessity for attaining the goal of creation, which is fellowship with God. "This goal is achieved only at the human stage, and even there not directly, but only as a result of a history in which human apostasy from God and all its consequences must be overcome." (ST 2:73)

Because human finitude is conceived as a "lack," Pannenberg's discussion of the future of humanity in the eschatological consummation also devalues human life by positing that the goal of human existence is to overcome human existence, to transcend finitude and be "lifted above the natural world and even also above the social relations in which we exist." (ST 2:176) Since creation is itself in need of redemption, and thus humans simply as created stand in need of redemption, then redemption can only be accomplished by transcending the finitude of human existence. Redemption is not a restoration but a completion.

We must proceed carefully, however, in levelling these charges against Pannenberg; we shouldn't be too hasty in calling the police, for he inevitably has an alibi, an airtight system which makes him difficult to apprehend. James Olthuis and Brian Walsh have referred to this framework as Pannenberg's contradictory monism.\(^5\) Contradictory monism is a coincidentia

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\(^5\) Their category arises from the tradition of philosophical historiography identified with Dutch philosopher D.H.Th. Vollenhoven (formerly of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam). The most programmatic description and development is found in James H. Olthuis, *Models of Humankind in Theology and Psychology*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1990): 46-49. See also Brain J. Walsh, *Futurity and Creation: Explorations in the*
oppositorum, a unity of opposites, a system which devours difference in the name of difference. There are two simultaneous movements: one toward differentiation, the other toward unity. Thus, "the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, existence and essence are simultaneously, mutually exclusive and mutually complementary. Simultaneously the direction of eternity and unity both validates and invalidates the opposing direction of temporality and differentiation." Thus Pannenberg at once honours finitude and devalues finitude; finitude is a necessary evil—'necessary' because it is the only way to the true infinite, but 'evil' because it must eventually be overcome. Throughout Pannenberg's corpus, one encounters a both/and system which places his theory beyond critique.

However, in the end, there seems to be a final resolution, a last reconciliation, a concluding Aufhebung which consummates the 'end of history.' I think it is very helpful to compare Olthuis and Walsh's "contradictory monism" with Caputo's "closet essentialism." Both, I would argue, are pointing to the same framework. In a manner very similar to Caputo's evaluation of Gadamer, Olthuis remarks regarding Pannenberg that he "seems to have a foundationalist concept of true universal reason that ignores, or at least does not take into account the current philosophical critiques of foundationalism. It is true that his is not a simple foundationalism. He insists not only that the question of truth remain open and our understanding of truth is always provisional until the end, but also that theology must begin and

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end with the majesty of God." 7 Up front there is a lot of talk about provisionality, history and change, but in the end there is a final determinative revelation of the essence of God. 8 "At the end of history," Olthuis goes on to comment, "a hidden harmony will be revealed in and through the contradictions." 9 In the end--when time shall be no more--it is unity which overcomes the evil of diversity and multiplicity found in creation. While this "end" is not straightforwardly historical or chronological but rather *kairological*, his framework still posits a *moment* where finitude is transcended, interpretation is overcome, and the conditions of history are surmounted. Thus, while I describe this model as an eschatological immediacy model, it must be emphasized that the eschaton is not simply chronologically future; in a sense, the future breaks into the present in the moment of *Aufhebung*, and it is in that moment, which Pannenberg does describe as "future," that the conditions of hermeneutics are purportedly overcome. 10 While he may not posit a "period of time" when this is the case, he nevertheless assumes a (non-temporal) moment where this *Aufhebung* is effected.

In analyzing and engaging in criticism of Pannenberg, then, it is necessary to proceed slowly. Some of my criticisms will appear to be blatant misreadings and denials of explicit statements that he makes. However, because of Pannenberg's contradictory monism or closet essentialism, it is imperative that we look to the future to uncover his construals of interpretation. One cannot call the police until the end. I will attempt to demonstrate these

7 Olthuis, "God as True Infinite," p. 320 (emphasis added).


9 Olthuis, "God as True Infinite," p. 321.

10 My thanks to Jim Olthuis for several discussions which helped me to see this kairological future in Pannenberg.
points by analyzing first Pannenberg’s understanding of creation and humanity, which will lead to a discussion of evil in his system. This will set the stage to show the implications of these points for his epistemology and hermeneutics. I will conclude with a critique and alternate proposal.

Trouble in Paradise

As we have come to expect from Pannenberg, creation itself points to the future, for finite beings exist in the nexus of temporal sequence which "refers" to a future fulfilment, "a future that transcends their finitude." (ST 2:7). "Creation and eschatology belong together," he argues, "because it is only in the eschatological consummation that the destiny of the creature, especially the human creature, will come to fulfilment." (ST 2:139) Creation’s destiny of being in fellowship with God was not possessed in Eden but rather remained a future fellowship to be established in the eschaton. Thus, the second Adam does not restore a broken relationship, but rather completes a relationship that was deficient "in the beginning," so to speak (ST 2:138).¹¹ There is a contradiction between the state of creation (from the very act of creation) and the goal that the Creator has set for it, hence its groaning and pain until this contradiction is set aside in the eschaton (ST 2:137).

Creation, then, is lacking something which only the future can remedy. But that means that creation qua created stands in need of redemption. There is a fallenness to creation which

¹¹ Pannenberg’s favourite "proof-text" (which he never exegetes) in this regard is 1 Cor. 15:45f. Both Olthuis and Walsh critique Pannenberg’s isolationist use of Scripture as ignoring the narrative of the story. See Walsh, "Introduction to 'Pannenberg’s Systematic Theology, Vol. 1: A Symposium,'" Calvin Theological Journal 27 (1992): 306.
necessitates an addition or fulfilment. It is not surprising to find Pannenberg often approvingly citing Plotinus regarding the relationship between eternity and time, and similar antecedents may be operative in Pannenberg’s tradition, particularly in Luther. But is it possible to speak of a "good" creation that is deficient? While Pannenberg would want to answer in the affirmative, the direction of his theology demonstrates that the two cannot be maintained: either creation is complete (which does not mean "perfect") and therefore good, or creation involves a lack which must be supplied, thereby impugning the original status of creation.

Pannenberg’s system heads in the latter direction. This is seen, for instance, in his discussion of human finitude and time. Human beings, as created, are finite creatures, and as finite, experience time as a sequence of events (MIG,87-88). But, "[w]ith the completion of God’s plan for history in his kingdom, time itself will end" and "God will overcome the separation of the past from the present and the future" which is a feature of cosmic time in distinction from eternity (ST 2:95). Juxtaposing these two ideas, Pannenberg is forced to ask, "Is time always related also to the finitude of creatures?" That is to say, how will human beings, as finite creatures who are temporal beings which experience time as a sequence of past, present and future--how will these exist in eternity, which is the end of time, and yet remain creatures and finite? "In the eschatological consummation," he replies,

12 ST 1:222f., 408-410; ST 2:92f; MIG,76f.

13 John van Buren, discussing the theme of fallenness in the young Heidegger (which is also rather Plotinian, as Pannenberg), notes that similar notions of the "privation" of human be-ing can be found in Luther’s Lectures on Romans and Commentary on Genesis. See van Buren, "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," in Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought, eds. Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994): 169-170. These themes will be further explored below in chapter three.
we do not expect a disappearance of the distinctions that occur in cosmic time, but the separation will cease when creation participates in the eternity of God. Hence the distinction of life’s moments in the sequence of time cannot be one of the conditions of finitude as such. For the finitude of creatures, their distinction from God and one another, will continue in the eschatological consummation. Nevertheless, the distinction of life’s moments in time has something to do with the finitude of creaturely existence, if only as a transitional feature on the way to consummation. (ST 2:95, emphasis added)

Pannenberg wants to keep his finite cake and infinitely eat it at the same time (in good Hegelian fashion).\(^{14}\) Thus, in the consummation, humans remain finite (as Pannenberg insists\(^{15}\)), yet experience time as God experiences time, without distinction.\(^{16}\) But we must consider the nature of finitude at this point. Finitude is both a temporal and a spatial limitation; or, perhaps, is a temporal limitation rooted in spatial limitation. I experience time as a sequence because I am a situated person: I stand here, now. If, as Pannenberg contends, sequential experience of time ends with the eschatological consummation, is our spatiality also "overcome"? If not (and how could we remain creatures if it is?), how can spatially-limited (i.e. finite) creatures experience time as anything other than succession, as a "separation of earlier and later by sequence of times, so that the present constantly sinks into the past (ST 2:95)"? Even if this is a kairological end, it still posits a moment when human beings transcend the human

\(^{14}\) This devouring nature of Hegel’s SA, the *savoir absolu*, is pursued throughout Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

\(^{15}\) Pannenberg is very insistent in this regard. I think he is constantly making this qualification precisely because he senses where his position must lead. But, I am arguing, his disclaimers cannot halt that trajectory.

\(^{16}\) "God's eternity needs no recollection or expectation, for it is itself simultaneous with all events in the strict sense."(ST 2:91) Important for the following discussion is to note that Pannenberg links this experience of time to omnipresence. There is an important connection between space and time, omnipresence and eternity.
experience of time.

Allow me to present a little thought experiment, not on the "Annihilation of the World" but rather on the "Consummation of the World," a picture of life in the new heavens and earth. On Pannenberg's accounting, humans remain finite beings in the eschaton, but they do not experience time as a succession of moments, distinguishing past, present and future. What then does their finitude consist of? If we continue with Pannenberg, futural finitude will consist in a distinction from the Creator and from one another (ST 2:95). We can at least say, then, that humans remain spatially-limited beings in Pannenberg's new world; we do not, in the end, become omnipresent. But now, given that, can Pannenberg maintain the atemporality of redeemed humanity? Let us consider Hendrikus, a human being occupying this new heaven and earth. As redeemed (and a Lutheran), he has attained to the destiny that Pannenberg promised and has "transcended his finitude", but of course is still not God. Hendrikus spoke with one of his redeemed sisters, Eta. But when did he speak with her? Yesterday? A moment ago? Do these questions not betray that spatially-limited beings must experience time as a succession of moments? Consider the conversation itself: does the uttering of each word follow after one and precede another? Is that not constitutive of speaking? But again, do not the words "follow" and "precede" indicate an experience of time as successive, distinguishing the past present and future? Indeed, is that not what Pannenberg describes as "our human experience of time", but

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an experience of time which he contends is overcome by eternity (ST 2:92)?\textsuperscript{18}

At this juncture we obtain a glimpse of the a-humanity or supra-humanity of Pannenberg's future. I would agree with Pannenberg that humans do experience time as successive. But precisely for that reason, it must be maintained that our future experience of time remains such, otherwise, we cease to be human, and therefore cease to be God's privileged image-bearers.

Pannenberg's theory regarding the future of humanity is the necessary correlate of his understanding of the origin of humanity. As a result of the independence of the creature from Creator in creation, there is a "tendency to disintegrate." Time, as the "condition of the attainment of independence by creatures" (ST 2:92), is at the same time that which dis-integrates the unity of life of the creature. Pannenberg's Plotinian borrowings are plainly evident here, as he confesses:

According to Plotinus, even when the soul has lost the unity of its life and fallen victim to the succession of time, it is still related to eternity, and therefore to the totality of its life, but in the mode of endless striving after it, so that the lost totality can be regained only as a future totality (\textit{Enn.} 3.7.11). Eternity as the complete totality of life is thus seen from the standpoint of time only in terms of a fullness that is sought in the future. This was an important insight for Plotinus. (ST 1:408)

Pannenberg laments that Christian theology "let slip the chance" to adopt Plotinus' analysis, and goes on to mention that Heidegger was the first to "recapture this insight," though from an

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\textsuperscript{18} Even if he does not actually posit a future \textit{historical} consummation but rather a kind of \textit{kairological} eschaton (here and now), his theory still emphasizes the overcoming of finitude and the transcending of human be-ing.
anthropological rather than theological standpoint.¹⁹ Pannenberg’s project is to retrieve this lost opportunity, hence his understanding of the creation of humanity as deficient and disintegrating the unity of life. Humanity “falls victim” to temporality. Thus, the “unity of life that we see only partially in the sequence of moments in time, and that can find actualization as a whole in eternal simultaneity, can be attained in the process of time only from the future, which brings it to totality.” (ST 2:102) The emphasis on the future as completion and bringing about a totality is the result of an emphasis of creation as something of a fall, a lapse into temporality and finitude.

Creation as Original Sin

If the creature must attain independence in time in order to attain future participation in God, and if that independence can only be obtained in time, and if time is also the condition of the dis-unity of life, then creation, in Pannenberg’s scheme, becomes a necessary evil for humanity’s destiny. Though "God did not will wickedness and evil" they are nevertheless "accompanying phenomena" of creation and as such "are conditions of the realizing of his purpose for the creature." (ST 2:167)

The problem, as I see it, throughout Pannenberg’s discussion of creation is the fact that he fails to make a distinction between the world as it now is and the world as it was before the fall. For example, in an instance of questionable exegesis, he states that "[a]ccording to the

¹⁹ Note the comparison alluded to in note 13, above. Interestingly, Heidegger did offer some (Plotinian/Augustinian) reflections on time to the Marburg Theological Society in July 1924. There Heidegger proposed that since time "finds its meaning in eternity" it is theologians, and not philosophers, who are really the experts on time. See Martin Heidegger, The Concept of Time, German-English Edition, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992): 1.
Genesis record, the historical form and experience of humanity do not show unambiguously the goodness that the Creator ascribes to it. At the beginning of the flood story we read, 'And God saw the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.' (Gen. 6:12) Now, I am not an Old Testament scholar, but I do seem to recall that between the pronouncement of the goodness of creation (Gen. 1:31) and the judgement of corruption in the flood narrative, a fairly momentous event occurred: the fall of humanity (Gen. 3). But this corrupting of a good creation is pushed back, in Pannenberg, to a constitutive aspect of creation itself. Though he concedes that the biblical narrative points in the direction of an original perfect creation, he feels that the eschatological motif of 1 Cor. 15:45ff., which points to a future completion of an incomplete humanity, is the ground for rejecting the notion of an original "perfect" state (ST 2:163). Thus, when God pronounced that his creation was "very good," it was really just "an anticipation of its eschatological consummation after it is reconciled and redeemed by the Son." (ST 2:168)

This "pushing back" of evil into creation itself comes to the fore when Pannenberg addresses the question, Why did God permit wickedness and evil?

20 Olthuis correctly remarks that it is Pannenberg's system which determines his exegesis which issues in "a pick-and-choose method that seems to skew the biblical narrative at crucial points." ("God as True Infinite," p. 323.)

21 Pannenberg fails to distinguish between "perfection" and "goodness." This leads to his rejection of "original perfection," which I am taking in this context to be basically equivalent to original goodness, where goodness may be understood as "sufficiency" or "completeness," without lack. The failure to distinguish perfection and goodness also results in a serious misreading of the Reformed tradition on the image of God in humanity. See his discussion, ST 2:211f.

22 Pannenberg takes himself to be siding with the Irenean idea of imperfect human beginnings over against the Augustinian emphasis on the goodness of our original estate, ST 2:168n.43.
To answer this question the theological tradition has pointed to the ontological constitution of created reality. In comparison with the Creator, the creature is mutable. Measured by God’s eternal selfhood, the creature’s mutability is an expression of its ontological weakness, of a lack of ontic power. (ST 2:169)

Evil is rooted in the "ontological deficiency" of human beings (ST 2:169). "There is some truth," he continues, "in the tracing back of evil, including the moral evil of sin, to the conditions of existence bound up with creatureliness." (ST 2:170) But does that not mean that human beings as finite creatures, who are not gods, are at fault simply for being finite? Why must human finitude be described as an original imperfection, unless, in fact, we are expected to be gods? Pannenberg, relying heavily on Leibniz, remarks that the creature is imperfect inasmuch as it "cannot know all things, may be mistaken about many things, and can thus be guilty of other failings." (ST 2:170, emphasis added) Guilty? Am I guilty for not knowing everything and making mistakes? Am I guilty for being a human being, and for not being God?

Pannenberg does nuance this discussion, remarking that "the limit of finitude is not yet itself evil." Yet, he maintains a strong relation between creaturehood and evil which in essence nullifies this disclaimer. That is, the possibility of evil is still to be seen "in the very nature of creaturehood." But rather than limitation as the root, Pannenberg points rather to the "independence" of creatures (ST 2:171). 23 But we must recall that earlier he insisted that this independence is necessary for attaining the destiny of humanity (ST 2:96). Evil remains, then, a structural element of God’s creation of human beings; or as Hegel said, Good Friday must precede Easter Sunday. James Olthuis has raised a number of serious questions at this point:

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23 A further question: If this is the case—if the possibility of sin and evil is due to the finitude and independence of creaturehood--then can that possibility ever be removed without becoming God? In the eschaton, if we still maintain our finitude and independence--if we are not gods--then are we not forever plagued by the possibility of sin and evil?
THROUGH A MIRROR DARKLY

Doesn't this make evil a necessary dimension of our nature as finite creatures? Is the "divided" self to be seen as a necessary, structural given of creation? Do not such views assume a fundamental "deficiency" in human nature from the beginning, that is, in principle, which makes it impossible for us to affirm wholeheartedly the goodness of creaturely being?...If evil is as necessary to life as oxygen, does it ultimately make any sense to talk of human freedom and responsibility in respect to evil? If evil is a normal constituent of human existence, rather than a perverse condition, are we not legitimizing the very evils we are called to fight?24

It is against this background of creation's original deficiency that we understand Pannenberg's insistence on creation as the first act of redemption and only completed in the world's eschatological reconciliation (ST 2:173). Further, it is in connection with his discussion of the fallenness of creation that we grasp another important feature of his theology: the fact that "the incarnation is simply the theologically highest instance of creation." The sending of the Son25 is the fulfilment of God's creative work (ST 2:144), a "fulfilment transcending our first weakness." (ST 2:211) Only in Christ do we see, for the first time, the completion of human nature. Thus, creation, because it is deficient or lacking, is always already referred to a future completion. This is seen, for instance, in Pannenberg's assertion regarding the "unfinished nature" of the image of God in humanity:

In the story of the human race, then, the image of God was not achieved fully at the outset. It was still in process. This is true not only of the likeness but of the image itself. But since likeness is essential to an image, our creation in the image of God stands implicitly related to full similarity. This full actualization is our destiny, one that was historically achieved with Jesus Christ and in which others

24 James H. Olthuis, "Be(com)ing: Humankind as Gift and Call," Philosophia Reformata 58 (1993): 169. The heart of my reading of Pannenberg (and of this entire thesis) has germinated from the seeds planted and watered by Prof. Olthuis.

25 Pannenberg's language refers mainly to the incarnation, and little to the passion and crucifixion. Nevertheless, inasmuch as God "shoulders the responsibility" for evil on the cross, this sending of the Son as part of creation also includes the crucifixion of the Son.
may participate by transformation into the image of Christ (ST 2:217).

Humanity and creation, *qua* created, from the beginning required redemption, a completion not yet realized. As such, we are driven by a "restless thrust toward overcoming the finite," recognizing that "the final horizon in which we see the true meaning of the data of life transcends the whole compass of the finite." (ST 2:228-229) A gigantic future awaits us in the eschaton.

*Through a Glass Darkly, But...*

The same motif—the fallenness of creation—is uncovered in Pannenberg’s epistemology and hermeneutics. Again, the understanding of finite human beings is (perhaps unwittingly) impugned, and we are constantly summoned to be gods, and promised the hope of such in the consummation of history. In other words, Pannenberg is proffering an eschatological version of a "dim mirror hermeneutic" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) which posits an immediacy of understanding (without interpretation) in the future while at the same time affirming the present distortions and "brokenness" (ST 1:250) of human knowing. Thus, Pannenberg will often speak of the "provisional" and "preliminary" nature of theological statements and interpretations "so long as time and history endure." (ST 1:16) They are provisional because of the limits placed upon them by the historicity of human experience which, he continues, "forms the most important limit of our human knowledge of God. Solely on account of its historicity all human talk about God unavoidably falls short of full and final knowledge of the truth of God." (ST 1:55) Theological concepts and interpretations, then, must be understood as *anticipatory*: always referring to a future, definitive revelation. In *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, this is tied more explicitly
to the finitude of human existence (MIG, 91-109), but in his Systematic Theology as well, he insists that the partiality of human knowing "is riveted as such to the conditions of finitude." (ST 1:54) Because we see through a mirror, enigmatically,

[the knowledge of Christian theology is always partial in comparison to the definitive revelation of God in the future of his kingdom (1 Cor. 13:12). Christians should not need to be taught this by modern reflection on the finitude of knowledge that goes with the historicity of experience. They can find instruction in the biblical account of our situation before God even as believers. Recognizing the finitude and inappropriateness of all human talk about God is an essential part of theological sobriety. (ST 1:55)

But... Though our assertions and interpretations are provisional, preliminary, and anticipatory, they nevertheless refer to a "future definitive revelation for which in the world faith is waiting." (ST 1:60) In the future will come the "definitive self-disclosure" of God that will overcome the conditions of provisionality and resolve all of the enigmas, "the final manifestation of what is yet hidden in God" which will constitute a "universal disclosure" (ST 1:207-208). In that day, we shall see "face to face." In that day, all of the essentialists will come out of the closet.

But... if the provisionality of human knowledge is riveted to the conditions of finitude, and if--as Pannenberg insists--humanity remains finite in the consummation of history, then is it possible to ever overcome the provisional or "perspectival" nature of human knowledge? If the provisionality of knowing is overcome in the future, does this not require the overcoming of finitude? Does that not entail the overcoming of creaturehood? Is not even the face-to-face encounter mediated by a space of interpretation, that is, does not that face come to me through the space of vision? Do I not only see that which is other, that which is separated by a space, a space that requires interpretation? Do I not always already see the face "as" something, a
seeing that is preceded by hermeneutics?

Coming to a juncture encountered earlier in the discussion of finitude and time, Pannenberg is here forced to conclude that humans, despite their finitude, somehow overcome the perspectival and hermeneutical nature of knowing in the future, when time shall be no more. Again, we must ask, how can spatially-limited beings escape the situatedness of finitude? How can I avoid the fact that as a finite creature, I am standing here, now, and see things from this perspective? I think the dilemma is intensified for Pannenberg precisely because he grants that this is the case "in time and history", but not in the future; that is, he emphasizes finitude as the condition for its overcoming, but what does this kairological overcoming involve? Do we then cease to be human? Is not this future hermeneutical paradise (which is a paradise precisely because of the absence of interpretation) a land populated by giants who are larger than (human) life, beyond finitude and provisionality? And is that future not a rather in-human notion?

At a fundamental level, what is at issue is the relationship between creation and redemption. Within the context of such a question, it may be said that for Pannenberg, as for Thomas Aquinas, grace completes or perfects nature. Redemption, then, consists in the completion of a deficient creation. This has been evident throughout the preceding discussion, for instance, in Pannenberg's assertion regarding creation as the first act of redemption, the affirmation that the incarnation (the nexus of redemption) is the highest act of creation, the notion of the "unfinished nature" of the imago Dei, and the future transcendence of finitude as

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26 The issues of time and epistemology are integrally connected, for knowledge is only provisional "so long as time and history endure." (ST 1:16) So, just as Pannenberg was forced to conclude that temporality is not constitutive of human finitude (ST 2:95), so here he is forced to conclude that provisionality is not constitutive of human knowing, despite his many assertions that finitude and provisionality are riveted together.
the destiny of humanity. Redemption, then, is not a remedial measure, but rather is necessitated by creation *qua* creation. The act of creation necessarily entails the crucifixion, the garden of Eden always already calls for the garden of Gethsemane. The creation of "day" is intrinsically haunted by a coming three hours of darkness, and seminally hewn from the tree of life is a tree upon which the Son will hang, accursed.

But hasn't Pannenberg missed something here? Is redemption necessitated by creation, or is it rather called for by a broken, fallen creation, a creation corrupted and tarnished? Instead of completing creation, does not grace *restore* a broken creation to its original status? Is it not a matter of healing rather than maturity? The important effect of this emphasis on restoration rather than completion is that it does justice to the original goodness of God's creation and also emphasizes the ubiquity and radicality of evil and suffering, in contrast to Pannenberg's system which impugns creation as already "fallen," in need of redemption, and which also denies the horror of evil by integrating it into the necessity of creation.

Finally, a theology of restoration, or a "creation theology," releases us from being guilty for being human beings. Because Pannenberg construes creation, and hence humanity, as deficient in their created status, the impetus of his theology is driven towards a supra-humanity and the "transcendence of finitude." On such accounting, human life as finite is insufficient and must be overcome, which also includes the situationality of human be-ing and the accompanying ubiquity of hermeneutics. But is that not calling us to be gods, or at least giants? And does that

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not entail a devaluing of human be-ing and a deprecation of the creational life that has been granted to us by the Creator? Should we not rather be content with our finitude, our humanity, as a gift from God? Should we not, with David (and against the giant), give thanks that we are so fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14)? Rather than construing creation and finitude as a fault (culpa), no matter how happy, a creation theology challenges us to see in our finitude a gift, not to be despised, but rather to be enjoyed and even celebrated.

IDEAL FUSION: GADAMER AND HABERMAS

A brief consideration of Gadamer and Habermas, certainly unlikely bedfellows, will also mark their common affinity with an eschatological immediacy model such as Pannenberg’s. While Habermas is a strident critic of philosophical hermeneutics, and Gadamer stands as one of the fathers of the field, both, at root, seem to share a common interpretation of interpretation which in the end (whenever that may be) posits an elimination of hermeneutics and the restoration or accomplishment of immediacy.

Painting such broad strokes, however, stands in dire need of justification, particularly given Gadamer’s impact on philosophical hermeneutics as perhaps the most influential post-Heideggerian philosopher with regards to questions of historicity and the conditionedness of knowing. Gadamer’s project in Truth and Method was precisely to unveil the Enlightenment "prejudice against prejudice" as prejudice; the Enlightenment rejection of (religious) authority,
Gadamer has demonstrated, while purporting to be a rejection of tradition in favour of reason, was really a rejection of one authority for another, of one tradition for a different tradition. His own theory of hermeneutics, then, attempts a rehabilitation of tradition and an understanding of prejudice not as a barrier to knowledge but as its only avenue. Gadamer’s two-sided project is illustrated well in the following:

The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will itself prove to be a prejudice, and removing it opens the way to an appropriate understanding of the finitude which dominates not only our humanity but also our historical consciousness. Does being situated within traditions really mean being subject to prejudices and limited in one’s freedom? Is not, rather, all human existence, even the freest, limited and qualified in various ways? If this is true, the idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility for historical humanity. (TM, 276)

Gadamer stands very much on the side of finitude and situationality, of the conditions of hermeneutics as ubiquitous to human be-ing. This is especially seen in his discussions of tradition (TM, 277-285) and the history of effect (TM, 300-307) as the very conditions for the possibility of understanding.

Given this emphasis in Gadamer, many would find it an odd (or rather, erroneous) move to associate him with a model of hermeneutical immediacy, albeit an eschatological one. After all, is it not Gadamer that has pointed out to us the conditionedness and traditionedness of our understanding? Hasn’t Gadamer, if anyone, sought to honour the reality of mediation? Is it not Gadamer that has opened our eyes to the fact that our understanding is always already an interpretation?

Yes, and no. Gadamer certainly honours the historicity of knowing, and this thesis is indebted to him in many ways. However, by connecting Gadamer with a model of immediacy, I am pointing to some hesitations I have regarding his understanding of plurality and difference;
that is, I think behind Gadamer's hermeneutics--in the closet, if you will--there remains a deep monologism which ascribes unity to the Truth (and the Tradition). As such, there is a movement, in the process of conversation and interpretation, toward the overcoming of interpretation and finitude, but only, once again, via those conditions. Hermeneutics and interpretation is founded in difference and otherness; it is because I am unique, because I stand in an other place and time that interpretation is necessary. But the task of Gadamer's hermeneutics, it seems to me, is to eliminate this otherness 'in the end'; "understanding" for Gadamer seems to be constituted by the elimination of different identities. This comes to the fore in his notion of the "fusion [Verschmelzung] of horizons," which arises in a section on temporal distance. Again, on the one hand I feel very near to Gadamer when he asserts that time "is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged because it separates; it is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted. Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome."(TM,297) Rather than being a yawning abyss, Gadamer adds, temporal distance is "filled with the continuity of custom and tradition."

It is the persistent (over-)emphasis on continuity which concerns me. As he goes on to develop, there is continuity because really, in the end, temporal distance is not composed of separate, closed horizons. In the end, there is no difference: "Just as the individual is never simply an individual because he is always in understanding with others, so too the closed horizon

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28 I offer this, recognizing that Gadamer emphasizes that "we understand in a different way, if we understand at all."(TM,297) My goal is to attempt to show that behind such statements there lurks a deep unity which ties together all of the difference. These "different understandings" which Gadamer admits are different ways of reading The Tradition, "the one great horizon."(TM,304) I'm not sure how much room he makes for the notion that truth itself is constituted by difference, for the Nietzschean insight that truth is plural, a woman who knows her duplicity.
that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction." (TM, 304) In the end, we will see that what appear to be distinct horizons "together constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and that, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness." (TM, 304) Thus effecting understanding requires the transposing of ourselves which involves "disregarding ourselves" and "rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other." (TM, 305, emphasis added) In fact, Gadamer argues, to acknowledge the otherness of the other is to suspend their claim to truth (TM, 303-304). Verschmelzung turns out to be a synonym of Aufhebung, another term bent on eliminating difference in the name of difference.

What ends up happening is the elimination of identity in the name of subjectivity and the obliteration of difference in the name of commonality (TM, 292). While Gadamer helpfully emphasizes the "miracle of understanding" (TM, 292) in contrast to more radical deconstruction, he does so at the expense of difference which grounds both hermeneutics and human existence. On the way to understanding and unity, interpretation is relegated to a transitional phase necessary for negotiating differences. I think Susan Shapiro is right when she observes that for Gadamer, "it is misunderstanding and misinterpretation that occasion the need for hermeneutics." 29 Gadamer himself seems to suggest the accidental status of hermeneutics when he alludes to the solution of the "hermeneutical problem" (TM, 298). So, as Caputo suggested, up front there is a lot of talk about change, difference and history, but in the end and in the closet, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics harbours a notion of deep monologic truth and a

latent drive for immediacy the overcoming of hermeneutics in a fusion of horizons. As Caputo remarks elsewhere,

*In the end,* I think, Gadamer remains attached to the tradition as the bearer of eternal truths, which in a way does nothing more than modify Plato and Hegel from a Heidegger standpoint. Gadamer's hermeneutics is traditionalism and the philosophy of eternal truth pushed to its historical limits. He offers us the most liberal form of traditionalism possible. He introduces as much change as possible into the philosophy of unchanging truth, as much movement as possible into immobile verity.30

There may even be a case for the fact that Gadamer never believes that hermeneutics will be overcome—that he is offering "not an *Aufhebung* which reaches or even aims at a final canonical state but an ongoing and continual *Aufhebung*";31 nevertheless, his framework posits this as a hope and dream in the fusion of horizons and remains, as such, rooted in a deep monologism.

It is precisely this attachment to the tradition which is the focus of Jurgen Habermas' criticisms of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.32 He hears in Gadamer a dangerous submission to (The) Tradition which leaves one open to, and eventually ends in, violence. If, as Gadamer and hermeneutics suggest, we can never step outside of our context—if we can only know based on context-dependent structures—then there is never possibility for critique, for one will never be in a position to challenge the tradition if one is enslaved to that tradition. If the tradition is distorted, hermeneutics will never permit one to recognize that distortion. This, Habermas contends, points out the limit of hermeneutics.

The self-conception of hermeneutics can be shaken only if it becomes apparent

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30 *Radical Hermeneutics*, p. 111.

31 Ibid., p. 113. This would be an indicator of Gadamer's contradictory monism.

32 Shapiro traces and reinvents this debate in a very helpful manner in her "Rhetoric as Ideology Critique."
that systematically distorted patterns of communication also occur in 'normal'—that is to say, pathologically inconspicuous—speech. That, however, is true in the case of pseudo-communication, in which a disruption of communication is not recognized by the parties involved. *Only a newcomer to the conversation notices that they misunderstand each other.* (HCU, 302)

It is this newcomer, this outsider or third party which is able to point out the distortions; that is, this must be pointed out from outside the conversation—*outside of the hermeneutical context.*

If hermeneutical consciousness were truly universal, as it claims to be, then we would "have no universal criterion at our disposal which would tell us when we are caught up in the false consciousness of a pseudonormal understanding;" this is the limit experience of hermeneutics (HCU, 303).

According to Habermas, Heidegger and Gadamer's emphasis on our preconception formed by tradition as constitutive of knowing and impossible to escape—our 'standing agreement' with our tradition—points to a consensus (which Habermas also wants) which is beyond critique (which Habermas is terribly frightened of).

The inherently prejudiced nature of understanding renders it impossible—indeed, makes it seem pointless—to place in jeopardy the factually worked out consensus which underlies, as the case may be, our misconception or lack of comprehension. Hermeneutically, we are obliged to have reference to concrete preunderstandings which, ultimately, can be traced back to the process of socialization, to the mastery of and absorption into common contexts of tradition....In so doing, we resubmit ourselves to the hermeneutical obligation of accepting for the time being—as a standing agreement--whatever consensus the resumed conversation may lead to as its resolution. The attempt to cast doubt, abstractly, on this agreement--which is, of course, contingent—as a false consciousness is pointless, *since we cannot transcend the conversation which we are.* (HCU, 313)

Habermas doesn't think (and I suspect he is right) that the tradition could ever be 'wrong' or 'deceptive' for Gadamer. That is, Gadamer fails to see that "the dogmatism of the traditional context is the vehicle not only for the objectivity of language in general, but for the repressiveness
of a power relationship which deforms the intersubjectivity of understanding as such and systematically distorts colloquial communication." (HCU, 314)

In contrast to Gadamer's "ontologization of language," Habermas offers a "critically self-aware hermeneutics...which differentiates between insight and delusion, assimilates the metahermeneutical knowledge concerning the conditions which make systematically distorted communication possible." (HCU, 314) This critically self-aware hermeneutics finds consensus not in a standing agreement with what has been handed down, but in the universal/shared principles of communication--"intersubjectively valid rules" (HCU, 306)--which are the basis of all communication and which transcend every conversation. "Only this principle," he continues, "is able to ensure that the hermeneutical effort will not stop short before it has seen through deception (in the case of a forced consensus) and systematic displacement (in the case of apparently accidental misunderstanding)." (HCU, 314-15) Because these shared principles transcend communication, they also stand independently of and outside of our context and hence make critique possible. It is this 'rationality' which provides the basis for critique of the tradition.

It is at this juncture that we catch sight of Habermas' eschatology, his teleology of the ideal. This consensus, which is required for critique, "might be reached under the idealized conditions to be found in unrestrained and dominance-free communication, and which could, in the course of time, be affirmed to exist." (HCU, 314, emphasis added) In the future lies "an ideal forum" where "communication can be carried through and made perfect." (HCU, 315)

An idea of the truth which measures itself against true consensus implies an idea of the true life. We can also say: it includes the idea of a coming of age. Only the formal anticipation of the idealized conversation as a future way of life guarantees the ultimate, contra-factual standing agreement which unites us provisionally, and on the basis of which any factual agreement, if it be a false one, can be criticized as a false consciousness. (HCU, 315)
Language, then, is constituted by a systematic distortion; the negative effects of interpretation are structural elements of hermeneutics and not accidental. But the overcoming of such systematically distorted communication is envisioned in the future, in the realization of the ideal community in the kingdom of God, where a universal consensus is effected, eliminate the distortions inherent to interpretation.

Ideally, I would disagree. However, Habermas construal of the relationship between hermeneutics and distortion, against the horizon of consensus and universal reason, indicates that he too, though in a different way, offers an interpretation of interpretation not unlike Pannenberg and Gadamer. This eschatological immediacy model, in the name of historicity, delivers a deep monologic understanding of truth, a monologism which excludes all who are not the same (monos).

In contrast, a creational-pneumatic hermeneutic offers space for different interpretations because it is rooted in a pluralist creation and a plural notion of truth. Thus a creational-pneumatic hermeneutic (developed more programmatically in Part Three) stands in direct contrast to the models in Part One, which link hermeneutics to fallenness and anormativity.

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33 See Shapiro, p. 128.
Part Two

A Hermeneutics of Fallenness
CHAPTER THREE

FALLING INTO THE GARDEN

Part One of this thesis amounted to a hermeneutical hamartiology: an analysis of several interpretations of interpretation which linked the meaning-ful negotiations of human communication to a story of fallenness and, either presently or 'in the end', promised redemption from such structures. The state of affairs which necessitates interpretation--situationality, distantiality, in short, the finitude of human existence--is somehow overcome in order that humanity might escape the plague of hermeneutics. Our topic, while hermeneutical, is also anthropological: an investigation into the nature of relations between persons (and texts) in light of the "nature" of human be-ing.¹ As I have attempted to demonstrate, both of the theories in Part One, as represented by Koivisto, Lints, Pannenberg and Gadamer, result in a fundamental devaluing of human be-ing by construing the conditions of such as something to be overcome; thus hermeneutics is anormative, accidental, fallen (hence the title of Part One, "The

Fallenness of Hermeneutics). But if interpretation is a constitutive aspect of human experience and be-ing,\(^2\) then it is impossible to overcome (without becoming gods) and further, the desire to escape the finitude of human existence itself marks the essence of the fall, the quest to 'be like God.' The grasping of the forbidden fruit, rather than initiating the history of hermeneutics, was an attempt to overcome such mediation and to 'know' as God does, *sans courrier.* A similar reversal in reading was offered with respect to the Babel narrative.

As we move into Part Two however, we encounter several theoreticians who refuse to believe any such myth of immediacy or pure reading. It is precisely Heidegger (and Derrida following him\(^3\)) who has thematized the hermeneutical nature of human existence, as well as the inescapability of such; in short, Heidegger and Derrida are philosophers who accentuate what I have been describing as the 'ubiquity of interpretation' with no dream of overcoming such a state of affairs. However, Heidegger and Derrida retain the category of fallenness to describe this state of affairs; not a fallenness in contrast to a primal paradise or heavenly city (as in Part One), but rather an essential fallenness, a fall that is always already a fall within rather than a fall from. While the distantiality and situatedness of human be-ing are recognized as necessary and inescapable conditions of existence, they are nevertheless connected to a fallenness which issues in violence. Thus, instead of positing the 'Fallenness of Hermeneutics,' Heidegger and Derrida offer instead a 'Hermeneutics of Fallenness.'

\(^2\) Again, I ask for the reader's patience in awaiting a full development of this in chapter five.

\(^3\) Derrida, of course, is no Heideggerian, is in no way a board member of Heidegger, Inc. However, his thought owes an incalculable debt to Heidegger even though it may represent the radicalization of Heidegger: the left side of the Heideggerian heritage (*Radical Hermeneutics*, p. 95).
But if hermeneutics and the space of interpretation is a constitutive aspect of being human, why must this state of affairs be construed as violent? Further, if being human is to be a creature, and if interpretation is an essential part of that creaturehood, then to construe such a state of affairs as essentially fallen is to ontologize the fall and devalue the fundamental goodness of creation. While I agree with both Heidegger and Derrida that interpretation is part and parcel of being human, precisely because of this I disagree with their construal of this as fallen and violent. Further, I will argue that they understand it as such precisely because they continue to be haunted by a nostalgia for immediacy and the "ghost of full presence."4

In this chapter, I will focus on Heidegger's early texts (1919-1927), attempting to outline both his positive contribution regarding the constitutive nature of hermeneutics as well as his construal of such as an aspect of the fallenness of Dasein. This will require an extended consideration of Heidegger's anthropology and his construal of intersubjectivity, followed by an attempt to mythologize otherwise than Heidegger. Crucial to this analysis will be a retrieval of the sources of Heidegger's thought in this regard, particularly the Christian antecedents in Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard. The chapter will close with a critique of these theological beginnings and a first attempt at reading the New Testament otherwise than Heidegger.

THE INTERPRETEDNESS OF DASEIN

The heart of Heidegger's early work, and that which has probably had the most impact on the subsequent history of philosophy in this century, is his disclosure of the interpretedness

4 Olthuis, "A Hermeneutics of Suffering Love."
of human being-in-the-world; that is, the hermeneutical nature of human existence as conditioned by 'being-there/here' (Da-sein). Though Heidegger's work is certainly indebted to previous research by Schleiermacher and Dilthey (and, to some extent, Nietzsche), his project was a radicalization of their technical notions and an attempt "to locate interpretation originally in life itself." While Being and Time--his most systematic presentation of these themes--fell as something of a bombshell on the philosophical community in 1927, seemingly without a genealogy, in recent years we have been made privy to the story of the genesis of this critical work, particularly with the publication of the young Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures (1919-23) in the still growing Gesamtausgabe, as well as the recovery of lost and unknown manuscripts. One of these early manuscripts is Heidegger's 'Aristotle-Introduction' of 1922, which grants an early glimpse of his delineation of the "hermeneutical situation". Here he emphasizes that all interpretations "stand under determinate conditions of interpreting and understanding." Thus, "[e]very interpretation, each according to a particular field and knowledge-claim, has the following:

(1) a visual stance which is more or less expressly taken on and fixed;
(2) a visual direction which is motivated by (1) and within which the 'As-what' and the 'That-with-respect-to-which' [das 'woraufhin'] of the interpretation are determined. The object of the interpretation is grasped anticipatorily in the 'As-what', and is interpreted according to the 'That-with-respect-to-which';
(3) a visual breadth which is limited with the visual stance and visual direction, and within which the interpretation's claim to objectivity moves."(PIA,358)

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6 I will not concern myself here with this story in detail. It has now been masterfully told by Theodore Kisiel, The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time and John van Buren, The Young Heidegger. I will delve only into those historical details which are crucial for the thesis of this chapter.
Every interpretation is conditioned by these aspects of (1) traditionality, which hands down the possibilities for interpretation (the Vorhabe of BT); (2) predelineation, whereby the interpreter understands someone or something 'as' something, which is conditioned by traditionality (roughly the Vorbegriff of BT); and (3) the situationality or horizontality of human be-ing which creates the horizons of the interpreter, beyond which he or she cannot see. Thus, when I interpret something (a text, a sentence spoken to me by my wife), my interpretation is governed by several factors that are constitutive of finitude and being human. There are 'limits' to interpretation which are both handed down by a tradition (such as the language I speak, the interpretations which I have been taught at various levels of life, the socio-cultural world in which I live, etc.) and inhabited as part of my finitude, the fact that I am here and not there. All of these aspects stand before every interpretation as "determinate conditions" which make interpretation possible while at the same time governing the interpretive possibilities. There is no reading which is not at the same time a "reading-into" (PIA,359).

Interpretation is always local, from a specific locale, a particular situation. In BT, Heidegger describes this as an "existential spatiality"\(^7\), which refers to what I have delineated as the situationality of human be-ing. This spatiality or situationality refers to a double-sided locatedness, a bivalent conditioning of human experience: (1) a physico-spatial limit inasmuch as I stand 'here', 'in this place', seeing things from this perspective; and (2) a temporal condition, inasmuch as I stand here 'now', 'at this time'.\(^8\) As he explains,

\(^7\) Heidegger emphasizes that it is an existential spatiality and not simply 'spatial' [i.e., physical] (BT,94,138ff.).

\(^8\) Derrida's notion of differance has a similar duality, as both spatial dif-fering and temporal de-ferring. This was developed in contrast to the bivalent idea of presence as a temporal present
The entity which is essentially constituted by Being-in-the-world is itself in every case its 'there'. According to the familiar signification of the word, the 'there' points to a 'here' and a 'yonder'. Dasein's existential spatiality, which thus determines its 'location', is itself grounded in Being-in-the-world. (BT, 171)

He goes on to say that "by its very nature, Dasein brings its 'there' along with it." Because human be-ing is characterized by this spatiality and situationality, the interpreter can never step outside of its locale, outside of its 'there.' I always see something 'from here': from this perspective and this situation, the place where I stand: in relation to that which is interpreted, in relation to those to whom I am communicating, and in relation to the traditions of which I am an heir. Inasmuch as this locale is not something I can choose (i.e., I cannot choose where and when I will be born, the culture into which I will emerge, the language I will be taught), Heidegger describes this being-in-the-world as *thrownness* (BT, 174-183).

As humans existing in the world, the world is a constitutive aspect of our be-ing; the world is not something beside us or other than us, as the relation between subject and object or the distinction between the Cartesian *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*. Thus we encounter 'things' in the world not as things 'in themselves', but as things that we use, as things for...
something; that is why the Greeks termed 'things' as *pragmata*, things to be used in *praxis* (BT,96-97). Because we encounter entities in the world as things 'for' something, we also encounter them always already 'as' something. Thus Heidegger refers in PIA to the 'As-what' which in BT becomes the 'as-structure' whereby something "is understood in terms of a totality of involvements."(BT,189) It is this understanding of *something as something* which constitutes the fundamental interpretedness of existence, an interpreting which precedes every assertion.

When we have to do with anything, the mere seeing of the Things which are closest to us bears in itself the structure of interpretation, and in so primordial a manner that just to grasp something free, as it were, of the 'as', requires a certain readjustment....In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by interpretation.(BT,190-191)

At this point he returns to the three determinate conditions laid out in PIA as grounding this "everyday circumspective interpretation". In short, "[w]henever something is interpreted as

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10 I would suggest that Heidegger's notion of 'as-structures' is a "translation" of Husserl's 'constitution' within the framework of a hermeneutic phenomenology. As such, it is rooted in 'Being-in-the-world,' which seems to correspond to Husserl's 'intentionality.' For Husserl, consciousness is always consciousness of something: there is no 'world' without consciousness and no consciousness without a world. As such, this world is 'given' in intuition, but this involves an act of 'constitution' in perception, whereby the perceiver puts the pieces together--the partial perspectives--in the context of what Heidegger will later call "a totality of involvements." For example, when I see the front side of a house, I understand it as the front, connected to two sides and a back, even though I do not perceive these other sides. It is because I perceive that which is in front as the front of a house that I thereby constitute it as such. With regards to Husserl's doctrine of intuition as giving the given, Caputo notes that "The injunction to remain with the given includes the reminder that the given is given only as something." (*Radical Hermeneutics*, p. 43)

In Heidegger then, the world is constitutive of Dasein as Being-in-the-world and is therefore understood as something against the horizon of a totality of involvements (significance).
something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us."(BT, 191-192) Every interpretation is a decision for a way of conceiving, a way of reading, "either with finality or with reservations."(BT, 191)

This disclosure of the conditionedness of all interpretation and the role of presuppositions in hermeneutics is one of the crucial contributions Heidegger has made to theory in this century. But the crux of his work lies not only in this discussion of the nature of interpretation, but also in the scope of interpretation. Rather than confining hermeneutics to special disciplines such as law, aesthetics and theology, Heidegger's early corpus is devoted to signalling the primordial role of interpretation in all of human being-in-the-world. Hermeneutics is not simply a negotiation between a reader and a text, but also between a carpenter and his hammer, or a wife and her husband. To be-in-the-world is to interpret. "Factual life," Heidegger states in 1922, "moves always within a determinate interpretedness which has been handed down, or revised, or re-worked anew. Circumspection\textsuperscript{11} gives to life its world as interpreted according to those respects in which the world is expected and encountered as the object of concern...The interpretedness of the world is factically that interpretedness within which life itself stands."(PIA, 363)

To be human is to interpret, is to encounter the world and entities within the world 'as' something--an encounter conditioned by the situationality of human finitude. In the language

\textsuperscript{11} Circumspection [Umsicht] is related to Dasein's basic structure as one of "care" [Sorge]: a way of being-in-the-world in which the world is a concern for me, within which I have "dealings" with the world. This is the structure which underlies the discussion above regarding things as pragmata, as things 'for' something, things which I use. The basic structure of Care will be addressed more extensively below.
of phenomenology, interpretation is pretheoretical and thus precedes every thematization or theoretical articulation. The theoretical assertion, in fact, is a derivative mode of interpretation, made possible only by the primordial construal of existence. Heidegger’s favourite example is a carpenter with his hammer:

Prior to all analysis, logic has already understood 'logically' what it takes as a theme under the heading of the "categorical statement"--for instance, 'The hammer is heavy.' The unexplained presupposition is that the 'meaning' of this sentence is to be taken as: "This Thing--a hammer--has the property of heaviness". In concernful circumspection there are no such assertions 'at first'. But such circumspection has of course its specific ways of interpreting, and these, as compared with the 'theoretical judgement' just mentioned, may take some such form as 'The hammer is too heavy', or rather just 'Too heavy!', 'Hand me the other hammer!' Interpretation is carried out primordially not in a theoretical statement but in an action of circumspective concern--laying aside the unsuitable tool, or exchanging it, 'without wasting words'. From the fact that words are absent, it may not be concluded that interpretation is absent. (BT,200)

Interpretation happens everyday, in the everyday, in every relationship. It often happens in the absence of words and largely in the absence of theoretical assertions. Life itself is a hermeneutical venture, and it is so because of the nature of human be-ing as finite, as located and situated. Heidegger represents something of a prophet of the ubiquity of interpretation, a prophetic tradition reaching back to Nietzsche. And as a prophet in this tradition, I would suggest that he is also recalling the tradition back to a more humane understanding of humanity, a more reasonable reason which honours the finitude (and createdness?) of human be-ing.

THE FALLENNESS OF THE EVERYDAY

However, having said that, and despite of all the debts my creational-pneumatic hermeneutic owes to this prophet, there remains a fundamental aspect of Heidegger’s theory
which betrays that, in the end, while his philosophy is certainly a philosophy of finitude, it is also a philosophy of the Fall; not a fallen philosophy\footnote{Although, as van Buren notes, "For Paul, as for the young Heidegger, philosophy is an expression of fallen life."\textit{(Young Heidegger}, p. 178.)} but a philosophy which sees the Fall as structural—an ontology or, if you will, an ontologizing of the Fall.

It is crucial that Heidegger’s notion of fallenness (and earlier, "ruination")\footnote{As developed in the Wintersemester lecture course of 1921-22 (GA 61, 131-155).} be understood in connection with the hermeneutic structures outlined above. As there noted, Dasein encounters things 'as' something 'for' something because, as Being-in-the-world, it is concerned and has a basic structure of care. But this 'care for the world' has a built-in tendency to become absorbed in the world. Already in 1922, Heidegger proposes that

There is alive in the movement of caring an inclination of caring towards the world as the tendency towards absorption in the world, a tendency towards letting-oneself-be-taken-along by the world. This tendency of concern is the expression of a basic factual tendency of life, a tendency towards the falling away from one's own self and thereby towards the falling prey to the world, and thus towards the falling apart of oneself. Let the basic character of the movement of caring be terminologically fixed as factual life's inclination toward falling. (PIA,363)

This fallenness is not an "objective event" nor something that "happens" but is rather "an intentional How" which is "constituent of facticity" (PIA,364; cp. GA 61,133). Rather than living the factual life of the individual, Dasein, as fallen, "moves instead within a particular averageness of caring, of dealing, of circumspection, and of grasping the world. This averageness is the averageness of the general public [Öffentlichkeit] at any given time, of the surrounding area, of the dominating trend, of the 'Just like the many others, too'. It is 'they' [das 'man'] who factically live the individual life."(PIA,365) A year later, in SS 1923, this
listening to the 'they' (the 'One', the 'Anyone and Everyone') is for the first time linked to the everydayness [Alltaglichkeit] of Dasein (GA 63, 85).

It is this connection between fallenness, everydayness and the 'they'\textsuperscript{14} which is explicated in BT. It is important to recognize that this construal of fallenness is rooted in Heidegger's anthropology and his understanding of intersubjective relationships. "Being-with-one-another," he begins, "has the character of distantiality."(BT, 164) This is a necessary component of human relationships inasmuch as human be-ings retain their identity in relation. However, Heidegger goes on to assert that this distantiality, which is constitutive of Dasein, results in a fundamental violence.

But this distantiality which belongs to Being-with, is such that Dasein, as everyday Being-with-one-another, stands in subjection to Others. It itself is not; its Being has been taken away by the Others. Dasein's everyday possibilities of Being are for the Others to dispose of as they please. These Others, moreover, are not definite Others. On the contrary, any Other can represent them. What is decisive is just that inconspicuous domination by Others which has already been taken over unawares from Dasein as Being-with. (BT, 164)\textsuperscript{15}

Human relationships are constituted by a primordial violence and domination. For Heidegger this happens whenever we read the newspaper the others read, or ride the subway on which others ride. "This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into the kind of Being of 'the Others'" and it is because of this subjection that Dasein falls prey to the

\textsuperscript{14} I will maintain the older translation of 'das Man' as "they" in accordance with the Macquarrie and Edwards translation. It has been emphasized in recent Heidegger scholarship, however, that "the 'One'" or "the 'Anyone'" give a better sense.

\textsuperscript{15} It is precisely this construal of intersubjectivity, I will suggest in chapter four, which lies at the heart of Levinas' understanding of the Other.
"dictatorship of the 'they'."16 The 'they' determines Dasein's possibilities and as such Dasein becomes bogged down in averageness and its possibilities are 'levelled down' to what everyone else is doing. Dasein becomes controlled by 'the public' and the public's understanding of the world. The 'they', moreover, make things too easy; it 'disburdens' Dasein of the difficulty of life and Dasein becomes a 'nobody' 'like everybody else'. This surrender to the 'they' is directly related to Dasein's 'absorption in the world' as an aspect of fallenness and the tendency of care (BT,164-167).

Because Dasein's hermeneutical situation is determined precisely by what is handed down to it, Dasein is "proximally and for the most part" mastered by the 'they', takes the 'they' at its word and accepts its interpretation. But it is precisely at this point that we see that those determinate conditions which are constitutive of interpretation are also, for Heidegger, instances of fallenness. That which is handed down to Dasein as "traditioned" is now connected with the averageness of the public. For instance, language, rather than being understood as a necessary condition which makes interpretation possible (while at the same time governing interpretive possibilities), is construed as an "average intelligibility", an "interpretedness" to which Dasein is "delivered over" (BT,212,211). While a linguistic tradition is a necessary aspect of human being, it is at the same time as instance of fallenness, another way that the 'they' drags the self into averageness and inauthenticity. Fallenness is "an essential tendency of Being--one which belongs to everydayness."(BT,210) As such, "[t]his everyday way in which things have been interpreted is one into which Dasein has grown in the first instance, with never a possibility of

16 This bears a remarkable resemblance to John Stuart Mill's use of the "tyranny of majority" (which he borrowed from de Tocqueville) in his treatise on individualism, entitled On Liberty, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Penguin, 1985): 62.
extrication. In it, out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed." (BT,213, emphasis added)

To be in-the-world, to be human, is to be fallen, for this is a "basic kind of Being which belongs to everydayness" (BT,219); "Being-in-the-world is always fallen" (BT,225). By becoming lost in the publicness of the 'they', by listening to Others, Dasein has lapsed into inauthenticity; it has "fallen into the world" by becoming concernfully absorbed in the world (BT,220, emphasis added). Dasein does not fall from a "purer and higher 'primal status'" but rather is always already fallen: "Falling is a definite existential characteristic of Dasein itself....Falling reveals an essential ontological structure of Dasein itself. Far from determining its nocturnal side, it constitutes all Dasein's days in their everydayness." (BT,220,224)

While Heidegger was one of the pioneers in underscoring the ubiquity of interpretation, we now see that his category of fallenness construes just those elements as inescapable moments of fallenness. Those elements of human be-ing which are the grounds for hermeneutics—the situationality, distantiability (and intersubjectivity), and traditionality of human existence—even though they are "constitutive" of human being, are at the same time depicted as those characteristics by which Dasein, as long as it is, "is sucked into the turbulence of the 'they's' inauthenticity." (BT,223) Thus, human relations (Being-with-one-another) which are part of Dasein's "constitution" are always already frameworks of domination whereby Dasein is mastered by the 'they.' "The 'they'," he continues, "is an existentiale; and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to Dasein's positive constitution....The Self of everyday Dasein is the they-self, which we distinguish from the authentic Self—that is, from the Self which has been
taken hold of in its own way. (BT,167) Heidegger laments that this makes things too easy, it takes the Kampf out of life (Heidegger loves a good fight). When Dasein listens to the 'they'-- and it cannot help but do so--it becomes average, like everybody else. Heidegger is calling us to be heroes, to stand up and fight, to be above average (so we can enrol in seminars with Allan Bloom).

The same tension occurs in the forestructures of interpretation. On the one hand his work is devoted to demonstrating that every interpretation is governed by the determinate conditions of what is handed down to us (the visual stance), the way we learn to interpret (the visual direction) and the horizons which these produce (the visual breadth). How we interpret depends on our locale and our tradition--our context; however, it is when we are influenced by "the surrounding area" and "the dominating trend" that we fall pray to the averageness of the public's interpretation (PIA,365). "Thus Dasein's understanding in the 'they' is constantly going wrong in its projects" and it is this way of Being which dominates Being-with-one-another (BT,218-219). That traditionedness which is part and parcel of being human is the same characteristic which prevents Dasein from being its own self, i.e., being authentic. It is for this reason that every "genuine" interpretation is a reading against (BT,213). Because of Dasein's essential tendency to fallen interpretation, from which it can never be extricated, genuine hermeneutics is 'naturally' violent.

The reason for this lies in care itself. Our Being alongside the things with which we concern ourselves most closely in the 'world'--a Being which is falling--guides the everyday way in which Dasein is interpreted, and covers up ontically Dasein's authentic Being...The laying bare of Dasein's primordial Being must rather be wrested from Dasein by following the opposite course from that taken by the falling ontico-ontological tendency of interpretation.(BT,359)

Because Dasein has fallen into the world, and this essentially so, "Existential
analysis...constantly has the character of doing violence." This is not only true with regards to Heidegger's fundamental analysis of Dasein; "it belongs properly to any Interpretation" (BT, 359) and is directed against the structures of everydayness that are an essential characteristic of human be-ing.

But if interpretation--and the determinate conditions of interpretation--are necessary and 'essential' aspects of human existence, why must these be described as fallen and violent? How has Heidegger brought us to this point? When did these structures become moments of fallenness and when did interpretation become violent? If we would trace our way back through this discourse, it will be found that the fallenness of everydayness, and hence the violence of hermeneutics, is rooted in Heidegger's construal of intersubjective relationships as ipso facto frameworks of domination (BT, 164-165). It is because Being-with-one-another places Dasein in subjection that listening to the 'they' becomes a lapse into inauthenticity. That is to say, behind Heidegger's interpretation of interpretation there lies a rugged individualism, a militaristic self-affirmation which devalues intersubjectivity--a resolute individualism which took on a haunting, Volklich character in 1933.17 I think Habermas is correct when he suggests that from the start he degrades the background structures of the lifeworld that reach beyond the isolated Dasein as structures of an average everyday existence, that is, of inauthentic Dasein. To be sure, the co-Dasein of others first appears to be a constitutive feature of being-in-the-world. But the priority of the lifeworld's intersubjectivity over the mineness of Dasein escapes any conceptual framework.

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17 In his rectoral address of 1933, Heidegger called the University (and the German Volk) to assert its authentic character and to will the essence of the German university through Labour Service, Military Service and Knowledge Service. Then, and only then, will the German people (as collective Dasein) realize its authenticity and spiritual-historical mission. See Martin Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," in Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers, eds. Gunther Neske and Emil Kettering (New York: Paragon House, 1990): 5-13.
still tinged with the solipsism of Husserlian phenomenology.18

Robert Dostal has objected to reading Heidegger as a closet solipsist, arguing that "Being-with-others is basic to Heidegger's account of Dasein." In fact, "[s]ociality or communality are constitutive of Dasein in the most fundamental way."19 Indeed, Being-with-one-another is constitutive of Dasein, but it is at the same time inauthentic existence. As such, Habermas' analysis remains valid: to be authentically Dasein is to wrest oneself free from the influence of the 'they', which requires that one in some sense escape the domination of Being-with (though one never 'can'). It is because intersubjective relationships—which are part and parcel of being human—are construed as structures of violence and fallenness that Dasein is essentially fallen—always already fallen as a related, intersubjective Being-with.

But why must the "distance" between persons—the space of identity—be understood as "disturbing" (BT,164)? On what grounds is this violence of intersubjectivity smuggled in, or what lies behind its introduction? Have we indeed stumbled upon a vestige of the Cartesian subject, a 'tinge of Husserlian solipsism'? Is authentic Dasein actually a closet res cogitans? Was Sartre perhaps a faithful reader of Heidegger after all?20

One finds little justification for this interpretation of intersubjectivity apart from those suggested above, viz., a lingering commitment to a detached, solipsistic self while at the same

18 Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 149. He goes on to say that, "In *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not construct intersubjectivity any differently than Husserl does in the *Cartesian Meditations.*" (149-150)


20 And as we will see in chapter 4, Levinas follows Heidegger closely on this point.
time recognizing the inescapable relatedness of human being. But would not Heidegger’s own *destruktion* of this ontology lead also to the deconstruction of such a construal of intersubjective relations? It is only against the horizon of a latent individualism that human relations would be understood as detrimental to the self, particularly when it is recognized that one cannot escape these relations. With regard to the hermeneutical situation, it is this relatedness of human being that lies behind the traditionedness of interpretation: I learn to interpret within a tradition of which I am a part and is comprised by the *community* of which I am a part. I interpret, by and large, the way *they* interpret. But why must this be portrayed as inauthentic if it is an inescapable aspect of being human? Is it not delineated as such only because Heidegger remains haunted by presence, albeit a presence that is never present, a *Geist* of full presence? That is to say, does not Heidegger’s discourse—his interpretation of interpretation—though it has no dream of immediacy, allow itself to be governed by its ghost? Is it not the spectre of presence which is setting the rules for the game? Does not Heidegger’s critique of the modern subject remain confined within a modern paradigm?21 Are we not permitted (called?), at this juncture,

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21 The point I am attempting to make here is that Heidegger, while pushing the limits of the modern project, failed to ask some crucial questions (questions that Derrida also fails to ask). I am not suggesting that one could completely step outside of the metaphysical tradition; however, Heidegger seems to concede too much, or doesn’t ask enough. This is analogous to Jean-Luc Marion’s critique of Heidegger’s critique of onto-theology. While Heidegger pushes the question back beyond and behind metaphysics, his critique remains within the horizon of ontology or the "screen of Being"; it is simply *another idolatry* inasmuch as it assumes the "essential anteriority of the ontological question over the so-called ontic question of 'God.'" Being still sets the rules, and whoever makes the rules wins the game. See Marion, *God Without Being*, pp. 37-52. Unfortunately, even Marion, despite his wonderful emphasis on love, gives the game to Being with respect to humans, for "[w]e fall--in the capacity of beings--under the government of Being." Thus, in the end, to be finite is to be sinful, to fall under "the (sinful) 'economy' of the creature" (pp. 108-109).
to interpret otherwise than Heidegger, to follow a different Weg?

What if being-in-relation was understood as a crucial aspect of being authentically human? It is this other reading of human intersubjectivity that lies at the heart of a creational-pneumatic hermeneutic, for if to be-in-relation is an aspect of being a creature, then it must be understood as a modality of creational goodness, of the goodness of creation. Rather than being always already dominated by the other, the Other and others are crucial to my be(com)ing human. It is precisely this other reading of 'Being-with', a reading otherwise than Heidegger, which has been developed by James Olthuis in his construction of an anthropological model that honours the intersubjectivity which is inherent to being human and being a creature.

An individual person is always an "I" of the "We." Individuation—the Iself—and communality—the Weself—are not fundamentally opposed. They are the two sides, so to speak, of the differentiated unity of humanity. Doing injustice to either side distorts the other and destroys the whole. There is no lone self. Every self is a "connective self." Rather than being aspects of fallenness and inauthenticity, relationships with others are crucial for authentic existence, that is, for being my own self (Eigentlichkeit). "Being human," Olthuis argues, in contrast to Heidegger, "is a thoroughly relational affair. And becoming a self is a

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22 Cp. R.J. Sheffler Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas’s Ethics as First Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1993). Manning proposes that Levinas offers an-other interpretation, one other than Heidegger’s. With regards to intersubjectivity, however—which lies at root of any ethics as the condition for the possibility for ethics—Levinas and Heidegger are agreed.


process of interconnecting in a rich variety of ways and forms. A self is, thus, constitutionally, a connective self in process, a fabric of many strands woven and being woven."25

Heidegger's construal of intersubjectivity remains confined within an ontology of power and domination, where "[t]o be a self is to have enemies. Implicitly, if not explicitly, one is always at war."26 But this, of course, is only one interpretation, conditioned by a certain ontological tradition, and one that is open to, even invites, question. If the world is creation—a good gift from the hand of God—and if being-with-others is a constitutive aspect of created goodness, then we may understand human relationships not necessarily as frameworks of domination (though there are certainly cases where they are), but rather networks for connection which are as crucial to human life as the oxygen we breathe. Instead of being a violation of myself, being-with-others is to be human. To be 'by myself,' to be "locked in myself, out of inner contact with others--loneliness--is against the human grain."27 The "distance" and "distantiality" (BT,164) which is a characteristic of Being-with-one-another are not "disturbing" gaps, but rather the "wild spaces of love", which is another way to read, another way to construe the world, an alternative interpretation of interpretation (and intersubjectivity).

Love as gift creates a space-which-is-meeting, inviting partnership and co-birthing, and fundamentally calling into question the deconstructive idea that


26 Idem., "Crossing the Threshold," p. 41. This will be further explored in connection with Levinas in the following chapter. Paul Ricoeur may also be included here, when he asserts that it is "difficult to imagine situations of interaction in which one individual does not exert power over another by the very fact of acting." Thus, "violence taints all the relations of interaction." (Oneself as Another, trans. Kathleen Blamey [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992]: 220, 351.) But why is this so hard to imagine, unless one begins with an ontology of domination? Could it not be otherwise? Could we not imagine differently?

27 "Be(com)ing," p. 161.
structures are necessarily violent. It suggests a new thematization of meaning and truth as good connections, in contrast to both modernity’s power, control and judgement, and postmodernism’s disruption and dissemination of any claim of entitlement to meaning and truth...[W]e have an invitation to meet and sojourn together in the wild spaces of love as alternatives to both modernist distancing or domination, and postmodern fluidity and fusion.28

In this reading, the Other is not necessarily a diminution of my being or that by which I am dominated, but rather the Other who enriches my being.

With regard to hermeneutics, then, we recover the traditionedness of human be-ing from the realm of 'inauthentic everyday existence' to be honoured as an important and enabling aspect of human intersubjectivity. The community of which I am a part is not the 'they' who distort our interpretations, but rather precisely the community which comprises the tradition(s) of which I am a part—the community which taught me to speak, read and write (my 'linguistic tradition') and thereby opens possibilities for interpretation. It is 'they' who taught me to interpret, and without 'them' I would be lost; in fact, I am never without 'them'. To listen to the 'they' is simply to be human, though it will certainly be admitted that at times listening to the dominant interpretation is violent (as, for instance, in Germany in the 1930s). But it is not necessarily violent to read the newspaper or ride public transit as Heidegger contends (BT,164).

This other reading of intersubjectivity and the spatiality which necessitates hermeneutics is indeed an interpreting otherwise than Heidegger; but it is also a reading of Heidegger against Heidegger, a "demythologizing" of Heidegger which disrupts his construal of human relations with his understanding of the constitutive nature of hermeneutics for human be-ing.29 The goal


29 This is the project that Caputo sets out to accomplish in Demythologizing Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 1-8.
of this demythologizing is not the elimination of myth, as Caputo emphasizes, but the production of another myth, a myth other than that of primordial violence. To interpret life as creation is just such a myth, a good story (eu-angelion), a tale of healing. Creation is a liberating Hebrew narrative told from the margins—from exile—and is precisely what Caputo (following Derrida) describes as a "jewgreek" myth of justice. Because it is a myth—an interpretation, a construal—some will be quick to dismiss creation. But it must be recognized that Heidegger's tale of fallenness and violence is also a myth, a hermeneutical decision haunted by undecidability. We must choose between myths and interpretations, for

it is not a question of getting beyond myth or of laying aside mythologizing altogether, which is no more possible than getting beyond or laying aside metaphysics, but rather of inventing new and more salutary myths, or of recovering other and older myths, myths to counter the destructive myths of violence, domination, patriarchy, and hierarchy.

As John Milbank has argued, Heidegger and Derrida's "differential ontology is but one more mythos" to which we offer a counter-myth, "an 'ontology of peace', which conceives differences as analogically related, rather than equivocally at variance." Milbank asks precisely the question which I have put to Heidegger's construal of intersubjectivity:

> [D]oes one need to interpret every disturbance, every event, as an event of war? Only, I would argue, if one has transcendentally understood all differences as negatively related...If one makes no such presupposition, then it would be possible to understand the act of affirmative difference, in its passing over to the

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30 See the work by Richard Middleton referred to above in the Introduction.


32 Ibid., p. 3.

other, as an invitation to the other to embrace this difference because of its objective desirability.\textsuperscript{34}

If we begin with a different decision, with a decision to interpret and believe differently, then the relationships between entities, which are the condition for hermeneutics, may be understood as primordially and fundamentally 'good' or 'peaceful' (Milbank), yet nevertheless open to the possibility of violence. But violence, in contrast to Heidegger, would not be a constitutive aspect of such relations; its intrusion, in war, is read "as an absolute intrusion, an ontological anomaly" which has no 'place' in creation.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{HEIDEGGER'S DISCLAIMERS}

Thus far I have suggested another reading of intersubjectivity in an attempt to read otherwise than Heidegger's myth of individualism and latent solipsism which undergirds his construal of the fallenness of Dasein. But there would seem to be yet another myth at work behind his discourse on fallenness, viz. the traditional Christian doctrine of the Fall and original sin. Of course, I have misread him, for Heidegger's early corpus is filled with disclaimers which preclude just such a suggestion. The interpretation of fallenness offered in \textit{Being and Time} is "purely ontological in its aims, and is far removed from any moralizing critique of everyday Dasein."(BT,211) Further, the category of fallenness and its manifestation in idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity is not meant to "express any negative evaluation" (BT,220,265); it is

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 289.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 294.
simply part of Dasein's essential ontological structure (BT,224). "So neither," he continues, "must we take the fallenness of Dasein as a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status'. Not only do we lack any experience of this ontically, but ontologically we lack any possibilities or clues for interpreting it." (BT,220) Dasein has not fallen from something or somewhere, but is rather always already fallen—essentially and existentially—"into the world."

Above all, the ontological analysis of the fundamental structures of Dasein must not be confused with an ontical/theological discourse on the Fall of humanity.

It follows that our existential-ontological interpretation makes no ontical assertion about the 'corruption of human Nature', not because the necessary evidence is lacking, but because the problematic of this interpretation is prior to any assertion about corruption or incorruption. Falling is conceived ontologically as a kind of motion. Ontically, we have not decided whether man is 'drunk with sin' and in the status corruptionis, whether he walks in the status integritatis, or whether he finds himself in an intermediate stage, the status gratiae. But in so far as any faith or 'world view' makes any such assertions, and if it asserts anything about Dasein as Being-in-the-world, it must come back to the existential structures which we have set forth...(BT,224)

The characteristics which Heidegger describes as fallen are essential to Dasein, and therefore precede any theological commentary on sin; the interpretation of fallenness in Being and Time is fundamentally neutral, before any faith commitment and hence untainted by it. He was most emphatic about this point in the lecture course of SS 1925, where he adamantly asserts that,

What is involved here is a pure consideration of structures, which precedes all such considerations. Our consideration must be differentiated quite sharply from any theological consideration. It is possible, perhaps necessary, that all of these structures will recur in a theological anthropology. I am in no position to judge how, since I understand nothing of such things. I am of course familiar with theology, but it is still quite a way from that to an understanding. Since this analysis time and again incurs this misunderstanding, let me emphasize that it proposes no covert theology and in principle has nothing to do with theology.36

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36 History of the Concept of Time, p. 283.
Across the campus at Marburg, Rudolf Bultmann was buying the story—the tale that lies behind his own myth of demythologizing, the goal of which was to sort through the layers of myth in the New Testament to unveil the essential structures of the gospel to express to the modern world. Because, for Bultmann, it is patently obvious that it is "impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles," it is necessary to strip the Kerygma of its mythical framework to arrive at a non-mythical expression of the gospel. The three-layered cosmos, the notion that death is the punishment of sin, the doctrine of the atonement, and the resurrection of Jesus are all problematic aspects of the New Testament which are unacceptable to "modern man." Bultmann's project was to disclose the New Testament interpretation of human existence, and to then determine whether that understanding is true. The faith which claims that this understanding is true "ought not to be tied down to the imagery of New Testament mythology."

What happens in the process of this demythologization is a remarkable tale; surprisingly enough, when all the demythologizing is said and done, Bultmann is startled by the fact that the New Testament, in mythical language, is saying precisely what Heidegger was saying in the earlier twentieth century in the neutral language of philosophy. "Above all," he remarked, "Heidegger's existentialist analysis of the ontological structure of being would seem to be no


38 Ibid., p. 11.
more than a secularized, philosophical version of the New Testament view of human life. "39

But because Bultmann was buying Heidegger's story about the neutrality and a-theological nature of his philosophy, Bultmann knew that it wasn't a secularization of the New Testament. As he goes on to say,

Some critics have objected that I am borrowing Heidegger's categories and forcing them upon the New Testament. I am afraid this only shows that they are blinding their eyes to the real problem. I mean, one should rather be startled that philosophy is saying the same thing as the New Testament and saying it quite independently.40

Thus, when Bultmann finally arrived at the fundamental structures of the New Testament kerygma as encapsulated in anxiety and authenticity, he was assured that this was not simply mythology, but part of the structures of human existence since Heidegger was saying the same thing, and saying it 'quite independently.'41

Heidegger's myth of religious neutrality in philosophy is rooted in his earlier methodological work where he developed the notion of "methodological atheism." This is not a simple atheism, but perhaps even a Christian atheism, the atheism of one who has a knack for being both a philosopher and a Christian, which means being both an atheist and yet religious.

What is at stake is the relationship between faith and philosophy, and it is here that Heidegger preaches atheism. For instance, in Winstersemester 1921/22, Heidegger insisted:


40 Ibid., p. 25, emphasis added.

41 Bultmann's project was at root apologetical. In essence, he was working with a revised natural theology, whereby he wanted to strip the NT of myth and arrive at its interpretation of existence. To then demonstrate that this interpretation of existence was true, Bultmann turns to the 'pure' discipline of philosophy to act as arbiter. This is not entirely unlike the traditional Thomist project of turning to philosophy, i.e., natural reason, to confirm the preambles of faith.
Questioningness [Fraglichkeit] is not religious, but it may nevertheless lead me to a position where I must make a religious decision. I do not behave religiously in philosophizing, even if I as a philosopher can be a religious man. 'But here is the art': to philosophize and thereby to be genuinely religious, i.e., to take up factically its worldly, historical task in philosophizing, in action and a world of action, not in religious ideology and fantasy. Philosophy, in its radical self-positing questioningness, must be in principle a-theistic. (GA 61, 197)

Philosophy is radical questioning; but to really question—to push one’s questioning to the brink of the abyss—one must be an atheist, for faith gives answers too soon. Even into the next decade, in 1935, Heidegger maintained this principle of methodological atheism, arguing that

Anyone for whom the Bible is divine revelation and truth has the answer to the question, 'Why are there essents rather than nothing?' even before it is asked: everything that is, except God himself, has been created by him...One who holds to such a faith can in a way participate in the asking of our question, but he cannot really question without ceasing to be a believer and taking all of the consequences of such a step. He will only be able to act 'as if'...

Faith and philosophy are mortal enemies; in fact, "[f]aith is so absolutely the mortal enemy that philosophy does not even begin to want in any way to do battle with it." The philosopher does not believe—cannot believe, because faith is in radical opposition to the very nature of philosophy as questioning. If philosophy is going to "make factual life speak for itself" it must

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42 Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959): 7. John Caputo sees a discontinuity between this critique and those of the early Freiburg lectures, but I would suggest that both critiques of a Christian philosophy are rooted in Heidegger's understanding of philosophy as radical questioning. See Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, pp. 43, 174-178. Incidentally, it is precisely the privileging of the 'question' which is questioned in Derrida’s *Of Spirit*, a line of questioning that leads him eventually to faith (OS,129-130).

43 Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenologie und Theologie*, p. 32. This opposition is rooted in Paul’s discourse on the foolishness of faith (1 Cor. 1:18-25) as taken up by Luther. For a discussion, see John van Buren, "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," pp. 167-168.

be "fundamentally atheistic." (PIA,367) That is why the idea of a 'Christian philosophy' is a "square circle" and a "round square." Further, and most importantly for the present consideration, this is why the ontological analyses of fallenness, care, and conscience must not be confused with theological accounts. Heidegger's discourse is a "pure" one, untainted or decontaminated of any vestige of faith and religion.

HEIDEGGER'S FAITH

I, for one, am not buying the story. As the research of Kisiel, van Buren and Caputo has demonstrated, Heidegger did not come upon these structures quite as independently as Bultmann had assumed. From 1917 on, Heidegger turned to reading Protestant theology and became particularly enamoured with the work of Martin Luther.46 His Aristotle-Introduction took its task of "phenomenological destruction" from "Luther's early theological period"; indeed, the entire analysis was rooted in the implications of "Reformation theology." (PIA,372-373) Further, it is in Luther's Lectures on Romans, Heidelberg Disputation, and Commentary on Genesis that we find many of the terms used in Heidegger's description of fallenness including 'fall,' 'care,' 'anxiety,' 'flight,' and 'conscience.'47

45 Phenomenologie und Theologie, p. 32; Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 7.

46 See the bibliography of Heidegger's reading list on the phenomenology of religion (1917-1919) in Kisiel, Genesis, pp. 525-526.

47 van Buren, "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," p. 170.
It is not necessary in the present context to recite the mass of data pulled together by Kisiel and van Buren. It is now beyond question in Heidegger studies that his theological reading in Paul, Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard had a decisive influence on Heidegger's early thought, a point that he himself maintained in 1959 when he remarked that without his theological background he would never have come upon the topic of hermeneutics. However, Heidegger insisted that his philosophical conclusions were reached 'quite independently' of theological or religious influences. After all, this is philosophy, and philosophy has nothing to do with faith. It seems, perhaps, that Heidegger most adamantly denies that which lies at the very heart of his project.

But once again, I am not buying the story, precisely because I do not buy the story of methodological atheism. *Being and Time* amounts to precisely what some had suggested but Bultmann rejected, viz., a secularization (Heidegger would say a 'formalization') of the New Testament. As Caputo well summarizes,

> When Christian theologians looked into the pages of *Being and Time* they found themselves staring at their own image—formalized, ontologized, or, what amounts to the same thing, "demythologized."...When Bultmann "applied" *Being and Time* to Christian theology he was "de-formalizing" the existential analytic and articulating it in terms of a historically specific, existentiell ideal, viz., historical Christianity. The reason this deformalization worked so well was that the existential analytic was in the first place and in no small part itself the issue of a formalization of Christian factual life. Bultmann was largely reversing the

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49 Cp. BT,151: "Perhaps when Dasein addresses itself in the way which is closest to itself, it always says 'I am this entity', and in the long run says this loudest when it is 'not' this entity."
process that had brought *Being and Time* about in the first place.\(^5\)

Once this is appreciated, then it turns out that Heidegger's interpretation of fallenness—his interpretation of interpretation and his construal of intersubjectivity—is not so "neutral" or "pure" after all, but rather a myth which invites de- and remythologization.

At this juncture we may set about a second demythologization of Heidegger, reading Heidegger against Heidegger, dispelling the myth of religious neutrality. For is philosophy so pure? Is not the notion of an autonomous philosophy precisely the demon that Heidegger's own work was engaged in battling? Was it not Heidegger who insisted on the role of presuppositions and preunderstanding in philosophy? Is not this excising of faith from Dasein akin to the reduction to a transcendental-logical ego, the animal that Heidegger declared to be mythical? Can I stop believing when I philosophize? Do I?

It is here that I would propose that Heidegger, when discussing faith and philosophy, draws back from where the trajectory of his own thought would lead. The whole of Heidegger's early work is bent on demonstrating that we are not disembodied egos, but rather human beings who are in the world and cannot extrapolate ourselves outside of that environment. Philosophy, then, is not a pure, unalloyed, transcendental science, though it is a theoretical discipline

\(^5\) *Demythologizing Heidegger*, p. 173. Derrida makes a similar observation: "The same Heideggerian thinking often consists, notably in *Sein und Zeit*, in repeating on an ontological level Christian themes and texts that have been 'de-Christianized.' Such themes and texts are then presented as ontic, anthropological, or contrived attempts that come to a sudden halt on the way to an ontological recovery of their own originary possibility (whether that be, for example, the *status corruptionis*, the difference between the authentic and inauthentic or the fall [Verfallen] into the One, whether it be the *sollicitudo* and care, the pleasure of seeing and of curiosity, of the authentic or vulgar concept of time, of the texts of the Vulgate, of Saint Augustine or of Kierkegaard)." See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 23.
As Ms own work has demonstrated, theory is not free from prejudice, from "extra-philosophical" commitments, and yet it is precisely this young Heidegger who insists on excluding the influence of faith from philosophy. But do we not find at this juncture yet another vestige of Enlightenment rationalism in the work of this one who played such a pivotal role in its dismantlement? Would not a more insistent hermeneutic phenomenology honour the role played by faith in philosophizing?

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT
OTHERWISE THAN HEIDEGGER

My goal in the preceding section was to unveil the myth—the religious commitment—which is at work behind Heidegger's purportedly neutral reading of intersubjectivity and hermeneutics. This was in order to open space for a different myth, an other story of intersubjectivity. But secondly, having appreciated that Heidegger's interpretation of interpretation owes its impetus to the Christian tradition, it must be emphasized that this influence comes from a particular side of the Christian tradition, a tradition within the tradition, albeit the most powerful tradition. The genealogy of this tradition stems back to Paul, as interpreted by Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard, a lineage traced in Being and Time: "Augustine...Luther...Kierkegaard..." (BT,492n.iv), echoing Luther's genealogy in the opening of the Heidelberg Disputation, where he appeals to "St. Paul, the especially chosen vessel and
instrument of Christ, and also from St. Augustine, his most trustworthy interpreter. Thus Heidegger's reading of historical Christianity and the New Testament was through the lens of a particular interpretive tradition, a tradition which excludes other tellings of the story. While Kisiel and van Buren claim that Heidegger was recovering "Primal Christianity", I would ask "Whose primal Christianity?"

In the chapters that follow, I will suggest that it is precisely Heidegger's dependence on this interpretive tradition which leads to his devaluing of human be-ing by absolutizing and ontologizing the fall and its effect on interpretation. My goal will be to read the New Testament otherwise than Heidegger, through the lens of a different--and therefore suppressed and marginalized--interpretive tradition other than this privileged line, whose genealogy includes the names of Pelagius, Arminius and John Wesley, uncovered by an archaeology of subjugated knowledges, voices from the margin. This alternate or counter-history itself offers an other reading of Paul, questioning the Lutheran interpretive lineage marked above. That is, Heidegger's retrieval is not a simple retrieval of 'primal Christianity'; it is not even a simple appropriation of the Pauline tradition, for Paul and the Pauline tradition itself constitute a pluriform corpus.

While Heidegger followed Luther in his destruktions of Aristotelian Christianity, he left its Platonism, via Augustine, untouched. Hence to be in the world is to be fallen, to be absorbed in the world. The Fall is a rather Plotinian fall into the garden itself, inasmuch as the

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52 In this tracing of an alternative history, I follow Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in Critique and Power, pp. 17-46.
world/creation is essentially and structurally fallen, and hence the state of affairs that necessitates hermeneutics is fallen and violent. Following Luther in SS 1923, Heidegger emphasized that the Fall is "as such constitutive!" (GA 63, 27) and in his notes to the course describes the Fall as "absolute" and refers "above all" to Paul (GA 63, 111). Being-in-the-world, for both Luther and Heidegger, is characterized by an essential fallenness, a notion which both attribute to Paul. The attribution of such ideas to Paul is not entirely without warrant. In fact, as I will suggest in chapter five, there is a marked dualism which plagues the Pauline corpus, particularly his conceptions of the world and creation. As Jurgen Becker has observed, in Paul, as in Heidegger, there is no consideration of a world before a Fall; Paul's Adam is already a representative of a fallen humanity. And while this would represent only a 'side' of Paul, it is a side of the tradition which persists in Luther and Heidegger, to the extent that Milbank hears echoes of Valentinus:

In trying to discuss the ontological difference in non-metaphysical, and non-ontological terms, Heidegger seems only to have succeeded in inventing his own religion. Indeed, in the notion of an ontological rather than a historical fall, there are many echoes of Valentinian gnosis, with its idea of primal disaster within the divine pleroma, or of Jacob Boehme, with his ideas of evil as arising within the workings of desire in the Trinity itself.

Hermeneutics, then, is an inescapable aspect of human be-ing, but the Fall is also a constitutive or structural moment of the world. While this is a reading that draws on a side of Paul or the Pauline tradition, my creational-pneumatic hermeneutic attempts a retrieval of an

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53 Edith Wyschogrod also suggests a neo-Platonic moment in Heidegger. See her Saints and Postmodernism, pp. 90-92.


55 Milbank, Theology & Social Theory, p. 302.
alternate, non-Platonic interpretive tradition, also stemming from Paul, but then tracing its
genealogy down a more marginal path. In this tradition (which will be discussed more fully in
chapter five), the Fall is not a structural or ontological aspect of the world but rather a historical
and accidental brokenness which befalls a good creation. As such, hermeneutics is not construed
as necessarily violent but rather as the space which opens the possibility for connection.
Interpretation is not a sign of falling into the Garden but rather an invitation to commune with
the Other.
CHAPTER FOUR

EDENIC VIOLENCE

Heidegger’s interpretation of interpretation represents the seed for what I earlier described as a violent mediation model of hermeneutics, which affirms the ubiquity of interpretation as an inescapable aspect of being human, but at the same time construes such conditions as the source of inevitable violence. "In the beginning is hermeneutics," Derrida writes;¹ that is, in Eden, in creation, there is interpretation, the negotiation of human be-ing, Adam interpreting (and misinterpreting) Eve (and God). However, Derrida’s interpretation of interpretation is not yet my creational-pneumatic model, for, as this chapter will attempt to demonstrate, when he asserts that 'In the beginning there is hermeneutics,’ he is simultaneously declaring that 'In the beginning there is violence.’ While interpretation is in Eden, as opposed to the models in Part One which relegated hermeneutics to an accidental postlapsarian history, Eden itself is always already contaminated by the Fall, albeit a fall within and not a fall from. The garden is always already plagued by violence and human intersubjective relations are ‘essentially’ and necessarily a violation of the other. To be human is to be a savage hermeneut,

always already and inescapably culpable for reading and thereby doing violence.

In this chapter, I want to explore Derrida's interpretation of hermeneutics focusing especially on the early *Of Grammatology*, but also making reference to other essays. The first part of the chapter will be largely an exposition of the link between writing, violence and intersubjectivity in Derrida (and, secondarily, Emmanuel Levinas), followed by a critique of Derrida's infinitist metaphysics of the supplement, attempting to catch sight of a spirit/ghost which continues to haunt his proposal.

**DERRIDA'S READING OF WRITING**

It must be emphasized that, when we turn to Derrida's construal of writing and interpretation, his discourse is a sustained reading of a particular philosophical and theological tradition which then shapes his own 'constructive' proposals. Thus, his thoughts on writing are expressed against the horizon of what he describes as the 'logocentric' tradition of Western metaphysics. It is a painstaking task to sort out the voices in this deconstructive mode of criticism, but such labour is necessary in order to avoid attributing to Derrida precisely what he is dismantling.

From Plato's *Phaedrus* to Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* to Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, Derrida sees the Western philosophical or onto-theo-logical tradition privileging the *voice* over *writing*, sanctioning the voice as the site of immediate access to "full presence," where presence is linked to comprehension and the denial of mystery. Western explorations into the relationship between thought, speech and writing would seem to be a series of footnotes to
Aristotle’s dictum:

Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images.2

Speech 'directly symbolizes' thought, whereas written words are symbols of symbols, twice removed from reality, site of a degenerative secondarity. In the framework of Saussurean linguistics, speech is the signifier of a signified, whereas writing is signifier of a signifier.3 The voice (phone) is thought to be a mirror of reality, delivering the world as it "really" is. In this history of logo/phonocentrism, writing is confined to a secondary and instrumental position, translator of a full speech that was fully present (present to itself, to its signified, to the other, the very condition of the theme of presence in general), technics in the service of language, spokesman, interpreter of an originary speech itself shielded from interpretation. (OG,8)

In the tradition, then, writing is linked to interpretation and mediation, whereas speech is thought to have unmediated access to 'things', apart from interpretation. "The epoch of the logos," he continues, "thus debases writing considered as the mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning."(OG,12-13) "Thus, within this epoch, reading and writing, the production or interpretation of signs, the text in general as fabric of signs, allow themselves

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to be confined within secondariness." (OG,14) Writing, and so interpretation, is relegated to a fallen secondarity and derivative status: "a sign signifying a signifier itself signifying an eternal verity, eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos." (OG,15) Inasmuch as speech is thought to be free of interpretation, human intersubjective relations are also thought to be free of interpretive superstructures and the mediacy of hermeneutics, a plague brought on by writing. It is this "contamination by writing" that is denounced by the preacher from Geneva (Saussure) as a violent heresy, "an archetypal violence: eruption of the outside within the inside," a violence brought about by the body’s usurping of the soul (OG,34-35).

Writing, in the tradition, comes upon language as a violence, though perhaps, as Rousseau intimates, a necessary violence, a supplement to speech which ends up replacing speech (OG,144ff.). Writing, while an inevitable development, marks the corruption of the purity of speech; it is exterior to language, accidental, on the outside making its way in. "Rousseau," Derrida remarks, "considers writing as a dangerous means, a menacing aid, the critical response to a situation of distress. When Nature, as self-proximity, comes to be forbidden or interrupted, when speech fails to protect presence, writing becomes necessary. It must be added to the word urgently." Writing is "not natural. It diverts the immediate presence of thought to speech into representation." (OG,144) Writing is derivative because representative.

This logocentrism of the Occident is the horizon against which Derrida takes up his project. His deconstruction sets out to disturb this myth of a pure voice—a speech uninhibited by interpretation and mediation—by unveiling the interpretedness of all human discourse; that is, "the secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifieds in general, affects them always already." (OG,7) The signified is always already a signifier, so
'signifier of the signifier'—the traditional definition of writing—"no longer defines accidental doubling and fallen secondarity"; on the contrary, it is the very origin of language (OG,7). Derrida does not question the traditional definition of writing, and its link to violence; what he is challenging is the ascription of this only to writing "in the ordinary sense."

Deconstructing this tradition will therefore not consist of reversing it, of making writing innocent. Rather of showing why the violence of writing does not befall an innocent language. There is an originary violence of writing because language is first, in a sense I shall gradually reveal, writing. "Usurpation" has always already begun. (OG,37)

His 'revelation' to us is that there is a writing—and hence a necessity for interpretation—which precedes speech, which he describes as "arche-writing" (OG,56), a writing of which all language is composed. Writing, rather than being exterior to a pure speech, is always already interior to language, essentially rather than accidentally, as its very possibility (OG,52).

While the logocentric tradition debases writing as 'accidental' and a 'fall' inasmuch as it is mediated and re-presentative, Derrida pushes this back to language itself. While Rousseau understood the supplement of writing as exterior, Derrida's analysis attempts to reveal that supplementarity is inherent to language, that there is always already mediation, that 'in the beginning, there is hermeneutics.' "There is," he insists, in italics, "nothing outside of the text," no referent at which language 'stops.' (OG,158) There has never been anything but writing; "there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the 'real' supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc." (OG,159) Rather than marking an accidental moment, supplementarity is a structural matter (OG,219); "Originary differance is supplementarity as structure." (OG,167)
The 'fall'\(^4\) then, for Derrida, is structural—a theme which recurs elsewhere. In the collection of "Envois" in *The Post Card*, for instance, he emphasizes that "as soon as there is, there is differance...and there is postal maneuvering, relays, delay, anticipation, destination, telecommunicating network, the possibility, and therefore the fatal necessity of going astray, etc." (PC,66, emphasis added) But when did a possibility become a "fatal necessity"? Why, because it is possible that a letter will not arrive, is it necessary that it not arrive?

Derrida admits that he cannot demonstrate that something never arrives at its destination; rather, he will always say, "a letter can always not arrive at its destination." That is certainly a weaker reading, but in the end, he doesn’t really mean it. He betrays such in a post script (to a post script), noting that "in order to be able not to arrive, it must bear within itself a force and a structure, a straying of the destination, such that it must also not arrive in any way." (PC,123) The problem, for Derrida, is built-in to the very *structure* of the postal system; which is also to say that it is an inherent element of the structure of the sign and the system of signifiers. The "possibility" of going astray is a structural matter, which means that it must (necessarily) be the case.

The mediation of hermeneutics, which the tradition relegated only to writing 'in the ordinary sense’, is pushed back to the very 'origin’ of language. But for Derrida, this means

\(^4\) This must be surrounded with a careful discourse. Admittedly, Derrida appropriates the language of fallenness from the logocentric tradition which construed writing as accidental, fallen from a pure and originary full speech. However, Derrida retains such a category, only pushing it back to the 'origin.' The 'fall' is 'original'—again, something of a Plotinian moment as in Heidegger. For a similar suggestion, see Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, pp. 21-24, 90-92.
that the origin is fractured from the beginning.  

If we consider the difference which fractured the origin, it must be said that this history, which is decadence and degeneracy through and through, had no prehistory. Degeneration as separation, severing of voice and song, has always already begun. We shall see that Rousseau’s entire text describes origin as the beginning of the end, as the inaugural decadence. Yet, in spite of that description, the text twists about in a sort of oblique effort to act as if degeneration were not prescribed in the genesis and as if evil supervened upon a good origin. (OG, 199)

Derrida’s project is to give up acting "as if," and face the reality of originary decadence. Thus Of Grammatology, he suggests, might be read as a "theory of the structural necessity of the abyss." (OG, 163) Arche-writing constitutes the fissure and rupture at the origin of language, the "harsh law of spacing" which is "an originary accessory and an essential accident." (OG, 200)

Throughout this deconstruction, then, Derrida continues to accept the traditional analysis of writing as representative, mediated, and therefore calling for interpretation; his 'twist' (tours, trick, turn, trope) is to emphasize that these elements are constitutive of language itself, and therefore he posits an arche- or preoriginary writing. A second aspect of the tradition which he appropriates is the link between writing and violence. While Rousseau and Claude Lévi-Strauss understand writing as a violation of fully present speech, Derrida contends that arche-writing, before speech, retains this violent character. 'Not for a moment' challenging Rousseau or Levi-Strauss, he emphasizes that violence does not supervene from without upon an innocent language in order to surprise it, a language that suffers the aggression of writing as the accident of its disease, its defeat and its fall; but is the originary violence of a language which is always already writing. Rousseau and Levi-Strauss are not for a moment to be challenged when they relate the power of writing to the exercise of violence. But

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5 "The breaking of the Tables articulates, first of all, a rupture within God as the origin of history." ("Edmond Jabes," p. 67.)
radicalizing this theme, no longer considering this violence as derivative with respect to naturally innocent speech, one reverses the entire sense of a proposition—the unity of violence and writing. (OG, 106)

Rather than being accidental, violence is originary; thus we may 'write' "writing/violence"—"violence is writing...A fatal accident which is nothing but history itself." (OG, 135) In a necessarily related manner, to read and interpret is also to do violence.

**INTERSUBJECTIVE VIOLENCE**

The violence of writing/interpretation, or writing/interpretation as violence, is rooted in the primordial war, "the essential confrontation that opens communication between peoples and cultures." (OG, 107) This consideration arises in the midst of an extended dialogue with Claude Levi-Strauss on the impossibility of the proper name. The springboard for the discussion is a page from Levi-Strauss's notebooks, compiled during his stay with the Nambikwara on an anthropological study—which was complicated by the fact that the Nambikwara are not allowed to use proper names. European visitors, then, impose nicknames upon them for sake of convenience. But as he recounts,

One day, when I was playing with a group of children, a little girl was struck by one of her comrades. She ran to me for protection and began to whisper something, a "great secret," in my ear. As I did not understand I had to ask her to repeat it over and over again. Eventually, her adversary found out what was going on, came up to me in a rage, and tried in her turn to tell me what seemed to be another secret. After a little while I was able to get to the bottom of the

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6 Cp. Foucault's inversion of the Baconian maxim "Knowledge is Power" to "Power is Knowledge." But as with Derrida, Foucault's is not a simple inversion of identification but rather a question of relation. He makes this point in "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," in *Critique and Power*, p. 133.
incident. The first little girl was trying to tell me her enemy's name, and when the enemy found out what was going on she decided to tell me the other girl's name, by way of reprisal. (cited in OG, 111)

As Lévi-Strauss interprets the scene, this violent naming is occasioned by a foreigner, a spectator from the West. It is a violence induced when natural goodness is interrupted by something or someone from outside. The purity of the tribe is contaminated by the presence of an outsider. From this Lévi-Strauss draws a "Writing Lesson": the violence of naming, occasioned by the foreigner, is akin to the violence of writing, itself foreign to language, representing its exteriority, its 'outside'. But as such, the violence of writing is **accidental**.

Just as Derrida challenges the construal of writing as 'outside' language, so analogously he deconstructs the notion of violence as accident befalling a fundamental goodness. Rather, the proper name represents the first violence. **Before** 'empirical' violence there is the violence of arche-writing, which stands as its possibility. The impossibility of the absolutely proper name—and hence every naming is a violation of uniqueness—is inscribed in the very structure of language.

The death of absolutely proper naming, recognizing in a language the other as pure other, invoking it as what it is, is the death of the pure idiom reserved for the unique. Anterior to the possibility of violence in the current and derivative sense, the sense used in "A Writing Lesson," there is, as the space of its possibility, the violence of arche-writing, the violence of difference, of classification, and of the system of appellations. (OG, 110)

Inasmuch as writing/language does not allow the other to stand as 'pure' other, its naming is a violation of the other, a violence done to the other. Further, this is an inescapable violence, one essential to being human, for we cannot step outside of language nor can we refrain from
There was in fact a first violence to be named. To name, to give names that it will on occasion be forbidden to pronounce, such is the originary violence of language which consists in inscribing within a difference, in classifying, in suspending the vocative absolute. To think the unique within the system, to inscribe it there, such is the gesture of the arche-writing: arche-violence, loss of the proper, of absolute proximity, of self-presence, in truth the loss of what has never taken place, of a self-presence which has never been given but only dreamed of and always already split, repeated, incapable of appearing to itself except in its own disappearance. (OG,112)

A first violence to be named; a first violence: to be named—a violence beginning at birth, a violation of the parents against their children which plagues them throughout their existence, one re-enacted each day.

It is, in the end (or rather from the beginning), a violence inherent to intersubjective relations, a violence of being-with-others, an almost familial violence. Writing, i.e., arche-writing, is "the exploitation of man by man." (OG,119) This is followed by a confession: "If it is true, as I in fact believe, that writing cannot be thought outside of the horizon of intersubjective violence, is there anything, even science, that radically escapes it?" (OG,127)

Here we have Derrida’s Confessions, following in the tradition of Rousseau (and Augustine?), his profession of faith, what he 'in fact' believes: writing cannot be thought outside of the horizon of intersubjective violence. Intersubjectivity marks the very origin of the self, but an origin which is at once an originary corruption: "Affecting oneself by another presence, one

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7 This is also why Derrida believes that negative theology—which attempts to honour God by not speaking about him—remains a violent discourse, for silence is an impossible ideal. See Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," in Derrida and Negative Theology, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992): 73-142. I have criticized this valorization of silence in Derrida and Caputo in the second half of "How to Avoid Not Speaking: Attestations."
corrupts oneself [makes oneself other] by oneself." (OG, 153) Once again a confession: "I do not profess that writing may not and does not in fact play this role [of violence], but from that to attribute to writing [in the ordinary sense] the specificity of this role and to conclude that speech is exempt from it, is an abyss that one must not leap over so lightly." (OG, 133)

It is in his construal of intersubjectivity that we get a glimpse of how Levinasian Derrida’s thought has been throughout its course since 1967, rather than 'shifting' to such in the later work. With Derrida (and before Derrida), Levinas shares a philosophical commitment to the primordiality of war and thus the relationship with the Other is one of violence (as in Heidegger). That war is the result of a totality, of the Other being crammed into a system against her will, made to 'fit'. Thus when Derrida remarks that language prevents the other from being recognized as pure other, he echoes Levinas' opening to *Totality and Infinity*, where he offers "War does not manifest exteriority and the other as other; it destroys the identity of the same. The visage of being that shows itself in war is fixed in the concept of totality, which dominates Western philosophy." (TI, 21) Levinas’ project is to show that this totality is interrupted by infinity; the interiority of the egoist self is disturbed by the exteriority of the Other, the transcendent face of the Other which comes from 'on high'.

For Levinas, this relationship with the Other is "primordial", which we may roughly translate (in accord with previous terminology used in this thesis) 'constitutive of human being.' Infinity is "as primordial as totality." (TI, 23) This means, then, that totality is primordial, and inasmuch as totality represents violence we come upon an "essential violence." (TI, 27) While

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8 The influence of Levinas on Derrida’s later 'ethical' work is widely recognized. See Jacques Derrida, *FL and The Gift of Death*. In *OG*, Derrida attributes his notion of the 'trace' to Levinas (p. 70).
I am always already called to responsibility for the Other, which means that intersubjectivity is 'essential' to human be-ing, that call is one which always comes violently upon me, disturbing my egoistic "enjoyment." The analysis of intersubjective relations begins with the purported necessary egoism of the self, of the 'I'.

In enjoyment I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone. Not against the Others, not "as for me..."--but entirely deaf to the Other, outside of all communication and all refusal to communicate--without ears, like a hungry stomach. (TI, 134)

It is because I am egoist in my enjoyment, he argues, that the face of the Other comes upon me violently, taking me hostage, disturbing my "being at home with oneself." (TI, 39) "To be I, atheist, at home with oneself, separated, happy, created--these are synonyms." (TI, 148)

However, it is precisely the interiority of enjoyment which is the condition for the possibility of the Other's coming upon me; "Interiority must be at the same time closed and open." (TI, 149)

Levinas contends that because of the enjoyment/egoism of the 'I', the face of the Other comes as a violation. But in Otherwise than Being, the order of necessity seems to be reversed: I must be egoist because the Other comes as a violation. Of course, I know I have things backwards; I know that the Other comes violently upon me precisely because I am joyously egoist. That is, Levinas insists upon the violence of the Other coming upon me given that I am egoistic. His descriptive analysis has disclosed that I am complacent in my interiority and enjoyment, and therefore the Other comes as a burglar, as a thief in the night. But it would seem that Levinas sometimes flips the order. Note his comment:

[Signification] is the passivity of being-for-another, which is possible only in the form of giving the very bread I eat. But for this one has to ['must'] first enjoy one's bread, not in order to have the merit of giving it, but in order to give it
with one’s heart, to give oneself in giving it. Enjoyment is an eluctable moment of sensibility. (OB, 72)

Here the necessity of egoism preceding the passivity of signification is posited in order to make sense of Levinas’ thesis. It is necessary for his thesis; but of course it is also a given, or given. We are egoist, he describes (and never prescribes). But is this the case? What I am attempting to point out is that Levinas’ entire thesis regarding the violent or asymmetrical relationship with the Other assumes his discussion of enjoyment and the egoism of ‘me’. But could my living be described as otherwise than egoistic enjoyment, as beyond interiority? Must we assume his description in correct? Is it necessary?

This same construal lies at the heart of his critique of hermeneutics (as does Derrida’s). When the face of the Other is taken “as a theme for interpretation” it is violated and placed in a totality of involvements rather than announcing itself kath-auto (TI, 65). Every thematization or conceptualization is necessarily an act of violence reducing the other to the same. “Thematization and conceptualization,” he continues, “which moreover are inseparable, are not peace with the other but suppression or possession of the other.” (TI, 46) At the same time, this thematization is “inevitable” (OB, 151). (At this juncture we also hear Derrida’s discussion of the inescapable violence of the proper name.)

But is my relationship with the Other necessarily one of violence? Is it not construed as such only against the horizon of Levinas’ interpretation of the self as primordially egoistic? At the level of “intersubjective violence,” have we not arrived at Derrida’s supporting myth, his belief ‘in fact’? Are we not free to interpret otherwise, to believe otherwise?

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9 This is a critique of Heidegger’s signification and ‘as-structure’ in BT. For a discussion, see Chapter Three above.
One could make him say quite a different thing. And [Derrida's] text must constantly be considered as a complex and many-levelled structure; in it, certain propositions may be read as interpretations of other propositions that we are, up to a certain point and with certain precautions, free to read otherwise. [Derrida] says A, then for reasons that we must determine, he interprets A into B. A, which was already an interpretation, is reinterpreted into B. After taking cognizance of it, we may, without leaving [Derrida's] text, isolate A from its interpretation into B, and discover possibilities and resources there that indeed belong to [Derrida's] text, but were not produced or exploited by him, which, for equally legible motives, he preferred to cut short by a gesture neither witting or unwitting. (OG,307)^

I have attempted to isolate A from B, to demonstrate that there is a first interpretation regarding the violence of intersubjectivity that is then read into B, the violence of interpretation. But at the level of this first interpretation we are "free to read otherwise", able to offer an alternative myth of intersubjectivity, much as was offered above with regards to Heidegger. Indeed, do we not uncover here, as with Heidegger, a peculiar vestige of the tradition which he is attempting to deconstruct, a "falling back" (OG,14,21) into the tradition?

What Derrida and Levinas have inherited from modernity is precisely what needs to be challenged. Derrida is honest about not challenging for a moment Rousseau and Levi-Strauss' reading of violence; his own analysis is only a "radicalization" of their thesis (OG,106). And it would seem that Levinas' framework is also a wholesale adoption of a modern ontology (as found, for instance, in Hobbes), if only to invert it. But as I have attempted to argue above,

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10 This is a gloss of Derrida's comments on reading Rousseau. I have interpolated Derrida's name in the places of Rousseau, 'Jacques' in the place of 'Jean-Jacques.'

11 He also accepts, without challenge, the traditional ascription of interpretation to writing. But because he thinks full presence and the absence of interpretation is a dream (as do I), he posits a more originary 'writing', arche-writing. But by doing so, he maintains the traditional confinement of interpretation to writing. In contrast, I would emphasize the interpretedness of speech.
intersubjectivity is violent only if one maintains something of a latent Cartesian solipsism or egoism. But if, in contrast, we understand human be-ing as essentially inter-relational, then that may be understood as 'good', as an instance of a good creation and not fundamentally violent. Admittedly, that is a 'belief', but so too, we have discovered, is Derrida's interpretation.

**DERRIDA'S INFINITIST METAPHYSICS**

Naming, reading, interpreting, speaking, writing: violence, Derrida argues. But on what grounds is naming a child violence? Or why must interpretation be violent? Further, if this is an inescapable aspect of being human--as Derrida believes--then why must this be construed as necessarily a violation? I would suggest that his interpretation of interpretation as violent betrays another vestige of the modern tradition of immediacy, for it is only if one is looking for immediacy and full presence that the finitude of interpreting 'as' something is considered a lack, a fall, an impurity. The logic of supplementarity, despite all of Derrida's intentions, remains a metaphysics of infinity. This is not to say that Derrida is looking for full presence or that he has any dream of immediacy, of escaping the interpolation of the postal system or stepping outside of the space of interpretation. He has given up any "dream of a full and immediate presence closing history, the transparence and indivision of a parousia, the suppression of contradiction and difference."(OG,115) The dream has died.

However, its ghost continues to haunt his work. Of course, "a ghost does not exist"(OS,62); presence is not, is not, never was. But its ghost remains, a spectre lurking behind his discourse, unwittingly shaping the plot of the story. A dream that has become a
ghoulish [Geistlich] nightmare, a recurring haunting of a nostalgic longing. It is a ghost he has caught sight of in the discourse of others: "Metaphysics always returns, I mean in the sense of a revenant [ghost], and Geist is the most fatal figure of this revenance [returning, haunting]."(OS,40) It is the Geist which Heidegger was unable to avoid. But Derrida fails to see this phantom lurking in his own work, "the phantom of subjectity" (OS,41).12

For instance, writing was traditionally construed as fallen and violent because it sacrificed full presence. Derrida’s radicalization of this is to push it back to the origin of language, to the very structures of language. But is that not to maintain full presence as a horizon? Elsewhere, he connects the violence of language to the fact that is prevents the recognition of the other as pure other, because purity is impossible (OG,110). Violence marks the very origin of language because it initiates the "loss of the proper" (OG,112). But what if we were to give up an expectation of purity? What if we refused to be haunted by this ghost of full presence and gave up any pretensions to purity? Why must this be counted loss? Is not interpreting it as such to harbour a notion of finitude as limitation against the infinite? Is it not in fact Derrida who follows up his discourse with "the most traditional metaphysics of infinity" and "a philosophy of the unlimited"?13 This seems to become clear in "Force of Law," where the ethical decision

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12 We also have from Derrida a note which confesses his conjuring of Heidegger’s ghost. Though he does not accept the call from Martin Heidegger ("What will he do with the ghost or Geist of Martin?"), "[a]ll this must not lead you to believe that no telephonic communication links me to Heidegger’s ghost, as to more than one other. Quite the contrary, the network of my hookups, you have the proof of it here, is on the burdensome side, and more than one switchboard is necessary in order to digest the overload."(PC,21,note) In chapter 5, I will consider yet another ghost—or rather, pneuma—which haunts Derrida’s discourse, one to whom he has yet to pay his debts.

13 Against Ethics, p. 264n.80.
is an interpretive violence because it is a decision which is "structurally finite" and can never meet the demands of "infinite 'idea of justice'"--'by nature' unjust.\textsuperscript{14} The decision is violent because finite; every decision is an incision only because it cannot measure up to infinity, "cannot furnish itself with infinite information and the unlimited knowledge of conditions."\textsuperscript{15}

But is that not to make finitude a violence, and is this not violence only if we are expected to be gods, even if it is impossible--only a dead dream? What if, instead of construing interpretive decisions as finite incisions, the hermeneutical moment was understood as 'all we have', an inescapable aspect of being of which nothing more is expected? Would not such a finitude be something like differance without being haunted by the ghost of full presence?

Following from such a construal, interpretation is not a violation of purity but rather a way of connection, a way of being-with that is essential to be(com)ing human. Rather than being the first violence, to be named is to be loved, is to be part of a community.\textsuperscript{16} Once the myth of essential intersubjective violence is relinquished--that is, once we mythologize differently--then the ground for the violence of hermeneutics is transformed into the possibility of connection and the wild space of love--the field of creation and the ground of a creational hermeneutic.

\textsuperscript{14} "Force of Law," pp. 24-26.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 26.

\textsuperscript{16} I have in mind here the birth of our children. It is difficult to understand that the moment of naming them in the delivery room was a first act of violation against them. It was rather the moment of welcoming them, of granting an identity, of offering them a family and a home.
Part Three

Towards a

Creational-Pneumatic

Hermeneutic
In the beginning is hermeneutics.¹

At this juncture, I am obligated to fulfil a number of promises, to validate a number of promissory notes scattered throughout earlier chapters regarding my own proposal which was repeatedly postponed to the fifth chapter. It is my hope that the shape of my own proposal was sufficiently sketched or intimated in the first two parts in order to provide grounds for my critiques. The task of Parts One and Two (Chapters One to Four) was to expound two basic interpretations of interpretation: a model of immediacy or presence (Part One) and a violent mediation model (Part Two). Within these basic models, two variations were considered, such as the evangelical model of present immediacy and Pannenberg’s eschatological immediacy model. Those interpretations of interpretation, once expounded, were subjected to critique against the horizon of my own constructive proposal, which here, in chapter five, will be more programmatically developed. My own proposal—a creational-pneumatic hermeneutic—does not

stand in dialectical relationship to Parts One and Two; that is, it must not be understood as a new synthesis constituted by the sublimation (Aufhebung) of an evangelical thesis and a deconstructive antithesis. As I hope will become clear, my proposal stands in contrast to both and yet in debt to both, both very near to and yet very far from Lints and Derrida. The close reader will refrain from dismissing my creational-pneumatic model as either simply evangelical or deconstructive.

AN INDICATION OF SOURCES

My creational-pneumatic model is neither evangelical nor deconstructive precisely because it attempts to step 'outside' (inasmuch as that is possible) of the paradigm which I believe nourishes or grounds both of those models. I would argue that all of the earlier interpretations of interpretation considered in this thesis, from Koivisto to Derrida, stand within a very distinct and formidable interpretive tradition whose genealogy stems from the beginnings of Western philosophy to the beginnings of Christianity to the beginnings of the Medieval Church to the beginnings of the Reformation to the beginnings of the modern era. At root (and roots, of course, are usually buried, unseen and hidden) the linking of interpretation to fallenness may be understood as the product of the dominant Western interpretive tradition, a Platonic/Pauline/Augustinian/Lutheran understanding of creation and fall, an understanding which is itself an interpretation. I believe that this tradition continues to be plagued by an

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2 Following in the tradition of a loose page recovered from Heidegger's Nachlass entitled "Motto and Grateful Indication of Sources," where he pays his debts with four quotations, two from Kierkegaard and two from Luther (GA 61,182).
incipient gnosticism which continues to construe creation and human be-ing as 'essentially' fallen and therefore ties hermeneutics to such a condition. The immediacy model of evangelicals, Pannenberg, and modern philosophy rests on a dream of full presence,\(^3\) of ascending to the Absolute Infinite Unconditioned, the *Eidos* or its Christianization as the 'God of metaphysics.'\(^4\) Thus John Milbank may write, approvingly I should add, of "Platonism/Christianity" and of the "neo-Platonic/Christian infinitization of the absolute" which characterizes the dominant Christian tradition.\(^5\) With regards to the violent mediation model of Heidegger, it became evident that his thought owed a number of unpaid debts to Luther and Luther's tradition, viz. Paul as mediated by Augustine. Even if Heidegger was enacting a recovery of 'primal Christianity' as KISIEL and van BUREN suggest, it must be noted that it was a recovery of only a certain side of a pluriform Pauline Christianity which bore the marks of a Platonic devaluing of creation and

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\(^3\) For instance, Luther identifies humanity in its prelapsarian state as enjoying immediacy, like Dante's Adam: "whatever God wanted or said, man also wanted, believed, and understood the same thing. The knowledge of all the other creatures necessarily followed this knowledge; for where the knowledge of God is perfect, there also the knowledge of other things that are under God is necessarily perfect." (*Lectures on Genesis* in *Luther's Works*, 1:141.) For a discussion of Luther's logocentrism, see Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament*, pp. 33-34.

\(^4\) Dennis Schmidt provides a wonderful analysis of this theme in *The Ubiquity of the Finite*, pp. 1-17.

\(^5\) Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, pp. 290, 295. Milbank dismisses "the Augustinian Platonizing rhetoric of spiritual essence over against bodily and symbolic integuments" as misleading (pp. 290-291). But I would suggest that such a dualism lies at the very heart of his 'Platonism/Christianity' and perhaps, the majority of Christian thought. Though Milbank hears in Heidegger "echoes of Valentinian gnosis" (p. 302), I think he is deaf to similar echoes in Augustine, that is, in Platonism/Christianity.
provided the seeds for gnosticism, which Marcion quickly perceived. This is then reflected in the Augustinian-Lutheran understanding of original sin, of sin as original, constitutive, absolute—an essential aspect of being human.

My proposal attempts to draw on an alternate history, another story relegated to the margins, a collection of subjugated voices long identified not only with the margins but the 'outside' of the Christian tradition, at times the heretical fringe. A creational-pneumatic model stands in contrast to those of the previous chapters precisely because it is rooted in a different paradigm; that is, mine is a more Arminian (but not precisely Arminian) understanding of the Fall and its implications for philosophical hermeneutics, drawing not on the Platonic/Pauline/Augustinian/Lutheran tradition, but rather the interpretive tradition traced in the likes of Pelagius, Grotius, Erasmus, Arminius, Wesley and Miley as mediated in its reinterpretation in early Pentecostal experience and later Pentecostal theology (inasmuch as it attempts to retrieve its Wesleyan-Holiness roots rather than a more Reformed/Baptistic

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6 Marcion’s canon, the first of its kind, was structured around his Gnostic theology which rejected the creator God in favour of Jesus Christ, thereby setting redemption against creation, spirit against flesh. This gnostic canon was composed only of the Pauline epistles and Luke’s Gospel (the most Pauline of the synoptics). I am suggesting, rather scandalously I am aware, that his decision made sense. Though the dominant Christian tradition has constantly renounced gnosticism, I don’t think it has ever freed itself from it, precisely because it has refused to see the seeds of gnosticism planted within the Pauline corpus; gnosticism is inside/outside Christianity. While a plethora of examples could be cited, I would mention here Paul’s notion of absence from the body (2 Cor. 5:1-8), the inauthenticity of concern for the world (1 Cor. 7:25-35) and the relegation of the 'world' to depravity (Romans 1, 12:2).

7 Erasmus, in his debate with Luther regarding free will (which is not wholly unrelated to this study), remarks that Luther and his followers (on this point, the Calvinists!) distort things because they "immeasurably exaggerate original sin." See Erasmus, De Libero Arbitrio in Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, eds. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969): 93. See also the discussion of this point above with respect to Heidegger, pp. 94ff.
framework\(^8\). This tradition attempts to honour the goodness of creation in the midst of and in spite of the Fall; the Fall, in contrast to Luther and Heidegger, is not absolute nor constitutive (contra GA 63, 27, 111) though it is pervasive and ubiquitous. However, creation is not destroyed but rather marred, broken, diseased. Redemption is not the completion of a deficient creation (Pannenberg) nor the recreation of an absolutely corrupted 'nature' (Luther) but rather the restoration or healing\(^9\) of a broken creation. The Fall, then, is (1) historical rather than ontological, (2) accidental rather than essential or constitutive, and (3) ubiquitous rather than absolute or total. The world is not the result of a primal disaster nor the site of unmitigated evil; the world, in short, is not 'by nature' evil and fallen, given over to 'the evil one.' The world, though broken, yet remains creation.\(^10\)

In the development of this framework, the shorthand of which may be simply described as 'the goodness of creation,' I am drawing on two distinct traditions. The first is the neo-Calvinian tradition as it follows Abraham Kuyper in his reinterpretation of Calvin, a reinterpretation, I would offer, which is actually a demythologizing, a reading of Calvin against Calvin as a mode of deconstructing Calvinism. Kuyper's retrieval of the goodness of creation

\(^8\) It is this recovery of the Wesleyan impetus of Pentecostalism which guides Steven J. Land's work, Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom, JPTSUp 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).


\(^10\) I should also note at this point another crucial difference: my model does not identify finitude and/or hermeneutics with fallenness. While I disagree with the dominant tradition's understanding of the Fall, I am also disagreeing with what is connected with the Fall or seen as its result.
and of the world as creation stands in contrast to the dominant dualism of Christian thought as inherited from Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin.\textsuperscript{11} The doctrine of total depravity, Kuyper remarked, remains disturbed by experience of goodness; this is because of what Kuyper describes as "common grace."\textsuperscript{12} At this point the Kuyperian heritage intersects with a second source of my proposal, the Wesleyan/Arminian/Pentecostal tradition and the notion of prevenient grace. I would suggest (and this itself could constitute an entire thesis) that in Wesley’s prevenient grace we hear an analogue of Kuyper’s common grace, and that underlying both is a belief in the goodness of creation not as a pristine Edenic original but as a persisting present creation in the midst of the fallenness which we experience. In the theology of my son’s children’s praise tapes, ‘God don’t make no junk’; and if God made this world, ‘it ain’t junk.’

The import of this discussion with regards to hermeneutics is this: if hermeneutics is a constitutive aspect of human be-ing as creational, then (1) it is not accidental but an inescapable aspect of human existence; (2) it is a state of affairs which is affected by the Fall but not completely corrupted by fallenness; and (3) it is an aspect of human be-ing which is primordially good and remains such in a postlapsarian world and therefore is not to be construed as necessarily violent. Creation, in this model, should not be identified with either a pristine

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} To cite only one example, Calvin speaks of the freedom death provides "from the prison house of the body." Further, when it comes to questions regarding human nature, Plato is the closest. (\textit{Institutes, I.xv.2, 6.}) I cite this as an example of how Kuyper’s retrieval of Calvin (and even more so the retrievals by Herman Dooyeweerd and the later Calvinian tradition) are at the same time a demythologizing of Calvin.}

'perfection' or immediacy, nor with a primal disaster or violence. It is to an explication of the hermeneutical structure of creation that I now turn.

**HUMAN BEING AS HERMENEUTICAL**

*Situationality and Intersubjectivity*

To be human is to interpret—to negotiate understanding between two or more finite entities. Interpretation, then, is called for by a state of affairs which incorporates (1) intersubjectivity and (2) relations between finite or situated beings. These two elements comprise the conditions for hermeneutics; but as will be noted, they are at the same time conditions which are part and parcel of being human and living in the world. Hermeneutics—the need for negotiation of understanding between finite entities—is therefore an inescapable aspect of being human and not an accidental way of being. As finite human beings, we never have (nor ever will have) access to the thoughts of an other as immediately present, as Dante's Adam proclaimed. Instead, I always hear another or read a text from 'where I am,' translating the other's discourse into one that I can understand. Every act of reading or listening is an act of translation, that is, a negotiation between two (or more) universes of discourse, two (or more) traditionalities, two (or more) ways of understanding the world. To use a more popular metaphor, I always read a text or see the world through the lens of an interpretive tradition from
which I cannot extricate myself for it is part of what it means to be human.\(^\text{13}\)

The ubiquity of hermeneutics, then, rests first of all on the *intersubjectivity* of human existence. We live with others--spouses, children, colleagues--and communication is necessary not only for survival but also for our enrichment and growth as human beings. If there were no communication between entities\(^\text{14}\) there would be no need for interpretation. But intersubjectivity *per se* would not necessarily require interpretation of communication if both (or all) of the communicants shared the exact same language, identical vocabularies, the same thought processes and immediate access to another's thought (which would be identical to one's own). If this were the case, however, one would wonder if even something like communication would be necessary, let alone possible. But precisely because human beings do not share the same language, do not possess identical vocabularies and do not have the same thoughts, interpretation is inescapable. This difference, which necessitates interpretation, is rooted in the finitude of human be-ing, the second condition of hermeneutics. Finitude, or what I have earlier

\(^{13}\) This visual metaphor, which I have attempted to avoid, does however indicate that what I am describing as an 'interpretive tradition' is very close to, if not identical with, what has usually been identified as a 'worldview'. As "visions of life for life" (Olthuis), worldviews constitute the primary commitments through which one 'sees' the world. It is at the level of worldview that the 'as-structure' of interpretation (Heidegger) unfolds. For discussions, see James H. Olthuis, "On Worldviews," *Christian Scholar's Review* 14 (1985): 153-164; Brian J. Walsh, "Worldviews, Modernity and Task of Christian College Education," *Faculty Dialogue* 18 (Fall 1992): 13-35; and our discussion in part two of "Postmodern Freedom and the Growth of Fundamentalism."

\(^{14}\) I use the more generic term here so as not to restrict interpretation to humans. Inasmuch as animals communicate, there would also be a process of interpretation. For instance, the bear "understands" that the claw marks on the tree are the mark of another and that they represent a boundary of another's territory. Or perhaps in a more sophisticated fashion (I am only speculating), the auditory communication between dolphins could be misinterpreted if the sound waves were "heard" differently.
described as *situationality*, signals the locality of being human, the fact that I hear/read from a specific locale, a certain situation, what Heidegger described as the "hermeneutical situation."\textsuperscript{15} This locality or spatiality is both temporal and physico-spatial and determines the possibilities of how one reads/hears.\textsuperscript{16} It may also be described as the historicity of human be-ing, in the sense that I do not share my history and it is this personal history which shapes my language, my vocabulary, my 'way of reading', etc.

While the 'ubiquity of interpretation' refers to the conditions of interpretation as a constitutive aspect of being human, it is also refers to the scope of interpretation. Interpretation is not something that happens only when one reads a text; instead, interpretation occurs at every level of communication and is not limited to the textual, nor even the verbal (for even 'body language' requires interpretation\textsuperscript{17}). Interpretation 'happens'--*es interpretation gibt*--at every level of relationship between situated beings. Every reading of the newspaper, every conversation at the dinner table, every rude gesture on the highway must be interpreted before it is understood. Every communication is filtered through a series of questionings, largely implicit, asked with the goal of understanding. But the questions asked are determined by the situation and traditionality of the interpreter. Interpretation is not relegated or confined to

\textsuperscript{15} It should also be emphasized that this 'situationality' or uniqueness cannot be reduced to temporal and/or spatial locality. I am not just my time and space; there is a mystery to the uniqueness of the self which persists outside of these conditions.

\textsuperscript{16} This was more fully developed in Chapter Three above. Cp. also TM,302.

\textsuperscript{17} Brian Stock in *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) seems to suggest that a gestural mode of being, as found in the enactment of the Eucharist for example, is free of interpretive structures and that the necessity of interpretation comes on the scene with the advent of writing and "literate theology."
writing (a notion that Derrida described as logocentrism) but rather stands at the origin of language and thus inhabits speech and gesture as well. For instance, if three hunters are walking to the blind in the middle of the marsh, and one of the hunters shouts "Duck!", one may raise his gun searching for the incoming fowl, while the other may dive to the ground in a desperate attempt to avoid an approaching projectile. The exclamation was "heard" differently, was interpreted differently. This "universalizing" of hermeneutics beyond textual reading has been one of the crucial insights of Heidegger and Gadamer, moving hermeneutical discussions from specialized fields such as law, theology and aesthetics to the question of general hermeneutics (the project of Gadamer's magnum opus, *Truth and Method*).

**Tradionality**

Inasmuch as intersubjectivity and situationality are necessary elements of human be-ing which necessitate interpretation, the possibilities for interpretation are conditioned by the *tradionality*\(^{18}\) which is the result of both intersubjective relations and the finitude of existence. As a finite creature, I am part of a community, the inheritor of a way or ways of 'seeing' the world, part of an interpretive tradition. We are always traditioned, part of a tradition, see through a tradition--that is, we are human. In fact, we are the inheritors of a plurality of traditions: a linguistic tradition, a socio-cultural tradition, a geographic tradition, a religious tradition, etc. For instance, I was taught to speak English (and in a certain sense, being born in rural Ontario--which I did not choose--I had no choice in the matter) which creates both the

possibility for communicating and interpreting, yet at the same time conditions the possibilities inasmuch as I can only say so much. My language is a finite collection, and my vocabulary utilizes only a small fraction of the possibilities within that language, which then limits my possibilities both for understanding and for communicating. However, even the notion of "limiting" betrays a nostalgia for infinity, thus I prefer the word "conditions". My linguistic tradition determines how I will interpret and determines 'beforehand' the questions I will ask in the negotiation of idioms which comprises hermeneutics. My socio-cultural tradition (as a middle-class rural male), my geographic tradition (as a Canadian Westerner), my religious tradition (as a Christian) all condition how I will read a text, how I will hear a statement, how I will understand a communication.

While more Nietzschean deconstructionists such as Mark C. Taylor seem to suggest that there is no limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted, these conditions of traditionality do prescribe possibilities: a plurality of possibilities to be sure, but a plurality does not an infinity make. A similar suggestion may be found in an early critic of metaphysics, David Hume:

Nothing, at first view, seems more unbounded than the thought of man, which not only escapes all human power and authority, but is not even restrained within the limits of nature and reality. ...But though our thought seems to possess this unbounded liberty, we shall find, upon a nearer examination, that it is really confined within very narrow limits, and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience.

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The possibilities for construal are conditioned by what has been handed down as possibilities, that is, one's tradition (paradosis). This is not to be confused with a mere repetition, for there are certainly possibilities for new interpretations, but there are only so many possibilities, a limited number of options with respect to the possibilities that are handed down. In Ricoeur's language, only those innovations are possible which are handed down by one's tradition. Traditionality is a heritage which one both receives and shapes. As Claude Geffre suggests, it is this idea of heritage that both "culture" and "religion" have in common: "Belonging to a culture is being rooted in particular tradition. It is being invited to live in the world in a certain language."21 A bibliography, for instance, is an indicator of such traditionality: the list of texts discloses one's tradition or one's exposure to a host of different traditions. However, though a bibliography may represent a diversity of reading areas, it nevertheless remains a finite collection which marks the constellation of one's thought. Other books which lie outside of the bibliography may raise questions and interpretive possibilities which I have not envisioned and thus my reading remains conditioned by my situation. Further, the very location of texts happens within determinate limits: I will have often read books upon suggestion of others--my teachers, for instance; or at the very least, I will have read only those books which I have had time to read, which marks another condition. Traditionality, then, is marked by physico-spatial and temporal conditioning (as with situationality), but is also comprised of an inheritance from others (which is grounded in intersubjectivity).

Every interpretation, then, happens within an interpretive tradition, and within that

interpretive tradition there is an accepted hermeneutic which functions as the normative or traditional hermeneutic, the standard of hermeneutic orthodoxy. We may see a similar state of affairs described in Thomas Kuhn's groundbreaking work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. There he is arguing that scientific research into the structure of the world functions within a paradigm: a constellation of "commitments that govern normal science."22 Purportedly objective scientific research proceeds "on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like"; thus science works on a notion of precedent and a paradigm functions very much like an "accepted judicial decision."23 "Normal science" is that accepted standard within a paradigm which is taken as normative for guiding research; it is "research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice."24 Classic examples would be the geocentric or Ptolemaic understanding of the universe, an interpretation of the world which was accepted as a paradigm for further research until its crisis in the Middle Ages.25 Normal science is the research orthodoxy within a given paradigm. But the paradigm itself, Kuhn argues, is an interpretation, and as such normal science is a series of interpretations resting on a paradigmatic 'reading' of the world. In the same way, every interpretation happens

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23 Ibid., pp.5, 23.

24 Ibid., p. 10.

25 The heart of Kuhn's book is to explore the status of these paradigms and to understand how shifts occur. Briefly, he argues that science experiences a "paradigm shift" when the existing paradigm fails to explain an aspect of 'reality' that confronts research, precipitating a crisis, which then gives birth to a new paradigm.
within an interpretive tradition—a paradigm, if you will—and the interpretive tradition shapes how interpretation happens. But, as with the paradigms of scientific research, interpretive traditions, while necessary and inescapable, are nevertheless themselves construals of the world that are open to revision, conversion and rejection.

It is this traditionedness which is denied in immediacy models, particularly in evangelical theology, which proposes to read Scripture apart from the 'distortion' of presuppositions or biases, and which claims that 'Scripture itself' can stand over and correct our presuppositions. But 'empirically' (as in a Foucauldian genealogical analysis), it will be seen that purportedly objective readings function with an accepted interpretive tradition and "everything but the most esoteric detail of the result is known in advance, and the typical latitude of expectation is only somewhat wider." This was seen above whenever Koivisto or Lints proposed to deliver the 'crisp unadorned voice of God' and their definitions of the Gospel. I am not, it should be remarked, faulting evangelical theology for operating within an interpretive tradition, for it is impossible to stand outside of such—it is a constitutive aspect of human being. The problem with evangelical theology is that it does not perceive itself as being governed by such an interpretive tradition, much as scientific research claims to deliver the world as it "really" is (scientists themselves have not been fond of Kuhn's proposal). The myth of a pure, objective reading prevents evangelicals from appreciating the impact of their tradition on their reading, particularly with regards to the Bible.

A case in point would be recent evangelical engagements with Catholic thought, precipitated by the document "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in

26 Ibid., p. 35.
the Third Millennium" (1994, drafted by Richard John Neuhaus and Charles Colson), to which conservative evangelical responses came hard and fast. All of the evangelical responses are grounded in the Reformational commitment to "justification by faith alone" as disclosing the essence of the Gospel. What they fail to recognize in their hermeneutical essentialism is that justification constitutes only one interpretation of the Gospel, and their own development is mediated by Luther's interpretation of Paul. While claiming to deliver the essence of the Gospel, sans courrier, what we receive is actually an interpretation of an interpretation, a reading shaped by a certain tradition and committed to a certain mono-logic. When Luther defined the Gospel as justification by faith he seems to have forgotten that the Apostle John also wrote about the Gospel without ever mentioning such a forensic notion. This distillation of the essence turns out to be the privileging of a certain tradition (the Pauline), to the exclusion of or at least ignorance of the Johannine, Petrine, and of course notoriously, the witness of James. The mono-logic of purported objectivity results in a levelling of the plurality of traditions within the New Testament itself.

Traditionality, or traditionedness, is simply an aspect of being human, of living in the world as a finite being in relation with others. Rather than being a distortion or barrier to understanding, it is our heritage which opens up the very possibility of interpretation while at


the same time standing as the determinate condition of interpretation. Thus Heidegger remarked that every reading is, in a sense, a "reading-into" (PIA,359)—a reading shaped by one's situation, one's personal history and heritage, one's language, and one's faith. There is always already interpretation in every relationship, which means that there is also room for plurality; along with the myth of objectivity is abandoned the mono-logic of a hermeneutics of immediacy which claims to deliver the one, true interpretation. But if interpretation is part of being human, then its analogue is a creational diversity: a multitude of ways to 'read' the world. This is not to give up the notion of truth, but it does abandon a certain understanding of truth; further, to say that everything is a matter of interpretation is not to abandon criteria, but it does require a reconsideration and reformulation of what those criteria will be.

Undecidability

A final structural moment of the hermeneutical nature of human being that I want to briefly consider relates to the plurality and revisability of interpretation just mentioned. Every interpretation is a decision, a commitment to an understanding based on conditioned knowledge—the decision of a finite creature. One of the correlates of the situationality of interpretation and human life is an undecidability with regards to interpretation. This is because the space of interpretation, which opens up the possibility of understanding, is also the space that opens the

29 Recognizing and seizing upon the traditionedness of interpretation, Cheryl Bridges Johns (following Walter Brueggemann) calls for a "legitimate sectarian hermeneutic" which not only recognizes the impact of tradition on interpretation but celebrates it as a way of owning our humanity and our tradition as a gift. See Cheryl Bridges Johns, "The Adolescence of Pentecostalism: In Search of a Legitimate Sectarian Identity," PNEUMA: Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies 17 (1995): 3-17.
possibility for misunderstanding, which is a necessary aspect of being finite, of being human, of being a creature. There is, if you will, a possibility for misunderstanding built-in to the very fabric of human life, there is the possibility of misunderstanding in Eden. This is neither sin nor evil, though after the fall it becomes the space which evil and violence inhabits; that is, it was not a sin for Adam to misunderstand Eve, to think she said "Three" when she said "Tree." He simply misheard her, misunderstood, misinterpreted. As part of the structure of creation and the finitude of creaturehood, this should not be understood as sin; the goodness of creation is not perfection.

The space of interpretation, then, which is opened up in the very being of being human, is the space of a hermeneutic decision made by a finite creature, and as such, it may be 'wrong.' In fact, in the end I would argue that every hermeneutic decision is a leap of faith, a certain trust or commitment, a belief which gropes beyond mere presence. Every interpretive decision, then, should be accompanied by a corresponding hermeneutic humility or uncertainty. This tentativeness of the hermeneutical decision is captured in Derrida's notion of undecidability.

As at root a commitment of faith, the hermeneutic decision is a belief, not a metaphysical

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30 Cp. Tremper Longman III, "What I Mean by Historical-Grammatical Exegesis--Why I Am Not a Literalist," *Grace Theological Journal* 11 (1990): 150, where he remarks, "I must admit, though, that in reading some writers, and they are most often of the literal [dispensational] school, they communicate the impression that they can control the text....I also suspect such a sentiment when scientific or legal analogies are used to describe the hermeneutic certainty, a good example being Johnson. Yes, I believe there are controls on interpretation (genre analysis being a good example), but none which allows us to say that I have arrived at a definitive, exhaustive understanding of the text which we can then prove to everyone beyond a shadow of a doubt. The lack of such hermeneutical certainty invites us to be open to challenge in our exegetical conclusions." (emphasis added)

certainty of presence. As Kierkegaard, in the persona of Johannes Climacus, remarks, "faith is always in conflict, but as long as there is conflict, there is the possibility of defeat. Therefore, with regard to faith, one never celebrates triumphantly ahead of time, that is, never in time, for when is there the time to compose songs of victory or the opportune occasion to sing them?"32 The hermeneutic decision remains haunted by uncertainty, for undecidability (not indecision) is the ground of the decision, just as doubt is the necessary correlate of faith. As Kierkegaard jots in his journal, "it is really Christianity that has brought this doubt into the world, for in Christianity this self received its meaning.—Doubt is conquered not by the system but by faith, just as it is faith that has brought doubt into the world."33 Faith and hermeneutics are inherent to creation, aspects of human life in its goodness. But inasmuch as hermeneutics indicates the necessity of interpretation—mediation—it also includes the possibility of misinterpretation. As well, faith implies its correlate, doubt. Interpretation and the hermeneutic project introduces a mediation which necessitates faith, which does not erase uncertainty but makes a decision "in spite of..."34 As such, there is built-in to the hermeneutical structure of creation an uncertainty, an undecidability with regards to hermeneutical decisions (i.e., interpretations) which ought to result in a more tentative offering of interpretations rather than a triumphant proclamation of having arrived at or received from God the one, true, definitive

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33 Cited in Ibid., p. 256.

34 I would also point to Ricoeur's discussion of attestation in *Oneself as Another*, pp. 21-23.
reading. 35

THE GOODNESS OF CREATION

The goal of the preceding section was to disclose the structures of human life which (1) comprise the state of affairs (intersubjectivity, situationality, traditionality) that grounds hermeneutics and call for interpretation, and (2) are constitutive aspects of human-being. The project was one of describing the nature and scope of hermeneutics and its inescapability in contrast to models of immediacy which understand hermeneutics as accidental and fallen. So far, the discussion has differed little and relied heavily on the development of hermeneutics in Heidegger and its radicalization in Derrida. However, as I remarked at the outset of this chapter, my model is not a simple re-iteration of hermeneutic phenomenology or deconstruction, even though, as has been seen, it lies close to both. The point at which my model diverges from Heidegger and Derrida is in the construal of these structures: while we are agreed that these are 'essential' to human being and as a result, so is hermeneutics, we are disagreed inasmuch as Heidegger and Derrida describes these structures as inherently violent. I, on the other hand, because I believe in the goodness of creation, understand these structures as good and not inherently violent, though they may and do become such in a fallen and broken world. But I do not think they are 'necessarily' so precisely because I believe the Fall to be an historical, accidental moment rather than an ontological, essential origin of human existence.

35 At the heart of this thesis lies a concern for the unity of the church and the ecumenical project. Among others, this thesis has an ecclesial destination.
That is what I 'in fact' believe (cp. OG,127), and it is perhaps destined to be rejected by some as a lapse into theology, and a rather naive theology at that. However, as we discovered in Heidegger and Derrida, their assertions regarding the necessary violence of human existence and interpretation was grounded in myth, in a fundamental commitment or faith, a primordial way of reading the world. At this juncture, we have arrived at the level of fundamental construals, a very religious realm (though it is denied to be such by both Heidegger and Derrida) of incommensurability. A similar juncture is seen in Caputo’s *Radical Hermeneutics*, where he considers two primary responses to our experience of suffering: the Nietzschean tragic response and the Kierkegaardian religious response.36 Undecidability, he remarks, prevents the privileging of either.

But it seems that, ironically, Caputo privileges the Nietzschean by describing the religious response as a "construal," a *hermeneusis* which "has looked down the dark well of suffering and found there a loving power which takes the side of suffering."37 More recently he says, "Faith is a matter of a radical hermeneutic, an art of construing shadows, in the midst of what is happening. Faith is neither magic nor an infused knowledge that lifts one above the flux or above the limits of mortality. Faith, on my view, is above all the *hermeneia* that Someone looks back at us from the abyss, that the spell of anonymity is broken by a Someone who stands with those who suffer, which is why the Exodus and the Crucifixion are central religious symbols. Faith, does not, however, extinguish the abyss but constitutes a certain reading of the abyss, a hermeneutics of the abyss.38

Faith is only a construal which is enveloped and haunted by undecidability; Abraham is haunted

36 *Radical Hermeneutics*, pp. 272ff.
37 Ibid., p. 279.
38 *Against Ethics*, p. 245.
by Zarathustra's laughter. The construal of the religious response is simply a way to cope with the cold reality of the flux by construing it as something warm.

But does not this characterization already deny undecidability? Is not his characterization of the flux as "cold" already a privileging of Nietzsche? Is not the tragic also a construal, a *hermeneusis* which is also exposed to undecidability? Though Abraham certainly hears the echo of Zarathustra's laughter, I wonder if Zarathustra ever lies awake at night wondering if Abraham is right. Is that not a more insistent understanding of undecidability? Caputo puts the burden of proof upon the religious response, which must answer to Nietzsche. But does not Nietzsche also have some explaining to do? Both the religious and the tragic responses are construals: interpretations of factical life. Caputo continually insists on the frigidity of the world while seeing the necessity of a religious response. But this privileging of the tragic interpretation seems to convey that Nietzsche knows what the world is *really* like (which is a very realist notion). Only a hermeneutic which recognizes the creational nature of faith can truly recognize the all-the-way-downness of undecidability. Thus, instead of undecidability making it impossible to choose between the two, it is precisely undecidability that requires that we choose, in spite of the fact that it is a decision of faith haunted by undecidability. Undecidability does not mean indecision but is rather the condition for the possibility of decision, that which beckons for a decision. Undecidability means we can't put all of the data and options into a computer and let it generate a decision; we do not have time to wait for the machine to tabulate all the data, nor could the machine ever be supplied with "all" the data. But we must decide.

My construal of the world as creation is just such a construal: an interpretive decision in spite of a number of experiences which would seem to point otherwise, to the inevitable or
essential violence of human life. But, I would offer, the construal of the world as structurally violent is also a decision fraught with undecidability, confronted by experiences which would point otherwise. While for every interpretation of the world as creation "there is an Auschwitz or a Hiroshima, a killing field somewhere, in South Africa or South America, which silence's God's voice," there is also, for every construal of the world as structurally violent the smile of a child, a birth, love. In fact, I would suggest that it is only a construal of the world as creation that can do justice to evil as evil, as that which should not be, as a horrendous and horrifying violence which should be opposed and from which we are promised redemption. Certainly creation is a different story than Heidegger and Derrida are telling, but it is only a different myth, a mythologizing differently. With regards to hermeneutics, this belief in the fundamental and persistent goodness of creation means that it is not doing violence to interpret, to construe something as something. However, a creational hermeneutic also recognizes that hermeneutics can become violent in a fallen world and that some readings have been responsible for the most horrific violence. But again, it rejects that this is "necessarily the case," that this is a structural matter (contra PC,29). While Derrida offers a "structural theory of the abyss," my creational hermeneutic contends that the abyss is not structural, but directional, an historical but not essential reality of the world. A creational-pneumatic hermeneutic is something of a structural theory of the goodness of creation.

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40 This will be taken up once again in chapter six with regards to a hermeneutics of trust and a hermeneutics of suspicion.
As a structural theory of the goodness of creation, a creational-pneumatic hermeneutic also deprivileges a "hermeneutics of suspicion" inasmuch as it argues that, while interpretation is rooted in the situationality and traditionality of the interpreter, it is not produced only by those conditions; interpretation is not simply the effect of the will to power. In this section, I will argue that a fundamental hermeneutics of trust is the correlate of a belief in the goodness of creation. At this juncture we will finally explore the pneumatic pole of my creational-pneumatic hermeneutical model inasmuch as this hermeneutic trust is linked to the guidance of the Spirit.

The site of this pneumatic discourse may be located in a little treatise on spirits: ruah, pneuma, esprit, and especially, Geist. Derrida's *Of Spirit* is a discourse on both 'spirit' and 'avoiding', or more specifically, *Geist und vermeiden* and how Heidegger (unsuccessfully) attempted to avoid this spirit in his work and life. A life and work haunted by ghosts—is this...

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41 Patricia Sayre gives a helpful overview of some of these currents, particularly the predominance of suspicion in postmodern discourse. Suspicion and trust, she argues, are two different attitudes that one can choose in the face of contingency. In the end, she argues, as do I, that a Christian philosophy will be characterized by a primordial trust, though not without suspicion. See Patricia A. Sayre, "The Dialectics of Trust and Suspicion," *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (1993): 567-584.

42 My goal is not to construct a Pentecostal biblical hermeneutic (as per Fee, McLean, Menzies, et. al.), but rather the project of developing a Pentecostal general or philosophical hermeneutic (as a project within the equally scandalous endeavour of Christian philosophy). As such, my work stands closer to the proposal of Howard M. Ervin, who offers, in the name of Pentecostal hermeneutics a "Pentecostal epistemology." See Ervin, "Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option," *Pneuma: Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 3.2 (Fall 1981): 11-25. However, as will be seen, this pneumatic general hermeneutic is not limited to the province of Pentecostals.
Heidegger or Derrida? Of course within the Gesamtausgabe there lurk a number of disturbing spectres: spirits which both disturb this corpus but also arise from this corpus to disturb us. Derrida’s goal in his little spirit-filled treatise is to reveal that, despite all of his protests and attempts, Heidegger failed to avoid this tormenting Geist:

Geist is always haunted by its Geist: a spirit, or in other words, in French [and English] as in German, a phantom, always surprises by returning to be the other’s ventriloquist. Metaphysics always returns, I mean in the sense of a revenant [ghost], and Geist is the most fatal figure of this revenance [returning, haunting]. ...Is this not what Heidegger will never finally be able to avoid (vermeiden), the unavoidable itself--spirit’s double, Geist as the Geist of Geist, spirit as the spirit of the spirit which always comes with its double? (OS,40-41)

But again we may ask: is there not also a spirit, let us say l’esprit, which Derrida cannot avoid, which is the unavoidable? Is there not a spectre lurking behind and underneath Derrida’s corpus, his body (of writings), his writing body?

We need not consult the witch of Endor to conjure up this spirit, for it is sighted in a startling way later in the text, when Derrida considers the origins of language as promise, a passage hovering between commentary and autobiography.43

It remains to find out whether this Versprechen is not the promise which, opening every speaking, makes possible the very question and therefore precedes it without belonging to it: the dissymmetry of an affirmation, of a yes before all opposition of yes and no. ...Language always, before any question, and in the very question, comes down to the promise. This would also be a promise of

43 Thus, what Derrida observes regarding Heidegger’s relation to Trakl could also be said of Derrida’s relation to Heidegger: "statements like those I have just cited and translated...are obviously statements of Heidegger. Not his own, productions of the subject Martin Heidegger, but statements to which he subscribes apparently without the slightest reluctance. On the one hand, he opposes them to everything which he is in the process of opposing, and which forms a sufficiently determining context. On the other hand, he supports them in a discourse of which the least one can say is that it does not bear even the trace of a reservation. It would thus be completely irrelevant to reduce these statements in ontological form to 'commentaries.' Nothing is more foreign to Heidegger than commentary in its ordinary sense."(OS,85)
Following on the heels of this passage is an extended note (which, not without significance, he offers as a pledge), an attempt to understand this uninvited visitation of (the) spirit. Here the spirit of promise--of the "pledge"--returns, as that which must precede any question. Thus before any hermeneutics of suspicion (which is, at heart, a hermeneutics of radical questioning), one must place one's trust in the promises of language.

Language is already there, in advance at the moment at which any question can arise about it. In this it exceeds the question. This advance is, before any contract, a sort of promise of originary allegiance to which we must have in some sense already acquiesced, already said yes, given a pledge, whatever may be the negativity or problematicity of the discourse which may follow. (OS,129)

This pledge, he goes on to say, is a "commitment" to what is given in the promise itself. Questioning--the heart and sole of suspicion--does not have the last word, precisely because it does not have the first word, because it is itself grounded in trusting a promise (OS,130). This pledge happens 'before' the question, even before language, in time immemorial: "before the word, there is this sometimes wordless word which we name the 'yes.' A sort of pre-originary pledge which precedes any other engagement in language or action."(OS,130)

As Derrida notes, then, there is a trust which is more primordial than suspicion, precisely because, I have been attempting to argue, goodness is more primordial than evil. The state of affairs composed of deception and false consciousness is an accidental way of being, not an essential one. The pharmakon is not original nor constitutive, but rather a contingency resulting from the brokenness of a fallen world. But before this fall, and now in spite of this fall, there is a primordial 'yes': a "wordless word", a living logos who was 'in the beginning', who tabernacles with us in flesh, and whose spirit resides within us (John 1:1-18). It is this wordless
Word, this *Who*, that we name 'yes': "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes." (2 Cor. 1:19-20) That is why "[p]role must first pray, address itself to us: put in us its trust, its confidence, depend on us, and even have *already* done it."(OS,134) And this pledge, he continues, this 'already', is essential because it reaches back to a moment of already-having-trusted, an older event, part of a past which never returns, and never 'was'.

Given this primordial trust, as the correlate of the goodness of creation, space is made for a plurality of interpretations, a multiplicity of tongues, which is also a very pneumatic-Pentecostal notion. When we recognize both the situationality of human be-ing and the fundamental trust of human be-ing, then we are able to relinquish a monological hermeneutics in favour of a creational and pentecostal diversity, the plurality preceding Babel and following Pentecost. Given the phenomenological constraint of the world (that which is interpreted) and the pneumatological criterion in the fundamental guidance of the Spirit as rooted in a primordial trust, a hermeneutical space is opened which invites our creation, beckons us to heed the call

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44 I think this passage (and a similar discussion in "Force of Law," p. 5) marks something of a *Kehre* in the Derridean corpus. Indeed, it seems to me that what Derrida here offers regarding a primordiality of trust is precisely what Gadamer was pushing him towards in their encounter, at which time Derrida consistently sided with the 'question', with suspicion. But as Gadamer noted, "Whoever opens his mouth wants to be understood; otherwise, one would neither speak nor write. And finally, I have an exceptionally good piece of evidence for this: Derrida directs questions to me and therefore he must assume that I am willing to understand them." (Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Reply to Jacques Derrida" in *Dialogue & Deconstruction*, p. 55.)

45 At this juncture, Heidegger once again fails to avoid speaking of the spirit, but here it is not *Geist* but rather the *pneuma hagion*, with explicit reference to "the miracle of Pentecost." (Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," in *On the Way to Language*, pp. 96-97.)
and accept the gift and risk of human be-ing in its creatureliness, refusing both the metaphysical
dream of immediacy and the differential narrative of violence. A creational-pneumatic
hermeneutic is a hermeneutic which celebrates humanity, but one that also mourns its rupture
and roots its lament precisely in its belief in a good creation. The heart of a creational-
pneumatic hermeneutic is a space, a field of multiplicitous meeting in the wild spaces of love
(Olthuis) where there is room for a plurality of God’s creature to speak, sing and dance in a
multivalent chorus of tongues.


-----. "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism: A Derridean Critique," in Diane P. Michelfelder and


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