The Text and Its Style. Schleiermacher's Hermeneutic Theory of Language

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I

For the last twenty years there has been a marked increase within the cultural sciences of theories that are based in one way or another on language. This is true of analytic philosophy, structural semiology and existential hermeneutics. Common to each of them is the attempt to revise the modern paradigm of "transcendental consciousness" or "subjectivity" in terms of language theory. Before I speculate on the motive for this change in the paradigm, let me draw attention to a seemingly related circumstance, namely that the unity of the paradigm in no way provided these approaches with a common basis for discussion and research. Of course, there have been fruitful confrontations both in West Germany and in the United States between the practitioners of analytic philosophy and phenomenological hermeneutics. Yet the few, faint-hearted attempts to bring about a discussion between representatives of these groups and the French post-structuralist semioticians have rarely succeeded in establishing a forum. To be sure, the initial polemics and defensiveness—Alfred

Schmidt's *Geschichte und Struktur* (1971) is typical—have yielded in the meantime to an increasingly favorable reception of the singular and powerful thoughts which streamed in from France on a rising tide of often questionable translation. And yet, as far as I can see, there have not been any effective attempts to mediate between these divergent methodological options. Rather, the rift in methodological standards, which used to run the length of the border, has now merely been transferred into West Germany.

I said that these attempts at mediation had found little resonance, not that there hadn't been any. Peter Szondi, for one, in his seminars, lectures and publications called for translation of the French semiologists and encouraged a critical reception of their work. As an individual who, like Friedrich Schlegel, was competent in the areas of literary theory and philosophical aesthetics, as well as in the literary history of several European languages, Szondi knew only too well that his opinions seemed out of the ordinary Germanistics, which has long been obligated to ideas emanating from neighboring disciplines, especially philosophy and sociology, since germanists were unable to lay an independent and satisfactory theoretical foundation for their discipline, cut itself off from the intellectual tradition embodied by Szondi and paid for its refusal to engage in the effort of mediation between various methodological options with an unrestrained pluralism of methods that constitutes, in effect, both a renunciation of any type of dialectic and an unprecedented complicity with the pluralism of the free (academic) market. Thus, Germanistics offers us a striking example of the common experience that temporal progress does not necessarily imply progress in knowledge In this area of study there are, as Ernst Robert Curtius said concerning literary criticism in general, only romanticism and beginnings.

Ironically, however, this situation creates an advantage for Germanistics. In its hour of need, it can have recourse to the treasures of the romantics' founding efforts without thereby articulating an "archaeological" interest. Szondi was able to show both how viable Schleiermacher's philological starting point remains and how well suited it is to institute a dialogue between the structuralists and linguistic-analytic hermeneutic positions.

Szondi's call for a new, more fundamental reading of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, which began with the publication of "L'herméneutique de Schleiermacher,"[1] did have some effect in West Germany. My own work is unthinkable without Szondi, and there are other works that follow this same line.[2] And yet, Szondi's article seems to have had little effect in France—which is all the more regretable, since it was published in French.[3] The task of mediation will remain unfinished if the French semiologists do not accept Szondi's encouragement and work to establish an international dialogue. My presentation should be understood as a renewed attempt to introduce Schleiermacher into France. And even if I hope to add a few important touches to Szondi's portrait of Schleiermacher, as well as contradict it in some other respects, I would like to acknowledge my debt to Szondi's initial, epoch-making re-reading of

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics.

However, before I begin, I want to speculate as to why the dialogue with contemporary French theoreticians has failed. Now, if the differences between those analytic forays dependent on a methodological discipline and those of an existentialist hermeneutics that wishes to ground scientific hypotheses in irrefutable communication processes located in the historical effects of a work, if these differences can be cleared up as indicated in the work of Apel, Taylor, von Wright and Toumlin, it is because they are all indebted (if you will allow me to simplify for the sake of brevity) to a "semanticist" perspective. They are all concerned with either an explanation of the process of understanding meaning or a test of the validity of judgements about the meaning of utterances. In spite of its methodological viewpoint, the question as to *How to do Things with Words* is not in essential opposition to the question as to how verbal perspectives on the world are constructed and how they dictate the horizon of meaning to the individual enclosed by these language structures Even models in which the category of the subject is no longer considered appropriate to the explanation of "the meaning of meaning" are concerned with a contemporary reformulation of the classic critique of meaning. To inquire as to the meaning of human utterances is apparently more fundamental than the question of their reasonability. Here we can make a connection with the neo-Kantian tradition (Cassirer, for example) in which the restrictive logical sense of the transcendental synthesis is broadened to include the output of our symbolic capacity in general and our linguistic capacity in particular. And if, in the wake of Wittgenstein, symbolic forms are thought of as rule-governed structures that determine the concrete actions of designating and giving meaning, and even as able to independently extend and transform the lexical-syntactical repertoire, then they must also be granted the capacity for spontaneity and reflection, the traditional hallmarks of subjectivity

From this perspective, the English Channel, which has often served metonymically to represent the division between Anglo-Saxon and continental philosophy, has not really effected any discursive rupture: the premises and methods of analytic philosophy are based on the same paradigm of reflection that has held sway over continental metaphysics since Parmenides. At any rate, this is the objection that both analytic philosophy and hermeneutic theory (broadly construed) must meet as soon as they take up the challenge of French semiology. For example, Derrida sees common premises at work in Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics, Austin and Searle's speech-act theory, and even in Foucault's "archaeology "[4] These premises surreptitiously conflate the competing positions into the unity of a *single*, scientific formation according to Derrida. In concert, they assume that consciousness, *parole* or "discourse" provide fundamental access to the meaning of utterances, even if such utterances, elements of social institutions, are initially unavailable to the individual and must, to use a phrase from Merleau-Ponty, be recuperated by means of an "archaeological" reconstruction. The

Parmenidian *"noein"*, the cognitive perception of being in its being, makes sense only under the assumption that something positive rather than nothing (μη όν) is given Thus, non-being *is* not, it has no presence, no truth, that might be uniformly repeated and it cannot be regarded as the possible object of a necessarily *general* knowledge. Friedrich Schlegel termed the nothing of Parmenides an "emptiness, seeking fulfillment," "a gap in being" (*Dasein*), that, itself unseeable, allowed the determination of the seeable.[5]

Only signs and the relations that they bear to one another (the new mass of the encodable) are visible, objective, significant, and, thus, replicable and generalizable within the framework of a structure The gap as such escapes the eye of knowledge, although it is precisely this gap that instituted the positive terms in their function as signs, that is, as meaning-expressive unities. As Saussure demonstrated, the identity building of signs and their integration into the economy of an articulated system is the result of a process whereby quite specific cuts are made in the unarticulated mass of signifying material (the significance of which he characterized as *"en soi nulle"*) through which individual blocks are separated from one another and thereby invested with profile, contour and particular features, in short, with differential characteristics. Only when the work of differentiation and interval formation among the *"termes pleins et positifs"* has been accomplished (and, precisely stated, this work moves forward continuously with each sign usage) can the "distinctness" of the sign as the synthesis of intelligible meanings and material substrata of expression be completed.[6] In other words, only when the work of differentiation withdraws itself, as it were, from the completed structure of the signifier is the same structure transformed from a meaningless, furrowed matter to an articulated order of signs which can express meaningfully. This is an old insight, with its most famous formulation in Spinoza's *"Omnis determinatio est negatio,"* and it is still present in Sartre's axiom, "Non-being is the basis for the determination of being '"[7]

Beyond this, reference to Spinoza, Hegel or Sartre is not very helpful, for, according to these thinkers, negation remains midway between two positions for the benefit of which it operates and sublates itself. On the other hand, there persists the aggravation that befalls the "semanticism" of meaning comprehension in the work of Lacan and Derrida as a result of its insistence upon a dialectically unsublatable denial, one that splits meaning off from itself without allowing it any recourse to itself. When Gadamer speaks of a "speculative structure" of language, he means to imply that the two terms of the process of communication reflect themselves in one another and are, thus, essentially homogeneous.[8] In the process of consciousness arising out of historical effect (*wirkungsgechichtlich*), one spirit (*Geist*) always speaks to another, or, radically reformulated, the context of meaning of a tradition *speaks to itself* in the form of a comprehension opened in opposition to this tradition In this manner the historical effects based (wirkungsgeschichtliche) hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur, as well as all communication or information

theories, make connection with the paradigm of reflection in which the alienation of consciousness from itself can only be a way station along the path of its constant return to itself However, as Derrida has emphasised, there is an alterity of a completely different order that of necessity remains unnoticed in such conceptions Every element within the order of a linguistic world view, even before it is able to grasp itself as what it is, carries within itself the traces of all other elements of the signifying structure. That is, it does not achieve its identity-as-meaning from its specular relation to itself or to an imperishable, authentic core of *truth*, but, rather, from its open alienation (*Veràusserung*) in that which is its other. As Derrida says, "In order to be itself, it must set itself off an interval from that which it is not."[9] Thus, the meaning that is to be understood is not based in a continuum composed purely of meaning equal to itself, but in that which is itself not meaningful The immediate transparency of meaning is already clouded at its origin; and, if one were to describe it the effable, then one would have to call its origin silence, as Mallarmé did.

The trouble is that this insight also applies to reflection itself—thus to the fundamental theorem of modernity, with which philosophy believed it had demonstrated its claim to a rigorous scientific method. However, one can *neither* think reflection without presupposing a simple self-conscious identity (otherwise one term in the relation could not be sure of being aware of *itself* in the other, rather than yet another), *nor* can one overlook the fact that this identity is never immediately present to itself; it must call the other—the other term in the relation—as witness to its likeness to itself Hölderlin had already presented the aporia in this form, and Fichte, to whom Hölderlin refers, discovered that the testimony of the other seemed to be verified by means of the identity's prereflective knowledge of itself. And yet, Fichte too got caught in a circle. On the one hand, as he demonstrated in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* of 1798, the certainity of the idea, "I," (its concept) is bound to the *difference* of at least two mutually sublating expressions ("You think 'I' and to that extent not of anything else, thus, not not-I"). On the other hand, this cleavage of the two terms must once again be invaded by a direct contemplation of their *non*-separation, otherwise, the other is no longer the same as the One, and the irreducible identity of the thought, "I," no longer obtains.[10]

There is no way out, the condition for the possibility of the I is its expenditure for the other. *This,* of course, cleaves the self into two parts, no matter how gladly it disavows its own differential basis after the fact. The pathway of the reflected to itself as that which reflects is, however, still blocked by the irremovable externality of the signifier According to Derrida, "a *langage* has preceded my self-consciousness."[11]

This thesis, and here I come to the real object of my discussion, is prefigured in Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* and *Dialektik* As far as I know, he was the first to draw the semiotic consequences (consequences that crystallized as he pursued the project for the *Hermeneutics*) from the failure of the reflection model It is the fact

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that he did not abandon the theorem of a meaning-creating (though semiologically humbled) subject that makes his position so attractive for contemporary methodological debate in linguistics and literary studies

In the above mentioned texts, Schleiermacher demonstrates that the concept of the "subject" appears inappropriate as a philosophical starting point. even in the highest of all syntheses, that of thought and volition, it exists as a relation, that is, as a virtual striving apart of the mutually referential. Yet the fact that the subject nevertheless possesses knowledge of the sameness of the relata is an achievement the fundamental reality of which the subject cannot attribute to itself. Thus, the epistemological ground of self-consciousness, its immediate self-transparency, slips into a peculiar belatedness in relation to its ontological ground Schleiermacher writes that the absolute interiority of this feeling of identity only occurs "in the subject," it is not produced "by the subject ."[12]

Thus, the subject does possess a consciousness of a unity which pervades it, and also knows immediately that it cannot be the originary source of this knowledge. It is conversant with itself only because it reads the hallmark of its "transcendental determinacy" (transzendenten Bestimmtheit),[13] as a suggestion of an identity that "supplements" the indication provided by the "defect" inscribed in reflection (Dial O, 287, 290, 295-96). In rough outline, this is the result of "the analysis of self-consciousness in relation to the corresponding presence of an other" (GI, 24). In terms of religious attitude, this necessitates a renunciation of the desire to call on the self as the basis for one's sense of being absolutely determined

Schleiermacher speaks of a "crisis of the subject"; this occurs as soon as the subject can only testify to (bezeugen), and no longer engender (erzeugen) its constitutive truth. When "its power is broken" (GI, 27) on the fictitiousness of its unconditional self-mediation, the subject may no longer be considered the locus of a supra-historical, self-present truth that contains, bound up within itself, all the facts of a historical world, facts that it could then reveal in a series of deductive steps.

II

This theoretical premise bars Schleiermacher from using a sequence of argumentative strategies typically employed in transcendental philosophy. Above all, the appeal to the authority of self-consciousness no longer guarantees the possession of an "absolute" truth present to itself in a trans-historical perspective. This option eludes Schleiermacher insofar as self-consciousness is defined as relational (and, thus, bound in time), and also as "a general consciousness of finitude" (GI, § 8, 2), that is, as a consciousness of "dependence" which is absolute in regard to its being per se and relative in regard to its "existence in the world" (GI, § 2; see GI §§ 3-5).

Reflection on the crisis of the subject has hermeneutic conse-

quences. "Since [the subject's] power is broken on the factitiousness of its unconditional self-mediation it no longer comes into question as the locus from which judgements (judgements independent of individual experience) about the realm of being in the historical world can be reached by means of a monologic series of deductions. Rather, the transcendency of the ground of knowledge forces the subject to verify the evidence of its perceptions in the field of interpersonal understanding. That is the concern of the dialectic, which Schleiermacher defined as "the delineation of the first principles for an artfully conducted conversation in the realm of pure thought,"¹⁴ The goal of the dialectic is "knowledge," that is, the production of a state in which theory is "inalterable and general" (*HuK*, 414). The partners in a discourse must be in accord with respect to the establishment of this goal, because without the "presupposition" of such a knowledge-idea (no matter how unattainable), there would be—when one considers both the irreconcilable disparity of the opinions that confront each other as well as the inadequacy of a "truth" that holds sway over the conversation from above—no guarantee of the intersubjectivity of the then sought after discursive agreement.

Another presupposition for the dialectic, one implied in the postulate of an ideal unity of knowledge, is the selfsameness of the object to which the divergent predicates are assigned. Only this allows the collision of dialectically sublatable "contradictions" (*HuK*, 426ff). Obviously, their conflict is not "objectively" resolvable (i e, through some external authority), since one cannot decide by simple exclusion between the appropriateness or inappropriateness of unreconcilable judgements about a self-contained intended "being" (A) or a specific sector of being (A') The lack of a transsubjective criterion for the "true" predication of a being forces the partners in the conversation to take into account in the formation of their potential consensus every predicate genuinely granted to it In other words, the partners must acknowledge that the object of judgement is not indifferent to the individual interpretations drawn up for it by the totality of subjects The predicated sphere expands continuously with each investiture of meaning. The breakthrough to truth is, as it were, made as soon as the relative nature of one's own standpoint is perceived. This does not take place in order to allow the positive fixing of a material expression (which would be relative, of course, since it would rest on a provisional consensus; it could even become an error as soon as it claimed to exhaust the potential meaning of being), rather, it occurs in the shape of a forever incompletable movement toward truth that totalizes each individual perception

Now the notion of a simultaneous relativity and universality in interpreting being, through which a group of subjects defines itself as a particular "thought community" (*HuK*, 417), has the structure of a language, that is, of a historical-"empirical" and "speculative" apparatus of communication-enabling catagories (*HuK*, 234, 467). There is no thought-community that has not *ipso facto* sedimented its dialectical consensus in the grammar of a "language nexus" (*HuK*, 420ff.), that is, as a context of references or signs through which it

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perfects its social synthesis. "Thought" is, according to Schleiermacher, nothing but the immediate self-elucidation of "action" (cf *Dial O*, 70). Because of its dependence on each particular grammar, the dialectic participates in the particularities and disinformation of the historical world (that is, in each particular tradition, historically or biographically induced givens that are precipitated in conventional speech patterns and are, at the time of their acquisition, internalized as various practices). The dialectic can never completely free itself from this dependency, since the truth constituted by it can never go beyond the status of an individual and historical interpretation of being founded on intersubjective unanimity. For this reason, the dialectic freely renounces "any claim to universality" (*HuK*, 422, 424)—in the sense of an objectivity independent of subjects—and recognizes that "the particularity of a language" is not only traced in the thought process of the individuals "socialized" within it, but also contributes to the apprehension of each and every other" (*HuK*, 421). The irreducible non-universality of "relativity of thought" (*HuK*, 410) points the dialectic to the "art of interpretation" or "hermeneutics." Hermeneutics considers utterances primarily from the perspective of to what extent they validate that which is individual; the dialectic on the other hand, stresses the notion that even the most private expression of meaning results in part from a prior awareness of an "idea of knowledge" common to all thinking beings and, further, must be formulated linguistically for the sake of its possible communication. "Thus, it is clear that both [hermenutics and dialectics] can exist only in mutual relation" (*HuK*, 411).

III

One can see that it is an intrasystematic consistency that provides the framework within which Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory will unfold: the transcendence of being in opposition to meaning, through which every linguistic community simultaneously discloses and disguises being, immediately forces the recognition of the concept of an individuality that cannot be considered simply a deduction of or an imputation of the semantico-syntatic system. Yet, from one end of the historical universe to the other, there is no universality whose economy is unlimited and whose structure would not arrest the unity of this particular movement, of which the gesture of an individual disclosure of meaning would expose the exact structure at this moment in historical time. In this respect, what Schleiermacher considers to be the individual is never simply the implied of a universal cohesion of signs, but always also its boundary and potential challenge from the side of subjects who, in the use of signs, bring into play their "particularity" as an "untranslatable" quality. There cannot be a "universal language" because "agreement about [such a language] is itself dependent on individual languages" (*HuK*, 461). Schleiermacher sees through the scientific utopia of a non-individual universal. A use of reason, with the mark of universality, encoded as

"language" within a language (the concern of dialectics/grammar) stands in fundamental opposition to knowing with the mark of individuality, i e., its untranslatability (the concern of hermeneutics/rhetoric) The latter is not immediately reducible to the former, just as the former can never reproduce a totally determined "speech act " It is a mistake to think that language speaks of its own, as a few structuralists, in the wake of the symbolists and Heidegger, have done (This talk of the autonomy of language is unmasked as a metaphor that hypostatizes the signifier as an objective force) As Charles S Pierce has shown, language never alludes to the interpretant who, in context, individualizes the meaning of signs Nor can individual meaning ever find expression (because of its untranslatability), that is, achieve the ontological status of a linguistic sign (insofar as "language, as a general system of designation" achieves the mediation of the social quality of thought [*HuK*, 458, 76f.]), unless it makes use of "thoughts . that already have a designation in the language" and restricts its capacity for individuation to the (of course not once again rule bound) symbolic overdetermination of the codified sign in conformity with "style" (*HuK*, 78, cf. 168)

Now, Schleiermacher maintains that every lingusitic expression (*Rede*), is doubly marked On the one hand, it manifests the system of the totality of the language (*HuK*, 458ff , 364, 380, passim), which prescribes to all participant speakers the syntax and semantics (the *"Grammatik"*) of their utterances "Language   [conditions] the thinking of all individuals   , if one considers the individual as merely a locus for language" (*HuK*, 79, cf 78). On the other hand, however, "language comes into being only .   through speech" in as far as 1) it has its origin in the totalized disclosures of meaning initiated by the speakers, and insofar as 2) every individual speaker "works in and on the language: He brings out something new in the language .   and in part preserves that which he repeats and carries forward" (*HuK*, 167, 78f)

One sees immediately that these differences are determined by a predominence or retreat of specific functions. "Grammar" (although only a virtual system, it formally determines the corpus of utterances) represents the first aspect, "rhetoric" the second, since it provides a theory of the art of speech This does not mean, however, that it should be construed narrowly as the technique of producing artful (artificial) speech (*HuK*, 76).

IV

This "double relation" (*HuK*, 77), this field of tension in which speech resides, obeys a dialectic whose law is yet opaque For one thing, the mechanism which discloses the linguistically codified sign as a function of an "intransferable" project of meaning (and also makes the historicity of taxonomies understandable) is not yet understood. Neither has it been demonstrated how the individual act of thinking—even if it, in a certain fashion, escapes "linguistic

law"[15]—nevertheless should be able to be constituted linguistically

As far as the thesis of the irreducible linguistic nature of thought is concerned, it stands in opposition to the classical notion that the linguistic sign is only the external re-presentation of something internal which is capable of avoiding the detour of the signifier, indeed is only authentically preceived in its absence The theoreticians of a rationalistic universal grammar supposed in this sense that empirical languages reflected more or less completely through the catenation of words in sentences the ideal judgements-syntheses of an eternal order of ideas, a logic In an analogous fashion, one might interpret Kant's apparatus of categories and principles as the model of a transcendental semantics, whose repertoire is accessible before it is available through signifiers, and which only in a second stage moves toward the sensible world—through a system of schemata concerning experience. As he had against Fichte, Schleiermacher raises the objection that even a non-sensible thought, should it wish to be "clear," i.e. distinct (cf. *HuK*, 77, 367, passim), must inscribe itself in an oppositional structure of a linguistic type, because "every concept is rooted in difference "[16] Even the meaning of "ideas" or intelligible principles can delineate itself only by means of a "system" of "conditioned differences among the units of meaning" (*HuK*, 365) And the difference between a (non-sensible) thought and a speech act (led through the straits of the signifier) reduces itself to the commonplace difference between a spoken and an unspoken use of signs (*HuK*, 77; cf *SW* III/9, pp. 126, 703) The thrust of this extraordinary thesis, which Saussure was to expand, is that insofar as one thinks at all (i.e., insofar as distinct meanings or "speech values" are at all coherently concatenated (*HuK*, 107, 135, 137, 141, passim), one must presuppose the "totality of a language" as a differential system by means of which from the outset an identical schematization of a speech community's experience of the world, thus, communication as a *fait social* (Saussure), is assured (cf. *GI*, § 42)

Here a second problem surfaces which needs clarification. doesn't the subversion of the subject by the signified (Lacan) imply the loss of the subject's individuality? And if such is not the case, where is the intermediate stage to be found which holds the dialectic of "linguistic law" and "linguistic usage" in flux without either degrading thought to the status of the active organ of the structure itself or releasing it from its bonds to language?[17]

An essential support for the claim to universality embodied in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is the proof that no linguistic utterance (level of rhetoric) discloses its meaning (*HuK*, 75), that is, is "understood," on the basis of a purely grammatical reconstruction: "Nor is it understood as a modification of language, unless it is understood as a fact of the spirit [of thought], because there lies the basis for any influence by the individual on language which comes into being through speech" (*HuK*, 79). Thus, the reconstruction of a grammatical sequence and its concatenated elements of signification becomes a hermeneutic operation at the moment meaning is

derived for the sequence; this *by means of* the elements, and not *through* them.[18] If one concededs that individual "significance," by dint of its sensitivity to context, i e the effect of the "immediate environment,"[19] also constantly renews the description of the unity of the codified "values of language," then it is necessary to define anew the concept "language" through the differential between the grammatical and the rhetorical functions.

Following the Kantian tradition, Schleiermacher employs the term "schema" to designate the realm of play in which a linguistic sign's "unity of meaning" (*HuK*, 104, 106) stretches between the strict identity of the concept (its unity as a linguistic value or paradigm), and the variability of its individual combinations and applications in the syntagmatic combine The (empirical) schema is the "unity in the determination of meaninghfulness" seen from the point of view of contemplation (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 140/B 179). Its origin in the resources of the contemplative capacity (imagination) permits the production of synthetic acts whose noematic correlate, despite the schema's unified organization, remains in principle open to new initiatives for constitution by the subject The unity of a "linguistic value" differentiated in the network of language, is obviously of this type The universality of a pure concept cannot be accorded to the meaning of a sign because no one of the sign's usages can ever correspond to this meaning completely (with regard to a universal being, moreover, it is hard to see what transformation its extension would be able to expand). Neither can it be a question of an individual perspective (which would not be translatable) The only option is a unification of the stuff of contemplation in such a manner that the conditioning of its noema results from a glance forward towards a concept without thereby permanently falling under its tutelage A change in the synthesis of the imagination instantaneously modifies the extension of the corresponding schema. It is, says Schleiermacher, a perception "which shifts within certain limits,"[20] and comparable to Wittgenstein's "language game," which he defined as concept with fuzzy borders.[21] The standard measure for the admissability of a word's use is granted speakers of a language by intuition of the *rule*,[22] according to which the designative *competence of the speaker works so as to* produce the appropriate verbal schema within the flexible unity his context-variable referents of meaning.

In no way does Schleiermacher confine his discussion of the schema to singular termini (to "*Subjektsbegriffe*"), he considers all categorematic expressions, thus all "notions of predicate" as well, to be schematizable (*Dial O*, 340ff.) A "floating unity" mediates between the two (*Dial O*, 342). Thus he does not consider "the unity of meaning" exclusively semantic, it is just as much a "structural" problem which he discusses very clearly and at length in his lectures on hermeneutics.[23] He is barred in principle from an abstractive separation of semantics and syntax by his ingenious discovery of the law of the double determination of every act of speech, namely, by the "total linguistic domain" through paradigmatic exclusion and by the speech act's "immediate context" through "syntagmatic determina-

tion (*HuK*, 101ff., 116ff.)[24] Just as paradigmatic selection fixes the meaning of a word (its linguistic value) in all contexts, its syntagmatic determination tests the breadth of the momentary individual implications of the word in specific contexts (the "local value" of the schema (*HuK*, 195ff., 141ff.) Both operations refer to each other.

The lexical paradigm is never anything other than an abstraction produced from the plenitude of its contextually variant usages by means of comparison and differentiation. Conversely, syntagmatic concatenation presupposes the linguistic value of a word as that which has to be modified by its immediate surroundings.

The essence of all notions of predicate and subject is thus "a floating unity between the general and the particular" (*Dial O*, 342), between distinctness and mutability, between concept and judgement, between intellectual and organic functions or whatever other terms Schleiermacher employs to frame this dialectical relation

V

This detailed, intelligently formulated theory of the linguistic schema provides Scheiermacher with a plausible explanation of both the relationship between language structure and language change and that between ordinary and metaphorical usage.

Just as the concepts of a language do not take possession once-and-for-all of its predicates (recruited from sense perception and acknowledged by judgement), but rather remain modifiable in their semantic substance through changes in the direction of their organic function (their unity of meaning is defined in relation to the basically inconclusive judgements made about their semantic substance), so must the language system in general also be regarded as an instable, i.e., historically open, "parasemic context" (Saussure)[25] whose world view changes according to the interpretive judgements made by individuals and which never attains the mode of being of an ultimately active idea which shakes off interpretation and comments from outside. Every individual communication presupposes the unity of the world as its noematic correlate toward which the exchange of messages points. This unity is, however, only the inert reflex of that schematic unity of speech as totality by means of which a particular community seals its practical synthesis. "The identical construction of thought codified in language" thus offers "no complete guarantee for the correctness of that thought" (*HuK*, 460). "Communications about external objects are a steady continuation of the test as to whether all humans construe identically" (*HuK*, 460).

Thus language is an individual universal. It subsists as a universal system principally on the basis of revocable agreement among its speakers. It changes its total meaning with every act of speech and at every moment, insofar as this semantic innovation succeeds in entering the grammatical repertoire—something that happens continually in conversational acts. Saussure described this phenomenon of "analogic" or "parasemic transformation" in quite

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the same sense as Schleiermacher and thereby contradicted the deductivism with which his supposedly orthodox pupils tried to defend the relationship between *langue* and *parole* There is an indeterminable (or, at least, not determinable on the basis of a pure potential such as *langue*) "*activité créatrice*," even a "*liberté individuelle*" for the speaker which is precipitated as "incessant daily creation within the *langue*" and as such cannot be thought, even if one could anticipate it from the point of view of the *langue*

Schleiermacher sees the purest expression of the meaning-creating potential of language in the poetic use of language [26] The metaphoricity of the symbolic use of language undermines the conventional meanings (schemata) of words through a well calculated semantic shock which challenges the reader's "free productivity in the language" (*HuK*, 143, 450f.) When the ordinary meaning of an expression (the schema *sensu stricto*) is cancelled out (cf , *HuK*, 105f), a new description (*re-assignment* is the term used by Mary B Hess, an "image," says Schleiermacher) of the intentionality of the expression is tendered and with it the possibility of a new vision of its designated content matter surfaces. This designation of content matter is, according to Scheiermacher, a hermeneutic function of speaking ("correct" objectivication corresponds to the grammatical correctness of the expression and the material content inscribed in it by the schemata of experience) If the originally simply individual image is appropriated by the recipients of an act of speech (*HuK*, 407f.), then this image has thereby ceased to be exclusive or private and exists as a virtual universal schema or possibly as a rule for language use (among others) in the totality of a language (cf., *HuK*, 410f).

VI

At this point the fundamental argument of Schleiermacher's theory of language comes to light, that aspect of his theory which has been fraught with the worst sort of misunderstanding throughout the history of its reception. the theorem of divination

Contrary to the assertions of Gadamer and the majority of Schleiermacher's exegetes, the theorem does not originate in the historical dimension which bridges the time-gap between interpreter and interpreted in no way is "divination" to be translated by empathy (*Einfuhlung*), a term which never appears in Schleiermacher's work.

"Divination" appears within the framework of Schleiermacher's theory of style (*HuK*, 169). (In the following remarks I will confine myself to its linguistic dimension.) By "style" Schleiermacher means the "manipulation of language" from the point of view of the degree to which the speaker introduces his "personal way of conceiving the object in his application and, thus, in his treatment of language" (*HuK*, 168). Here we are obviously dealing with an event essentially identical to the metaphorical "new description" in as far as stylistic modification challenges the general schematic posture of language with a speakers initially untranslatable "thought." The

poetic "image," which is superimposed on the general schema, is layed down as a "purely singular entity," thus *ipso facto* as something which, in contradistinction to language, is irrational" (*HuK*, 408) Poetry (*Dichtung*), which is merely the extreme case of everyday language use, has something to give in the linguistic medium "that cannot really be given through language, since language only expresses the general" (*HuK*, 401). The speaker, acting in a literally "poetic" manner (producing new meaning), forces his individuality onto language, an individuality which has not yet been codified and is in this sense ineffable (*HuK*, 403f.) The speaker does this by the manner in which he "weaves these [words] together" (*HuK*, 401) The "particular combinatory structure" of style, in which "the essence of individuality" leaves its trace *ex negativo* (*HuK*, 370, passim) must, however, be differentiated from the combining of words according to a syntactical rule. A sentence or a speech act modeled on universal regularities (be they generic, social, or grammatical in nature) is an "object for grammatical interpretation" and only invokes "language as a general concept," that is, as the transcendental apparatus for generating all "necessary forms for subject, predicate and syntax" (*HuK*, 171). These forms are not, however, "positive means for explaining" real instances of language use (of style), "rather, they are negative means, because whatever contradicts them . . cannot be understood" (*HuK*, 171f). It is true that syntax, semantics, and—as far as it formulates its own rules—pragmatics constitute the *conditiones sine quibus non* of language use, but none of these instances is thereby the *cause per quam* of the individual combination through which the free thought of the speaking subject manifests itself in its individuality—which is never necessitated and thus never completely schematizable (*HuK*, 173). This combination can be constructed a priori (*HuK*, 172). Indeed, "grammatically, one cannot allow any individuality with a concept. . . . Style cannot be organized in concepts " Therefore, all models which seek to appropriate style as a rule-governed or multi-coded process in a generative apparatus are condemned to failure. Not because style brings an extra-verbal quality into play or contradicts any existing rule (Schleiermacher maintains that style presupposes such rules), but simply because style originally locates universal signs in relation to an actual meaning, the light of which illuminates the signs in this particular combination (in distinction to all others, even those which can be analytically paraphrased). *Post festum*, that is, as soon as the sense is understood, i.e. has become "meaning," one recognizes its rule in the abstract, yet, in relation to future speech acts, this meaning has no authoritative power [27] Schleiermacher says that in every individual design of meaning there remains "something indescribable . . . which can only be called harmony" (*HuK*, 177). This harmony is not an attribute of any single sign or all signs and their laws of concatenation, rather it is something like the synthetic unity of its invisible scansion or like the effect of those differential "*brisures*" (Derrida) on the places which commemorate their articulation—by means of which they are disclosed as variable schemata and reminded of their permanent capacity to always ex-

press something other than that which they mean in this actual context [28]

However, it is then impossible to characterize the "complete understanding of style" with expressions which are oriented toward the metaphorics of decoding (*HuK*, 168). There is no continuous passage from a system to its application in as far as one can never exclude the possibility that the signs employed have provided a new semantic interpretation for the codified totality of the language (which assigns every signifier its and only its signified) [29] A meaning first produced in the act of speech (a "creative act," *HuK*,325)—i.e., a meaning which is first defined at the moment of speech as the appropriate interpretation of its chain of signifiers—cannot be described with the means of *the* repertoire, whose boundaries have just been crossed (This objection is especially pertinent to the hermeneutic conservatism of the genre-theory in E D Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation*.) Thus the "comparative method," which measures a new description of a sentence's meaning comparataively, in terms of the usual meaning of its consituent signs, can tease out such an individual meaning only under the circular presupposition that it *is* a singular instance of meaning which the act of "divination" has previously labeled untranslatable.

In Schleiermacher's rhetoric the concept of "divination" stands for precisely this insight, namely, that language systems on their own never disclose in advance a particular interpretation of an actual use of language and that the individual meaning (prior to the codified semantics/syntactics of the sign chain which bears it) cannot be derived on the basis of *discovery procedures* of a deductive/decoding type.

The attempt to leap from a differential procedure of determination which operates on the basis of comparison and opposition to a description of style leads of necessity to an infinite regress ("this leads to an infinite regression," *HuK*, 176). What is made commensurable by the "comparison" cannot be the "new" (*HuK*, 167), the as-yet incomparable of a phrase just heard, unless a conjectural hypothesis ("divination") had already made the meaning, the individual combinatory manner of the author, commensurable or possibly open to divination, by a leap of the imagination or an originary "guess" (*HuK*, 318; cf 326,passim)

The most striking evidence for the everyday reality of such divination is language acquisition in children They must literally "understand primordially" what is said to them,[30] since "they don't possess language yet (and thus have no rules to apply), rather, they seek to discover them. . They have absolutely no points of comparison, they acquire them gradually as the basis of a comparative process which develops faster than one would expect" (*HuK*,326) The decisive question, which cannot be answered by any code model of language, is; "How do they concretize that first understood entity?" (loc. cit.) That is, how do they make the leap from the pure capacity for language to the comprehension of a meaning which can only first be recognized during the act of guessing itself (in other words, by

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divination)? The question can only be answered by granting children the "same divinatory boldness" that, in smaller measure, permeates adult understanding of meaning (*HuK*, 327).

We need to be aware of the fact that the universality that Schleiermacher's theory of language opens up for us is the recognition that the universality of semiological systems (a thesis which Schleiermacher helped found)[31] doesn't close the gap of *"différance"* in which, according to Derrida, something like sense and meaning first come to be, that is, that every spoken word is wrapped in a silence that *ipso facto* slides past the precepts of the code a silence that Mallarmé termed the *condition et délice de la lecture* [32] This seems to me to be the almost forgotten insight to which Schleiermacher's theory of language gives us access. The fact that its reception distorted this theory even more than other theoretical pronouncements of German romanticism and the fact that Schleiermacher's own pronouncements surface as so many intruders to mar the tranquality of contemporary linguistics and literary studies speak for the possibility that the romantic model is by no means antiquated and not merely in the sense that its richness hasn't been completely recognized, much less exhaustively exploited.

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NOTES

1   Originally published in *Poétique* 2 (1970), 141-55

2   See Manfred Frank, *Das individuelle Allgemeine* (Frankfurt a M 1977) and Norbert Altenhofer, "*Geselliges Betrage—Kunst—Auslegung Anmerkung zu Peter Szondis Schleiermacher Interpretation*," in Ulrich Nassen, ed *Studien zur Entwicklung einer Materialen Hermeneutick* (Munich, 1979), pp 165-211

3   See, however, T Todorov, *Théories du symbole* (Paris, 1977), p 218, where the author announces a hermeneutic oriented toward Schleiermacher under the title "*Stratégies de l'interprétation*"

4   Jacques Derrida, "Avoir l'oreille de la philosophie, Entretein avec Lucette Finas," in *Ecarts Quatre essais à propos de Jacques Derrida* (Paris, 1973)

5   Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe seiner Schriften*, (hereafter *KA*), ed Ernst Behler (Paderborn, 1958) vol 12, p 192

6   Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Paris, 1972), p 38f

7   Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant* (Paris, 1943), p 130

8   H G Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tubingen, 1965), p 432ff

9   Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris, 1972), p 13

10   J G Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre [Nova methodo] (1798)*, in *Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed, Hans Jacob (Berlin, 1937), vol 2, p 355ff

11   Jacques Derrida, *La dissémination* (Paris, 1972), p 376

12   F D Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube,* seventh edition, ed Martin Redeker (Berlin, 1960), vol 1, §3, p 3 (hereafter *Gl,* citations from the body of the text will be presented with section, and paragraph reference, Schleiermacher's marginal notes will be refered to by page number

13   F D Schleiermacher, *Dialektik,* ed Rudolf Odebrecht (Leipzig, 1942), p 290 (hereafter *Dial O*)

14   F D Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik,* ed Manfred Frank (Frankfurt a M , 1977), p 412 (hereafter *HuK*)

15   F D Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik,* ed Heinz Kimmerle (Heidelberg, 1959), p 39 This edition gathers together in critical format all of Schleiermacher's notes including the early hand-written ones, and remains an essential tool for an in-depth study of his work

16   Ibid cf *Monologen,* "Because only through opposition is the individual recognized " In *Kleine Schriften und Predigten 1800-1820,* eds H Gerde and E Hirsch (Berlin, 1970), vol 1, p 38

17   ibid

18   *Hermeneutik,* ed Kimmerle, p 154 (my emphasis, M F)

19   Ibid, p 65, passim

20   Ibid , p 47, 57ff Cf *Huk,* p 106, 109, 437

21   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt a M, 1977), p 50 (= § 71)

22   Schelling says, "Sense perception (*Anschauung*) of the rule " In *Sämtliche Werke,* ed K F A Schelling (Stuttgart, 1856-61), vol 3, part 1, p 508 Schelling had otherwise worked against Schleiermacher's transferral of the Kantian schematic to the act of designation in language

23   *Hermeneutik,* ed Kimmerle, pp 60, 93

24   Ibid , p 42

25   "Parasemic" means positing one sign next to, on the basis of, another, thereby mutually delimiting both

26   "Thus, poetry (*Poésie*) would be an extension and new creation within language This possibility is basic to language itself, yet it is only in the poetic that it appears, either in pure or attendant form" (*HuK,* p 405)

27   Thus, one can comprehend the style of an individual and designate its rules, but one can't derive a law of his future praxis Every rule carries an index of its own antiquated, past nature

28   Cf Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris, 1966), p 505

29   In his often overlooked *Essai d'une philosophie* (Paris, 1968) Gilles-Gaston Granger was able to show that this applies even for systems such as mathematics

30   *Hermeneutik,* ed Kimmerle, p 61

31   In addition, Schleiermacher introduced into our discipline the concepts of structure and meaning understanding as they are currently used Cf *HuK,* p 139 and *Hermeneutik,* ed Kimmerle, p 60 The "extreme importance" and an-

ticipatory significance of this structure-concept in particular—which covers both grammatical and textual structure—was already pointed out by Joachim Wach in his *Das Verstehen, Grundzüge einer Geschichte der hermeneutischen Theorie im 19 Jahrhundert*, 3 vols (Tubingen, 1926), vol 1, p 133f Cf also *Hermeneutik*, ed Kummerle, pp 38, 56

32   Stephan Mallarmé, *Oeuvres completes*, ed H Mondo and G Aubry (Paris, 1965), p 310